



# YINDJIBARNDI NATION NEWS NGARDA WANGKA



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YINDJIBARNDI NATION NEWS | NGARDA WANGKA

## Wanthiwa!

Welcome to the first edition of Yindjibarndi Nation News—Ngarda Wangka, published by Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd (YNL).

In relation to Yindjibarndi’s strategy on Nation building, last October we created YNL as the vehicle to deliver a range of projects and initiatives across our portfolios in cultural, community and commercial, or what we call our “3Cs”. The idea and purpose are to create a working model that is supportive of all members, a value-driven concept to develop opportunities and self-confidence to achieve whatever pathway you feel is right for you. With so much going on at present, and more to come down the track, we decided to launch this new quarterly publication to update our community and all our partners on this important work.

Please get in touch if you’d like to comment on an article or indeed suggest one.

Sincerely,

**Michael Woodley**  
Chief Executive Officer - CEO  
Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd (YNL)

### WARNING

This edition contains the names of people who have passed away.

## A new era for Yindjibarndi



Photo: Ngaarda Media

At the signing ceremony. Back, from left to right, Yindjibarndi elders and directors, Margaret Ranger, Pansy Sambo, Lyn Cheedy, Kevin Guinness, Stanley Warrie and Middleton Cheedy. Front: Richard Cohen, managing director of Rio Tinto’s iron ore port and rail services, and Yindjibarndi CEO Michael Woodley.

**The Yindjibarndi people have devised a unique approach with their “3C” model—culture, community and commercial—which has been likened to the triple bottom line used by major corporations around the world.**

But a new deal with Rio Tinto will enable the community to ramp up this holistic model with a new structure to deliver lasting benefits for all community members.

Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation chief executive Michael Woodley said the new era was about transforming the success of native title into real community, cultural and commercial (the “3Cs”) development for the benefit of every community member.

“We believe that everyone deserves to be valued. The 3Cs cuts across all of that and gives opportunities to people who may not have many years of high school education. We can harness the skills they have and the passion that they have for their benefit and for the entire community,” he said.

“For more than a decade we’ve been focused on establishing our native title rights and responding to the bad behaviour of FMG. Now that we’ve won in the High Court we’re moving on and delivering for all Yindjibarndi people.”

“Part of this is the result of the new agreement with Rio Tinto signed last year, but for the most part what we’ll achieve is the result of the will of the Yindjibarndi people to work together.”

