

The Shaking the Bush Gathering

10 - 12th December, 2025

The Community Shed, Tennant Creek

Warumungu Country



The Shaking the Bush Gathering aimed to ignite a strong movement for better Wumpurrarni homes and keep *kurnula warlukurn ama yuungkungkku* ‘this fire burning’ across Australia so all Aboriginal people can achieve housing justice. This first Shaking the Bush gathering invited people to work together in new ways, with community control at the centre.

“*Warumungu manu, Patta kana nada*” We acknowledge the people of this Warumungu Country and Patta ground

Report available online at:

<https://ucrh.edu.au/project/healing-country-weaving-knowledge-systems-to-meet-climate-challenges/>

The phrase **'Shaking the bush'** comes from Uncle Norm and refers to shaking a bush together to advocate from things to change, and that the seeds that fall are like ideas that people will pick up and will grow from this work of Wilya Anyul Janta, for generations to come.

The important thing you got to do, my mate, you gotta shake that bush. If you want to make something happen, you've got to shake that bush all the time.

You've got to talk. And you've got to be strong. You have to shake that bush. If you just shake that bush, you'll have seeds falling off the tree, and once hit that earth, it comes up again. It grows.

That's what happened to my older people. They put something there, but they fell over. But what they did, they made sure to put us young fellas, young people behind coming up again. And as we come up behind now, old people, we've got to be stronger. We've got to work with this world we living in today with technology and we're getting smarter.

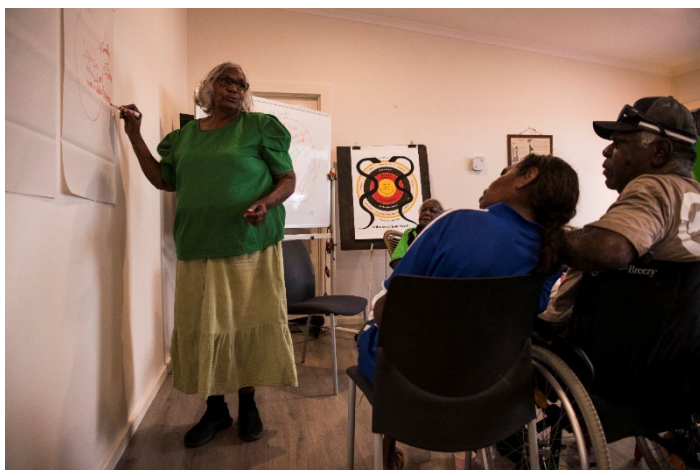
– Uncle Norm Frank Jupurrurla, 100 Climate Conversations



Welcome to Country at the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre –
Provided by Jimmy, Uncle Norm and Auntie Patricia Frank.

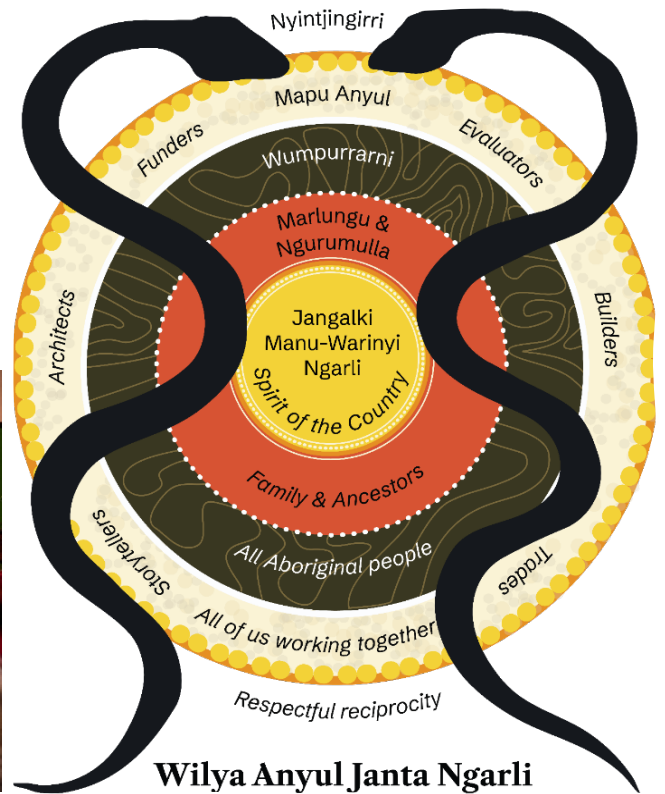


One Voice: Strong voices in Tennant Creek's history, fighting together for
change presented by Diane Stokes, Pat Brahim, Rosemary Plummer,
Heather Rosas, Michael Jones, Valda Shannon, Suzanne Jones.