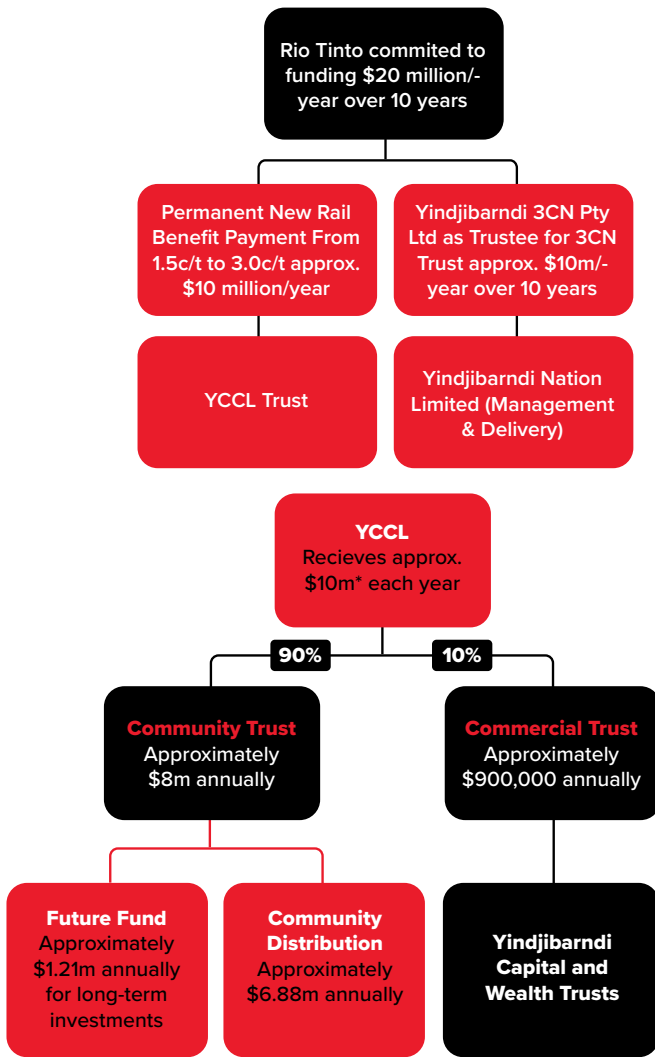


## How the benefits will flow

Last October the two native title rep bodies, YAC and YNAC, established Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd, a registered public company that will be the main vehicle to manage and deliver programs for the community. YNL is funded via a trust, Yindjibarndi 3CN, which has four directors from YAC; Stanley Warrie, Angus Mack, Margaret Ranger and Roseanne Mippy. This avoids having multiple meetings and it shows the importance of native title to the community.

YNL will receive funding of \$10 million a year over the next 10 years to support a range of programs, projects and new initiatives across the 3Cs.

### The Yindjibarndi Structure



\*From years 2-10 YCCL returns \$1m a year to Rio Tinto to repay a loan.

The immediate community and cultural priorities are improving the housing and infrastructure in town and in the homelands, investing in culture, expanding the ranger program and pursuing business opportunities through initiatives like Yurra and Cedrant car hire. Some of the groundwork is already underway, such as the community census and the housing strategy.

## New agreement with Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto is one of the world’s largest mining companies with extensive iron ore operations in the Pilbara (though not yet on Yindjibarndi country). In 2013, when YAC was immersed in its costly battle with FMG, Rio agreed to a rail tariff of 1.5 cents per tonne, and a large loan, which became crucial to Yindjibarndi’s journey and allowed us to be successful in our fight . These funds were paid to Yindjibarndi Community and Commercial Ltd (YCCL), which in turn funds two trusts that support community and commercial projects.

Under a new deal negotiated last year with Rio Tinto, the company has agreed to double the rail tariff to 3 cents per tonne, or around \$10 million a year. After deducting a \$1 million a year loan repayment over nine years, and administration costs, these monies are then divided between the Community trust (90 per cent), with the remaining 10 per cent going into the commercial part of the YCCL.

Directors of YCCL will have their say in the management, decision making and policy developments on how the funds will be disbursed.

YCCL independent director Tony Noonan said that in the future it would be important for the trust to have “front end services” based in Roebourne so that it can better interact with the Yindjibarndi community. YCCL is working with a Perth based provider to bring this about. He also called for the staging of an annual event so that all the parts of Yindjibarndi are “on the table” and everyone knows what the plans are.

Ben Wyatt, a Noongar man and director of Rio Tinto, said he was confident that the new structure would deliver results for the entire community. Speaking at the official launch of the new agreement, Wyatt said that it was the result of “co-design with traditional owner groups”, and “an example of where this is working”.

The Yindjibarndi community certainly has runs on the board, whether it’s setting up a Pilbara-wide media service or transforming the derelict Victoria Hotel.

But following the “David and Goliath” victory over Fortescue Metals Group in the High Court and now the new agreement with Rio, it seems that nothing can hold us back.

## ABOUT US

**Yindjibarndi Nation News—Ngarda Wangka** is published by Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd, a project delivery company established by the Yindjibarndi PBCs.

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# Compensation Case



Elder Tootsie Daniel



The late YAC director Margaret Read

## Elders tell of their hurt and sickness from FMG's mining.

The Australian public gained a glimpse of the powerful issues at stake in the Yindjibarndi compensation case against Fortescue Metals Group when two frail elders gave evidence to the Federal Court in early March.

Speaking from her hospital bed in Karratha, YAC director Margaret Read told of the hurt and suffering she endured because of FMG's mining and its deliberate efforts to divide the community. Elder Tootsie Daniel, seated in her wheelchair, spoke at the Ganalili centre of the immense spiritual beauty of Yindjibarndi country that she had visited, which had now been destroyed.