Introduction of the Wilya Janta Ngarli by Jimmy Frank

The Ngarli or 'seed' is Wilya Janta's way. It tells us how to behave and go.



Why 'Shaking the Bush' - When housing works, history of Aboriginal control and collaboration on housing in the Barkly by Kat Williams, Pat Brahim, Nicole Frank, Tony Miles and Richard James.



The red hot spark! Tour of the first Wilya Janta 'Explain home'



Where to build and who decides: The Blue Mountains Community Land Trust case-study – Louise Crabtree Hayes and Genevieve Murray



The Wilya Janta story so far: the land, the design, the money story and the future



- Impacts of the NT intervention showed lack of autonomy and land rights
- Challenges having to negotiate for land lease of Uncle Norm's block, including for how long the lease was for
- Community needing more support from government systems to move forward, have examples of what can work now
- Aunty Serina, and Simon and Steve from OFFICE explained the design process
- This journey has required a lot of Trust and Love

Introduction to the Wilya Janta evaluation

The graphic features the Wilya Janta logo (a stylized figure with arms raised) in the top left. To its right are three circular callouts: a red one for 'HEALTH, SOCIAL & CULTURAL IMPACTS', an orange one for 'PERFORMANCE & BUILDING DESIGN', and a yellow one for 'ECONOMIC 'RETURN ON INVESTMENT''. The central text reads 'Coming home Making home Valuing home'. Below this is the subtitle 'A health and wellbeing evidence-base for Aboriginal cultural and climate appropriate community-designed homes'. A paragraph follows: 'Proving how to cost-effectively build culturally and climate appropriate homes using an Indigenous-led design process as an innovative climate adaptation.' At the bottom are logos for the University Centre for Rural Health, Hunter Medical Research Institute, Wilya Janta, CSIRO, CQUniversity Australia, and The University of Queensland Australia.

The money story by SGS Economics - Kasey Bailey, Emily Hobbs and Andrew McDonald

- A cost-benefit analysis being undertaken by SGS Economics, to compare costs taken to build a Wilya Janta home compared to a NT Gov town house, and what benefits there are to people who will live in a Wilya Janta house.
- This study has shown there are more benefits overall by building a Wilya Janta home, with an overall finding that “for every \$1 invested a total benefit of \$1.83 will be generated for the wider NT community”.
- Some challenges for this economics work is the Western approach, putting costs against things that we don't usually put a money value on, and having to make assumptions about what might happen in the future.
- Culturally Safe and Healthy Aboriginal Housing: Business Case, February 2026. Report available at: <https://www.wilyajanta.org/resources>

Housing performance of the Explain Homes – Pippa Soccio from CSIRO

- As a demonstration of the housing performance monitoring equipment that will be used in the Explain Homes and NT Govt case-study houses, CSIRO placed devices in the Shaking the Bush meeting area and presented the data on Day 2.
- The monitors measure temperature, humidity, how much Oxygen there is in the space (CO₂), (a measure of occupancy), how much light there is (luminance), background noise (decibels) and air quality including smoke and dust (PM2.5).
- The presentation showed the value of real time monitoring data: CO₂ levels in the room during Day 1 indicated there was a problem and we needed more airflow. No wonder people felt sleepy!

Introduction to Environmental monitoring
TODAY YOUR SPACES ARE BEING MONITORED

WILYA JANTA HOUSING COLLABORATION & CSIRO
Shaking the Bush: 10-13 December 2025

"CONDITIONED" MEETING SPACE

Other climate worries

Updates from the [Healing Country](#) project (Aboriginal community-led climate adaptation) – presented by Aunty's Lyn Dimer and Lyn Coomer of Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar and Carl Broman and Stevie Wappett of Bundjalung Jagun and Veronica Matthews.



The Healing Country Project
Weaving knowledges systems to meet climate challenges

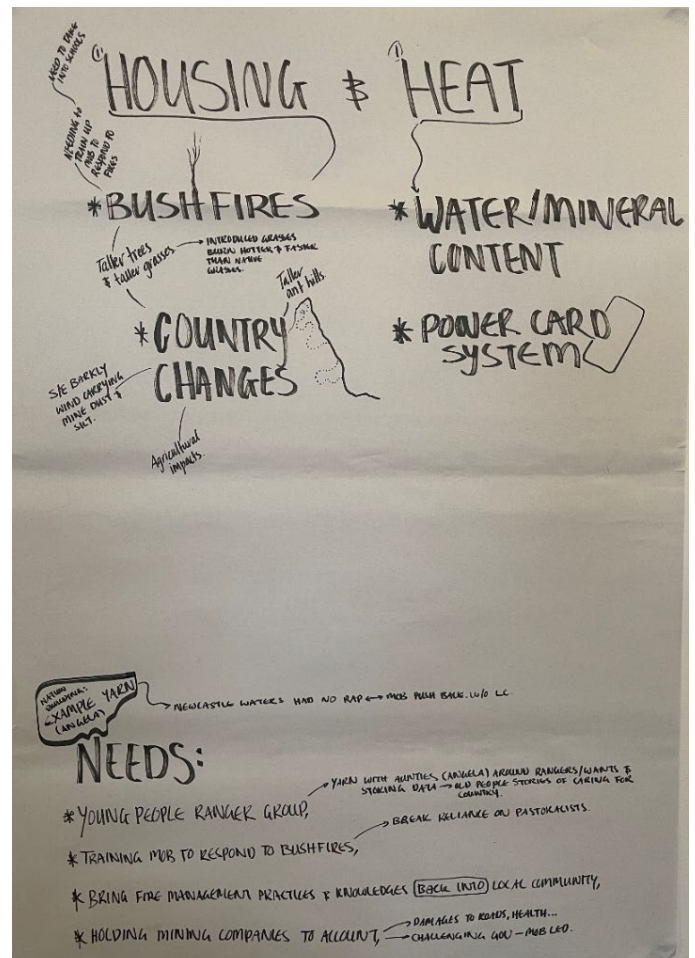


- Updates provided on Healing Country project work happening on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar (Country) and Bundjalung Jagun (Country).
- Stories have been collected from many Elders, Knowledge Holders and community members. These yarns are documenting the changes to climate that are being observed and the impacts being felt by the plants, animals, land and people. This includes the loss of bush medicines and food, loss of access to land and water sites due to agricultural clearing and industrial development, and negative impacts on communities' health and wellbeing.

- Project activities are being guided by and overseen by Cultural Knowledge Holders Group members at each location. This includes choosing what resources are developed for community members to share the findings more broadly.

Local input on climate worries and changes to Country – Healing Country

- Session dedicated to local community yarning about broader climate worries and experiences in Tennant Creek
- **Temperature shifts in the region** – Tennant Creek temp and humidity has become more like Katherine over last 45yrs.
- **Ant hills have become bigger and taller further south now**, like they are in Darwin region, shows difference in rainfall and temperature.



- Water level is currently high in town so drought not an issue, but **water mineral content is very high**. Impacts on human health such as diabetes and related renal dialysis.

- **Mining history has impacted air pollution and polluting water tanks** by gold mining silt and trucks bringing up dust. Also being carried by SE Barley winds that carry polluted mining dust.

- **Higher grasses shifting south**, Buffel grass an introduced species that burns hotter. **Bushfires now bigger, faster and having more impact**, last year very close to town, pastoralists losing cattle is the only focus of government and media.
- Mob not being educated on what to do in bushfires to keep safe from fire and from smoke.
- Ranger programs wanting to engage with young ones more. Wanting to know how to engage kids in collecting data and owning it.
- **Water management alongside pastoralists has been challenging**, but improvements being made with Newcastle Waters, increasing access to Country and upskilling community. Have needed to increase community voice in negotiation with pastoralists and mining companies.

- Participants noted there are many community members with great knowledge on the changes that have been happening to Country over time. Also acknowledged that many old people are passing and community is losing important and valuable knowledge. Needs to be passed onto young ones.
- **Important sites are being impacted by bushfires**, need protecting.
- Some of the **junior ranger programs can be pathway** for passing on knowledge from Elders to the next generation on caring for Country
- People are also transient, non-community staff, learning skills such as bushfire management, but then moving and taking knowledge rather than sharing back to community and Elders.
- **Energy insecurity** comes from expense of energy, infrastructure broken and impacted by extreme weather. Very expensive using power cards, need to have solar panels. Will be looked at in the Wilya Janta evaluation.
- **Roads and development** of mining companies using lots of trucks on road **impacting water flow and quality of roads**. External consultants have all the voice, not coming from community voices.
- **Access to Country** impacted by pastoralists and mining companies.