The case presided over by Justice Debra Mortimer convened a special session for the two elders because of their frail health. Ms Read passed peacefully away on 31 March, 3 1/2 weeks after giving evidence.

Ms Read told how she visited an area near FMG's Solomon mine some years ago and heard two loud explosions that made her "really sick". The coverage of their testimony was featured extensively in the Australian media.

"Two loud bangs made me feel really sick, absolutely sick, because our country was being destroyed," she said.

She told of how she and other elders had been refused access to the mine site by FMG.

"It made me feel really, really horrible, really really bad. We could not go onto our own country."

Ms Read also spoke with great sadness about the divisions in the Yindjibarndi community that followed the intervention by FMG.

She had tried to reconcile the differences between the two groups but had not succeeded.

"I tried so many mediation programs, I spoke with my people out on the street and tried different ways of trying to communicate with them to come back with us," she said.

Mrs Daniel is the widow of Ngarluma man David Daniel who was the applicant in the joint Ngaluma-Yindjibarndi claim. Her evidence was also prominent in the successful native title case before Justice Steven Rares.

Mrs Daniel said she had learnt culture from her old people when she was young and had spent time out on country.

## 'Our ancestor spirits are being transferred into train carriages.'

She spoke poetically about a visit with her late husband and other elders including Woodley King, Jack Moses, and Yilbie Warrie. Mrs Daniel said her elders taught her about finding bush foods and medicines.

"These old people, they said 'This is our country, this is the country we want to come back to and live.

"When I looked at that country it was so beautiful, with wildflowers, it took my breath away," she said.

"It opened our hearts and the old people started singing corroboree songs.

"It was like the country welcomed us, it greeted us, then I just cried, it was so beautiful.

"Now, looking at that same country breaks my heart, it's all barren because of that mining.

"It breaks my heart. This country is no more, it's all barren."







Photo: ABC.

Justice Debra Mortimer handing over the Kurna native title judgment to Uncle Lewis O'Brien in 2018. She has presided over many native title cases and is now hearing the YNAC-FMG compensation case.



Photo: Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation.

Part of the extensive operations of FMG's Solomon hub mine, which has extracted around \$5 billion a year of iron ore from Yindjibarndi country since 2013.

Mrs Daniel said Yindjibarndi people had always wanted to return.

“We want to move back to country, that’s what we fight for, but our homelands is where they remove iron ore and take it to other countries and that is wrong,” she said.

“Our country has been disturbed and our hearts are broken.”

In her affidavit, Mrs Daniel said the Solomon mine was destroying Garliwinyji country where “there are strong spirits and lots of caves”.

She added: “I get a tear in my heart just thinking about the mine destroying the country. Our ancestor spirits are being transferred into train carriages.”

Mrs Daniel said the division in the community was caused by FMG and that Roebourne was “like a war zone sometimes”.

In her affidavit to the Court, Ms Read spoke of the bitter fighting in Roebourne because of the dispute with FMG. And she told of how the esteemed elder Ned Cheedy, who lived to the age of 106, had died of a broken heart.

“There is physical fighting on the streets of Roebourne now between the young people ... they are never ending,” Ms Read said in the document.

“None of these fights happened before FMG turned up. I am not sure the rift will ever heal.

**The case will resume in Perth on 31 July and on country from 7 August.**



# Ngurra is where the heart is

Photo Credit: Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation.



Some of the original housing and infrastructure at Ngurrawaana.

## A major focus for the Yindjibarndi Nation is to invest in communities and homelands including Ngurrawaana, Cheeditha and Buminjina because that's what community members have emphasised in the recent census and in other meetings.

Where required, these projects will involve immediate investment in "make-safe" works so that issues like electricals are fixed, followed by planning, community consultation and long-term investment.

In collaboration with Yindjibarndi communities, YNL will be using the Rio Tinto funding to address these immediate and long-term needs.

YNL general manager for community Michael Charlton said that as the most established and longest permanent community on Yindjibarndi Ngurra, Ngurrawaana was an example of what Yindjibarndi people can achieve on this front.

"The Yindjibarndi Nation has identified the homeland movement as a key pillar of nation building, and Ngurrawaana is a logical location to support this. A clear plan including governance and infrastructure development is needed to ensure the longer-term prosperity of the community. This will ensure that any planned growth is responsive to the needs of the community," he said.

Mr Charlton added that the lack of a clear plan and management structure are in most cases the result of community population fluctuating seasonally and leading some to leave the communities.

YNL plans to invest around \$750,000 this year in immediate make-safe works and technical planning, with a view to securing community endorsement by September this year. YNL project officer Bradley Webb, who has extensive experience working on Aboriginal housing in NSW, will lead the work at Ngurrawaana and assist the other communities.

Buminjina is an important location on Yindjibarndi Ngurra. It holds significant cultural and historical value for Yindjibarndi people. The Yindjibarndi people have long held aspirations to improve

infrastructure at the site so that it can sustain more frequent and longer-term visits. There is limited infrastructure at the site but growing aspirations of the community to more frequently visit and spend longer time there. To facilitate this, a clear plan for investment and the longer-term sustainability is required.

The budget for the Buminjina works this year is \$500,000, with a plan to achieve community endorsement by September.

The Cheeditha community, located on a large parcel of freehold land just outside of Roebourne, has been the focus of numerous aspirational plans and studies to support a more sustainable and functional community. But it became clear that the housing at Cheeditha is in urgent need of repair and a revised strategy is needed to secure long-term viability.

YNL will invest \$400,000 this year in community planning for Cheeditha. The project involves using technical information being developed by Pilbara Solar.



# Ganalili housing project underway



The Ganalili transitional housing construction site is a hive of activity.

## **Construction has begun on the Ganalili Accommodation and Training Facility in Roebourne which will provide flexible housing for people in need of transitional accommodation and support services.**

The result of a partnership between the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation and the WA government's North-West Aboriginal Housing Fund, the facility will provide six one-bedroom and three two-bedroom apartments along with a caretaker's residence and a multi-purpose office that can be used to provide training and support services.

It is being built on part of the land surrounding the former Victoria Hotel, which has now been transformed into the Ganalili cultural and business centre.

For people making the transition back into the workforce, the accommodation facility will also offer wrap-around support services including financial management and healthy living programs, thereby enabling residents to move into employment and the private market housing.

This latest Yindjibarndi initiative ties in with the Yurra group, as the units will be open to employees such as apprentices and trainees, as well as people exiting the Roebourne Regional Prison. The accommodation will not be reserved exclusively for Yindjibarndi people, according to a recent presentation by NWAHF.

The facility will be made available to the community and business sectors who provide training and pathway employment opportunities to our people and community.

YAC has contributed land and assets to the project. It will own the facility and take on responsibility for the running costs and management. NWAHF is carrying out the construction with the project managed by a joint steering committee with representation from communities, YAC and other local stakeholders.

Through February and March 2023, YAC, Yurra and the NWAHF will be working with community to consider how to best support those that will live at the facility when it opens.





# Yurra celebrates 10 years



Local workers maintaining a rail culvert as part of Yurra's \$20 million rail maintenance contract with Rio Tinto.

## When Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation CEO Michael Woodley sat down with Liam Wilson in 2012, what was meant to be a half hour introductory meeting instead went for four hours and the two thrashed out a plan to create a partnership business.

A decade later, Yurra Pty Ltd has grown into a diversified services company that employs over 170 staff and last year generated \$57 million in revenue. Its services provide entry-level opportunities for First Nations people in the region, with about a third of its staff identifying as Indigenous people from the Pilbara.

Yurra, which means the sun in Yindjibarndi, was registered as a company with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission in February 2013 and to have reached this milestone of 10 years in business is quite an achievement for any business, let alone a contracting business in the Pilbara.

In parallel with Yurra's journey over the past decade, Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation has engaged in a David and Goliath battle with Fortescue Metals over its mining of Yindjibarndi country and related destruction of heritage. This shows that while YAC had one eye on its native title rights, it was also looking to the future with nation building opportunities for all Yindjibarndi people.

Mr Wilson had been running a landscaping and civil business based in Port Hedland, but in working with Yindjibarndi Wealth, Yindjibarndi's commercial development arm, it provided initial support for Yurra

to expand with a loan of \$350,000 which was paid back 2 years ahead of schedule.