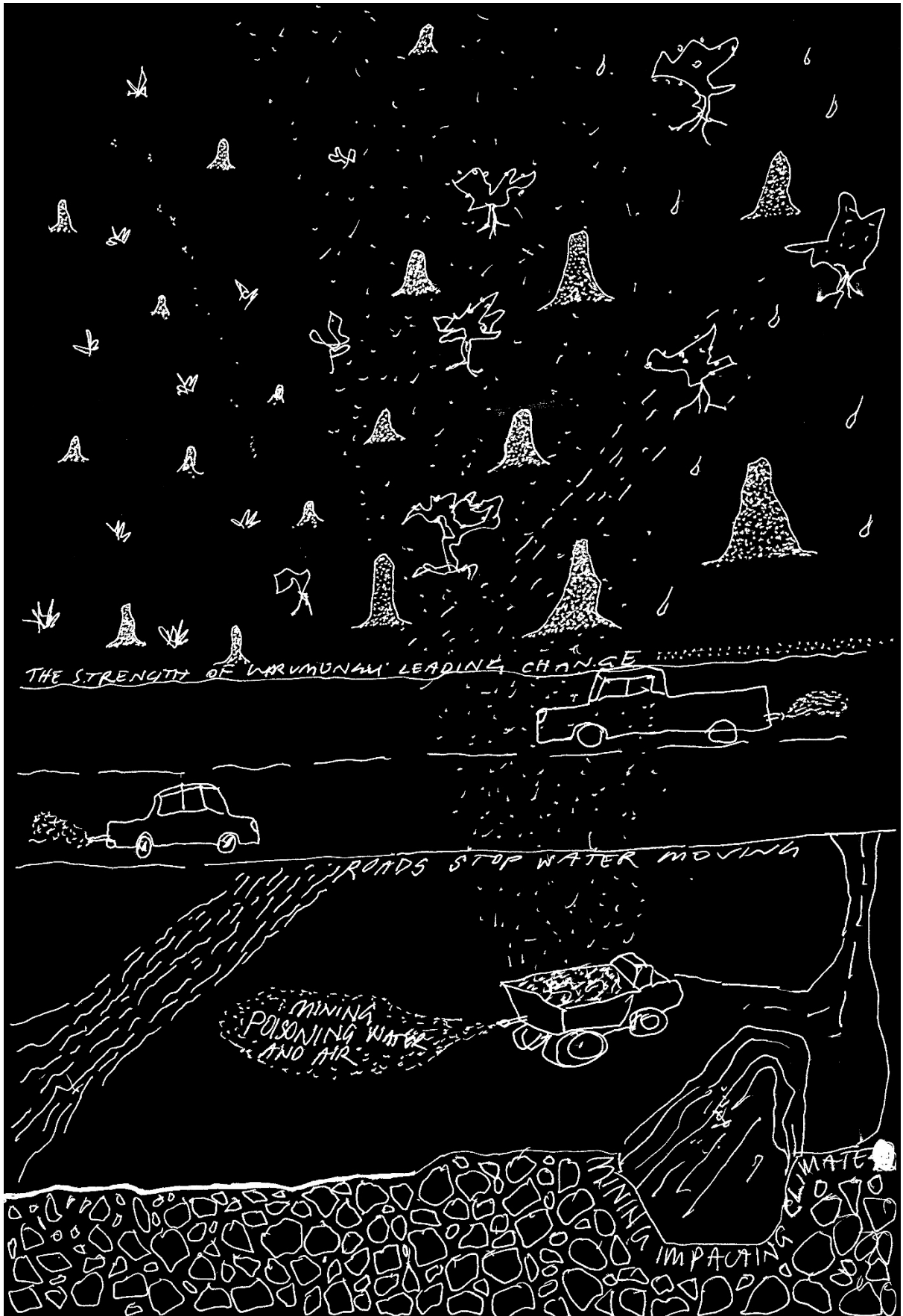


Image by Genevieve Murray

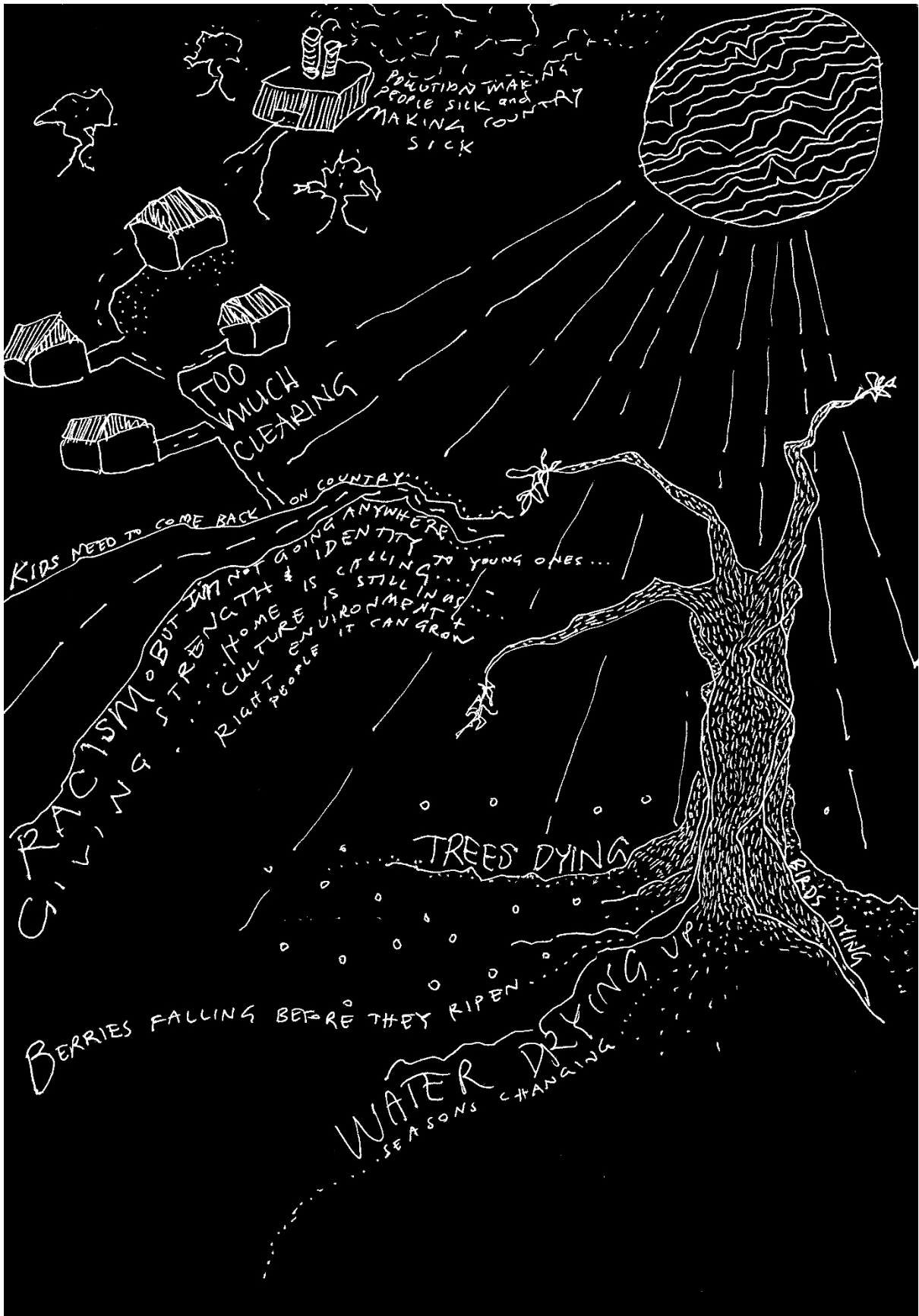


Image by Genevieve Murray

Wilya Janta evaluation measures

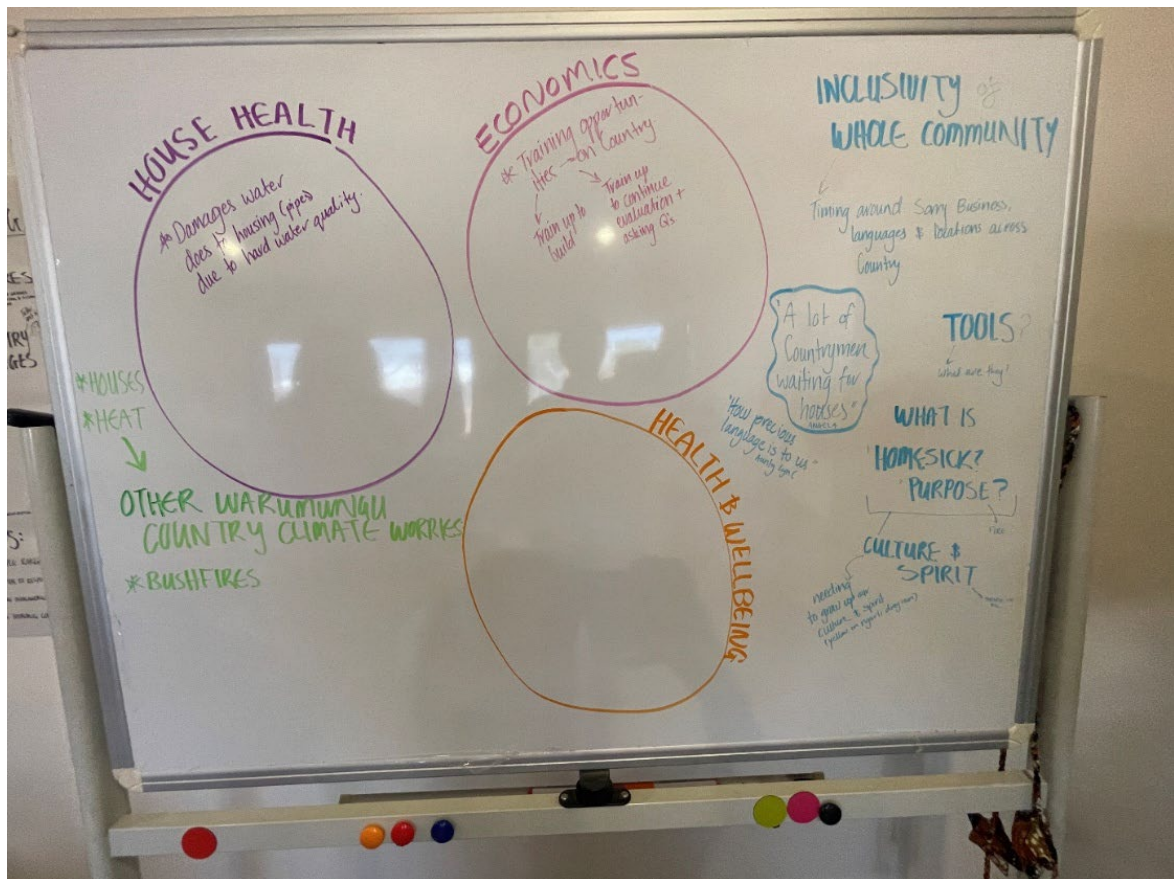
Community-led housing evaluation approach, what do Wumpurrarni value, what are Wumpurrarni wanting to prove?

- Discussed our ways of working together – that research has a dark history of extraction. Now needing to start from culture, from community leading and owning this work.
- Some things will be counted in numbers, some by the dollars, and others be stories.
- This project is much more than the house – ownership of land, children going to school, skills building of local mob, value of having a garden etc.
- Input needed for not just what we *can* measure, but also what we *should* measure for this evaluation.