Yurra now provides landscape construction and grounds maintenance, commercial cleaning, rail maintenance, civil construction, Industrial services and manages the Yindjibarndi ranger program. In addition, it owns a majority stake in the building company GBSC Yurra. Yurra's 10th anniversary was capped off when GBSC Yurra was in March this year crowned Rio Tinto's "Supplier of the Year" at a gala event attended by the Premier Mark McGowan and Rio's Iron Ore CEO Simon Trott.

At the 2012 meeting, Mr Woodley and Mr Wilson devised a plan to create a services based business in the Karratha even though all of Mr Wilson's work was in Port Hedland.

**"We set up the structure even though we didn't have any work in Karratha. But we started in Karratha with a small amount of work in Wickham—cleaning and grounds maintenance," explains Mr Wilson.**

After one full year of year of operation, Yurra generated \$2 million in revenue—a figure that has since grown 28 times over.

Yurra now boasts a list of impressive clients including Rio Tinto, Woodside, Sodexo, BHP, the WA Government, local governments, and Greening Australia, among others.

The business has a head office in Karratha which is supported by yards in Roebourne, Port Hedland and a small corporate office in Perth.

Michael Woodley says that Yurra is a great example of what Aboriginal self-determination is all about.



Yurra employee Curtis Lockyer while working on the Ganalili renovation. Photo: Yurra

**“We have put our capital and knowledge to good use in creating Yurra, which is now going from strength to strength. And it is a great moment to be associated with to be establishing a self-economic capable First Nations business.**

Of all the projects that Yurra has been engaged in, Mr Woodley says its work on creating the Ganalili centre in Roebourne is a standout. The project, in collaboration with partners GBSC, was able to deliver training and employment opportunities for people in and around our communities and for members in the Roebourne prison.

On behalf of the Yindjibarndi Nation, the Yindjibarndi people via Yindjibarndi Wealth owns 66.7 per cent of Yurra via its commercial trust. Yurra in turns owns 75 per cent of GBSC Yurra.

Mr Wilson says the cleaning and grounds business is a good pathway to employment for people coming into the workforce for the first time. The entry level wage is \$30 an hour, rising to \$35 an hour for a leading hand position.

Last year, Mr Wilson lead the expansion of Yurra into the scaffolding business for Woodside’s operations which is used to maintain huge facilities like LNG plants. Previously, these services were provided by a tier one multinational.

In 2018 Mr Wilson sent a 2-page letter to Woodside Ltd outlining the case for giving a local, Aboriginal-

controlled business this opportunity, which was helped by Woodside’s commitment to provide genuine opportunity to First Nation businesses. It took a while to penetrate Woodside’s large procurement operations but after some persistence, Yurra was awarded the contract which will involve trades in both offsite fabrication and onsite implementation.

Yurra has benefited from for a recent Federal Government grant that assisted the business to secure the Woodside contract, enabling Yurra to acquire 5,500 tonnes of scaffolding material and associated equipment, an investment worth over \$14 million. The scaffold material sits in a dedicated compound within the Woodside LNG operation.

Mr Wilson says he gets very annoyed when he hears comments from business leaders that talk down the capabilities of Aboriginal people. He says the partnership with Yindjibarndi is a thriving example of what can be achieved with some planning and persistence.

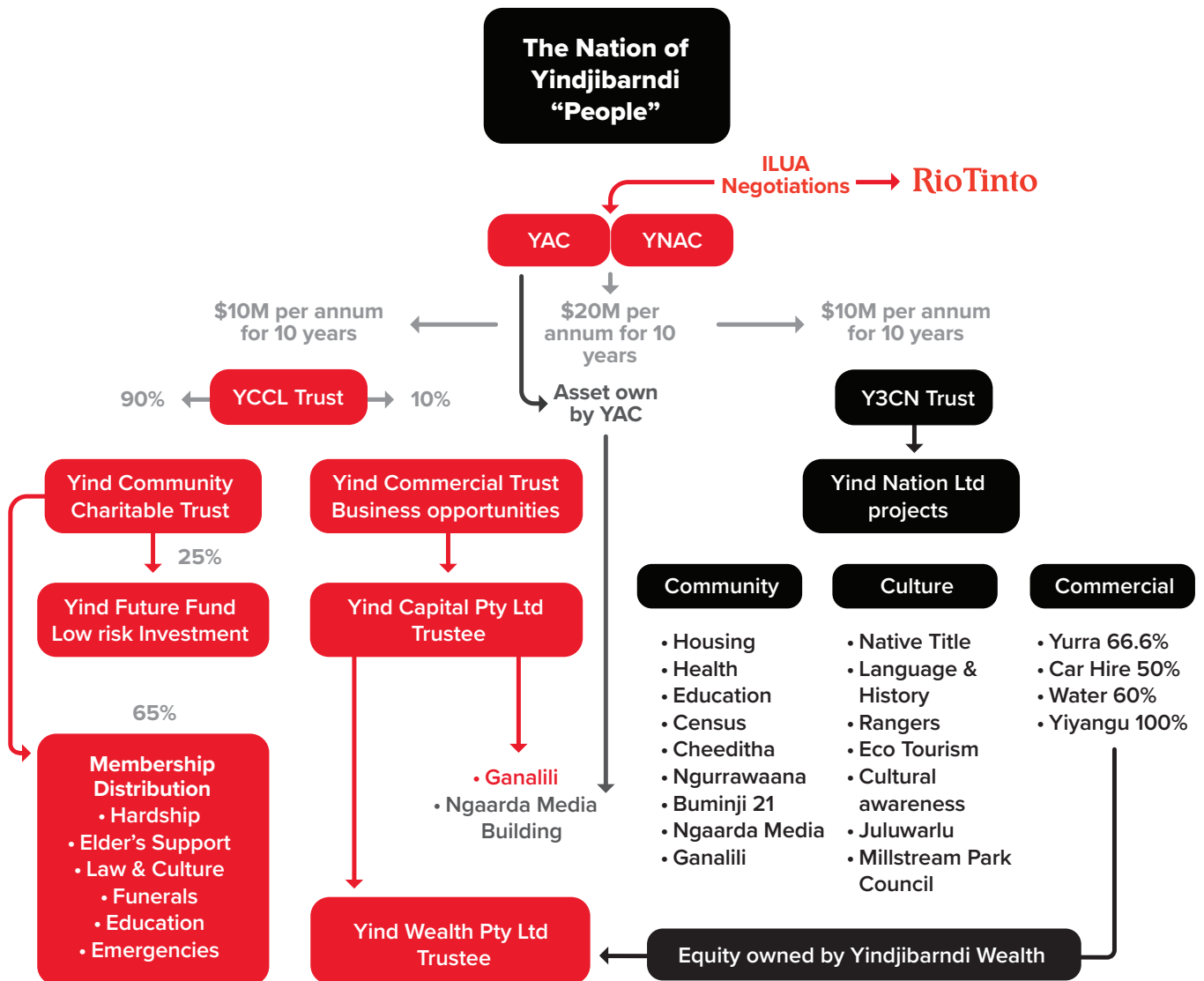
The next step in the growth plan is to integrate GBSC and Yurra businesses into a multidisciplinary contracting and services group. Positive discussions are live with GBSC partners, and it’s hoped the transaction will be completed by the end of the financial year, creating a group with over 430 staff and target revenue of over \$200 million a year.



# The Yindjibarndi Group

This diagram summarises the journey of our community over the past decades and our vision for the future. It begins with the formation of our native title representative body, the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) in 2004

and Yindjibarndi Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation (YNAC) in 2017 and, more recently it shows how our community has been energised and resourced with the modernised ILUA signed with Rio Tinto in 2022.





This agreement is transformational as it will support a range of cultural, commercial and community projects over the next 10 years.

Our structure is aimed at delivering benefits to all Yindjibarndi people. Some of what you see here has been in place for some time, like the YCCL trust and Yindjibarndi Capital formed in 2013, but other parts are in the early stage, such as our renewable energy business Yiyangu and our plans for Eco Tourism in Millstream.