Potential impacts and benefits of Wilya Janta's housing model

- How **young ones are missing out on education and health supports** due to disabilities including ADHD and FASD. Being in a culturally safe home would have positive impacts on the child as well as their parents and grandparents as carers. If they can learn on Country, can learn two-ways. Less stress and healing that comes from being on Country and hunting will impact a child's behaviours, learning and wellbeing.
- **The house as a Mother** (Uncle Norm's words) – you look after your mother and your mother looks after you. There are deep spiritual elements to this concept. There are also more tangible measures such as upkeep and maintenance. How do we tell this story? Also links to the 'motherland' or 'homeland' where you belong. The house is what cradles us, mothers and old people keep us safe.
- **Chronic stress levels** can be looked at, if parents stresses that impacts children. Stress reduced maybe when just able to walk outside.
- **Ngarli could be seen as a tool**, could be used to frame the evaluation evidence approach at the different levels.
- Town camps (Community Living Areas CLAs) historically developed around language groups and allocated by Julalikari. Without that Aboriginal leadership on who lives where, CLAs no longer arranged like this and has led to conflicts.
- When Council of Elders gov funding cut, no longer feel that community have a voice. Had been able to identify and solve community problems such as youth crime issues, and in relation to allocating housing. Challenge of relying on gov funds.