Even though we have come a long way, we're not resting on things that we have already achieved.

We're now in talks with other commercial and government partners to deliver on the projects we aim to bring to fruition, as well as housing, employment and health benefits for our community.

We hope that the diagram will give you some encouragement to find a place where you, as a proud Yindjibarndi individual, can play a role.

**Michael Woodley**  
CEO  
Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd



Photos courtesy of Juluwarlu and Yurra.  
The wind turbines depict a possible future development.



# Taking our Culture to the cloud



Photo Credit: Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation.

This corroboree on the banks of the Fortescue River where the Gods left their footprints in the bedrock would be ideal content for the new App.

**In the era of smartphones and cloud-based information storage, Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation is now looking to launch into the digital age by developing a “cultural awareness app” that stores information and can be accessed by anyone who wants to learn about Yindjibarndi culture.**

With funding supported by Yindjibarndi Nation Limited (YNL) and in partnership with RTIO, the project is also aimed at generating a new source of income for Juluwarlu from businesses, government agencies and individuals who want to learn about Yindjibarndi people and country.

Juluwarlu CEO and co-founder, Lorraine Coppin echoed the voices of past Yindjibarndi elders whose vision to partake in something that began 23 years ago was a credit to their foresight, and wisdom to protect Yindjibarndi culture.

**“I am forever grateful to have worked with these elders and to follow in their footsteps to continue documenting Yindjibarndi history,” Ms Coppin said.**

Phil Davies, the general manager of culture for Yindjibarndi Nation Ltd (YNL), says the massive amount of material collected by Juluwarlu since its formation in 2000 is both a challenge and an opportunity for the community.

**“Juluwarlu holds a nationally-significant Indigenous**

**digital and material archive at Roebourne which the National Library of Australia has assessed as ‘unique’ and ‘highly significant’. This includes thousands of hours of historic film and audio recordings, as well as documents, maps and photographs. This material affirms a Yindjibarndi narrative, history and identity since Ngurra Nyjunggamu [when the world was soft],” he explains.**

**“The cultural awareness app will enable the Yindjibarndi youth to engage with their culture, but we also see this as a resource that will be valued by the corporate and government sectors and by schools, tourists and ordinary Australians.”**

The project also presents an opportunity for both Elders and youth alike to play a role in adapting the archival material into accessible content.

**“Juluwarlu has established relationships with the community and has a strong rapport and reputation for effectively delivering arts projects with Elders and the Roebourne community. This project will build on and develop these relationships,” he added.**

The app has now been substantially progressed to a “proof of concept” version and has received positive feedback from key groups. To progress the app to a fully functional and useable platform, substantial investment in the digital architecture will be required, alongside content development to execute a market-ready version. This needs to be done together with the development of the operating model and business case.





Photo Credit: Juluwarlu  
Aboriginal Corporation.



App users could learn the story of Nyinkara (the Greedy Man made of rock) and the Marrga (creation spirit), photographed at Jirra near Gregory's Gorge.

As part of YNL's agreement with Rio Tinto, proposals to invest in new projects have to be approved by a partnership committee. The app was put to the meeting late last year and gained a significant investment of \$500,000. Other funders are Lotterywest \$150,000, and \$50,000 each from Juluwarlu and Pilbara Development Commission.

For corporate clients, their employees will be given secure access to the platform so they can access the training remotely. The platform will track and certify that an employee has completed the training using the latest digital tracking and interface technology. These clients will be given individual username and passwords which will also have authentication requirements upon log in, thereby providing for individual tracking and certification of completion by the employee is automatically tracked.

Juluwarlu has engaged two key partners to support this project: the software development firm Brains, and Black Iris Consulting. The project is expected to be completed over a period of 12 months.

Rio Tinto is also expected to play a key role with the opportunity to become an "early adopter" of the technology, before moving to long-term integration in its training and human resources functions.

**"As well as playing a leading role in supporting Yindjibarndi community generally, we think the app presents an opportunity for Rio Tinto to show that it is at the cutting edge of combining ancient Indigenous knowledge with 21st century technology," Mr Davies said.**