- Benefit of Wilya Janta having alternative sources of funds, **can then tell their own story and hold people accountable** such as justice, health and housing departments. Can show what needs to be done, what's possible and what it costs – proving people wrong and **stopping departments from 'handballing' the issues around.**
- **Empowering Wumpurrani people**, needs to be recognised in policy or laws. So for example if there are a council of Elders, they need to be valued by government and systems.
- Goal is for independence and being able to work outside of the bubble, to be able to shake the bush without fear, for **system changes.**
- Wanting to provide guidance to other communities on what's possible in the Territory, teach the story of how communities to build their own homes.
- **Country as the only place to heal people**, especially young people.
- **Passing on of culture, knowledge and leadership between generations** will come from this work.
- Need to invite decision-makers out to Homelands to see firsthand how communities are living.
- **Wanting to capture other voices and perspectives outside of community** e.g. funders, builders, allies, partners. Evaluation has the power to impact people's change of view, their own perspectives can change as we share our values. Different perspectives...



Reflections from Dr Fiona Wirrer-George, Central Queensland University

- Fiona of Western Cape Qld, works within arts informed research approaches and creative processes
- Wilya Janta's work is a testament of giving voice to voice. A show of sovereign ownership, a reclamation, and a blueprint of a way forward that will spread out.
- Given permissions to share these stories and knowledge back to own community, spread the fire.



Arts-informed approach to research - Talah Laurie

- Shared ways of working through creative approaches and work undertaken alongside Wilya Janta.
- Wilya Janta storybook being developed to share the story of this work that has gone into the building of the first house on the hill.



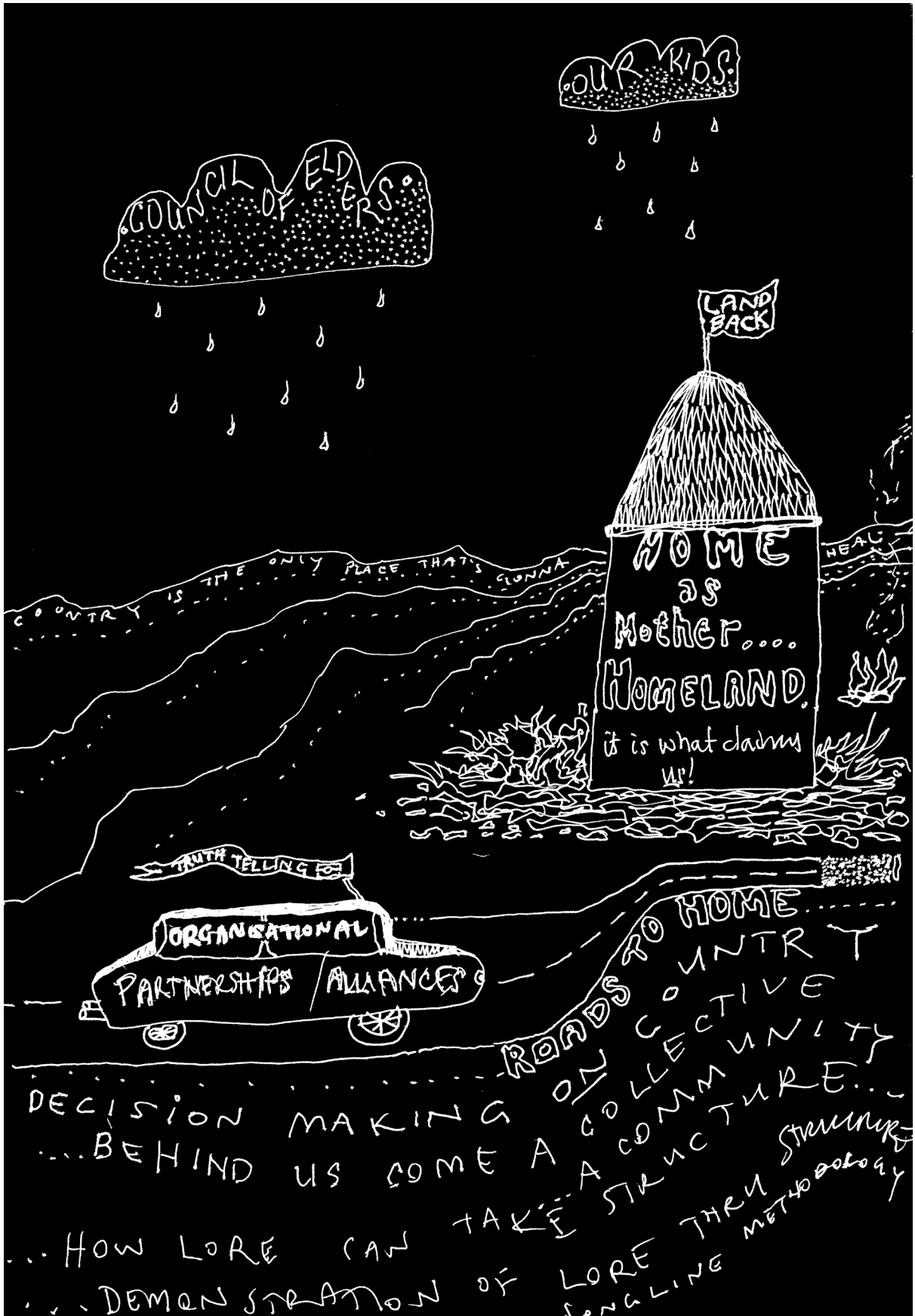


Image by Genevieve Murray

Yarn with politicians

Marion Scrymgour, Member of Parliament for the Federal seat of Lingiari; Chancey Paech, Labor member of the NT Legislative Assembly and Gwoja Sid Vashist, Mayor of the Barkly Regional Council.



Shaking the Bush Gathering Evaluation Findings

Our local Wumpurrarani team designed, tested and conducted a short evaluation survey for the Shaking the Bush Gathering. Overall we had **25 responses** from people from 15 locations, 20% from Tennant Creek, 72% Indigenous and 76% female.

All except three attended all three days of Shaking the Bush.

Strong messages focused on:

The importance of coming together and including different people with different perspectives, listening and learning and supporting community to lead the way in the collaborative efforts to improve housing and benefit Wumpurrarani families.

People's big take aways included:

"The power of coming together, sharing examples of community learning together and making change" Spreading the fire, lots of learning, complexities of community, heaps of optimism", "A greater understanding of what constitutes culturally appropriate housing", "Stories that have inspired me to keep reviving the way we engage and involve community in economic and impact evaluations. We can't measure everything that's important".

What we need to do next and more of to improve housing for Wumpurrarani people?

Bring more people into the conversation, share our learnings from the Wilya Janta process so far and the evaluation with more communities, build alliances, show evidence and advocate for community led change to government and other decision makers.

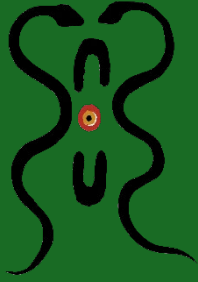
What we can do better for the next Shaking the Bush?

More interactive sessions, mix it up and have more sessions outside or on Country and with more community members engaged. A bigger space would be good, with better ventilation and a speaker so everyone can be heard. Bush foods would also be great to include.

Thank you to all of the Wilya Janta team who worked on this evaluation survey.

Dinner and celebration





Thank you to everyone who attending this important gathering and contributed to the discussions across our time together. We look forward to continuing our work together.

Organisations represented at the gathering

Wilja Janta wilyajanta.org

University Centre for Rural Health ucrhc.edu.au

CSIRO csiro.au

OFFICE office.org.au

SGS Economics & Planning sgsep.com.au

Hunter Medical Research Institute hmri.org.au

Jagun Alliance jagunalliance.org.au

The Kids Research Institute Australia thekids.org.au

Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory ahnt.org.au

The Australian Medical Association ama.com.au

Blue Mountains Community Land Trust bluemountainsclt.org

Australian Community Land Trust Network australiancltnetwork.org.au

Indigenous Knowledge Place, School of Architecture Design and Planning, University of Sydney
sydney.edu.au/architecture/industry-and-community/indigenous-knowledge-place

Central Queensland University cqu.edu.au

University of Newcastle newcastle.edu.au