

Mediaportal Report

22/10/2007

▶ **Housing crisis fuels neglect and abuse**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18
By: Jessica Jeeves

In taking over 73 Northern Territory indigenous town leases for five years, the federal Government also inherits public **housing** stock in the targeted communities. This **housing** is widely acknowledged as inadequate and poorly maintained.

Keywords: Aboriginal(2), abuse(2), child(1), Children(1), families(1), homes(2), houses(1), housing(15), Indigenous(5), Yuendumu(7)

Clip Ref: **00030756680**

536 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **We need a lot of houses we've got to get new houses'**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18
By: None

Harry Jones was born in 1964 or 1954 at Mt Denison Station. He is married with four sons, two daughters, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Keywords: Aboriginal(1), family(5), houses(8), Yuendumu(6)

Clip Ref: **00030756681**

538 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **Government don't do it the proper way**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18
By: None

Yes, we live at this place here, **Yuendumu**. This house here is the one I'm talking about.

Keywords: Yuendumu(4)

Clip Ref: **00030756679**

469 words
Type: News Item
Photo: Yes

▶ **We've got to have blokes that are committed to Aboriginal people'**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18
By: None

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Keywords: Aboriginal(5), families(1), family(2), houses(4), housing(4), Papunya(1), traditional owner(1), Yuelamu(1), Yuendumu(4)

Clip Ref: **00030756678**

787 words
Type: News Item
Photo: No

▶ **'It's going to be hard for old people'**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18

By: None

Jeannie Egan was a teacher at **Yuendumu** School for over 30 years. She now works for the Jaru Pirrjirdi program with young people.

Keywords: Aboriginal(2), families(3), family(1), houses(1), housing(1), Yuendumu(3)

Clip Ref: **00030756677**

437 words

Type: News Item

Photo: Yes

▶ **We don't understand your ideas, the things you want us to do, the way you want us to live**

Australian, 22/10/07, General News, Page 18

By: None

Ned is a leader of the Yuendumu community. He has worked as Sport & Recreation Officer, and in education. He currently has the role of acting **Community** Liaison Officer with Yuendumu Council.

Keywords: Brough(1), Community(2), Mal(1)

Clip Ref: **00030756676**

581 words

Type: News Item

Photo: Yes



Housing crisis fuels neglect and abuse

Jessica Jeeves

IN taking over 73 Northern Territory indigenous town leases for five years, the federal Government also inherits public housing stock in the targeted communities. This housing is widely acknowledged as inadequate and poorly maintained. In February the Northern Territory Minister for Housing Elliot McAdam told Parliament: "I know the word 'crisis' is often ill-used, but in speaking out today on indigenous housing in the Northern Territory, I cannot think of a better term."

In Yuendumu, community housing (100 to 110 homes) is managed and maintained by the community council. Given the population estimate of 1000, this makes the average occupancy around 10 people per house. Much of the housing is old and bears visible signs of overcrowding and infrequent maintenance.

Maintenance and repair is con-

ducted by contractors brought from Alice Springs by the community council. Requests are submitted by residents, some of whom report they have waited up to three years for action.

External contractors are often very costly, with a locksmith recently charging \$1200 for an hour's work. There are no local plumbers or electricians, and no training available locally.

In one of the few amendments made to the intervention legislation so far, the federal Government has exempted itself from the responsibility to maintain and repair the community housing it now controls, describing the backlog as an unfair burden.

According to the Yuendumu Council's 2006 five-year plan, there are at least 37 families waiting for housing in the community. The recent acquisition of eight new portable three-bedroom homes does little to alleviate this

need and a spokesperson from the council says that the population of the community is growing.

Crowding and inadequate housing are identified in the Little Children Are Sacred report as key underlying factors contributing to child neglect and abuse.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released its housing report last week, which found that 30 per cent of dwellings managed by Indigenous housing organisations required major repair or replacement.

This week, people talk about housing and also the concepts of home, place and belonging.

Every fortnight, *Voices from the Heart of the Nation* will provide readers of *The Australian* with a unique insight into the hopes and concerns of people from Yuendumu.

All interviews conducted by PAW Media and Communications, Yuendumu.

WARLPIRI LEXICON

Warlpiri and Warlpiri-English

Yapa: Aboriginal people.

Kardiya (*Kar-dee-ya*): non-Aboriginal people.

West Camp: an area of houses in the west of Yuendumu.

Jukurra: Dreaming.

Ngurra: camp, home, homeland.

Kuruwarri: the marks made on people or objects that are associated with different jukurra.

Yurrampi: honeyant; as the honeyant Dreaming travels right through Yuendumu the

community often goes by this name.

Yujuku: humpy.

Kalkaringi: Wave Hill Station, where Vincent Lingiari led the famous walk-off in the 1960s in a protest for equal wages and land rights.

Ngajuku: for me, mine.

Ngurrju: good.

Ngurrju-nyayimi: really good.

Punku: bad.

Yuwayi: yes.

Lawa: nothing.



back



SHELTER FROM THE SKY



Facts and figures:

- In Yuendumu, each adult resident pays the council \$25 per week in 'rent' or rates.
- The prime cause for repairs of indigenous public housing is not damage, but routine maintenance. Damage work comprises about 7% of overall repairs.
- 58% of Indigenous people in remote areas reported that they were living in a dwelling with structural problems.



Sources: Yuendumu community council; Indigenous Environmental Health: Report of the Fifth National Conference 2004; Housing for Health Update, 2002 NATSISS (ABS)

Beginnings: Isiah Fisher watches preparations for new housing in Yuendumu



HARRY JAPANGARDI JONES

‘We need a lot of houses — we’ve got to get new houses’

HARRY Jones was born in 1964 or 1954 at Mt Denison Station. He is married with four sons, two daughters, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Harry has worked on cattle stations since he was a young fellow: Coniston, Pine Hill, Dawn Station, and has also lived in Mt Allan. He has been a fruit picker in Gundagai and still works on cattle stations. He is currently staying in Yuendumu while waiting for the Community Council to fix the bore at his outstation.

MY name is Harry Jones. I live in outstation. That outstation, we call it Kiripi outstation, Kiripi we call it because in the Dreaming a kangaroo been crawl along there. (It’s about) 32 km (from Yuendumu). I live there with my family. My wife, Eliza, (my sons) John, Robbie and my two daughters-in-law with their kids. Big mob of grandchildren and grandson and baby ones too — three babies, new babies. But I love them — I’m their grandfather. Sometimes they’re home-sick, “Oh, we’ll go to Kiripi outstation — we don’t like to sit down around here Yuendumu, we like to go”. They’re always asking me — little kids “hey, we’ll go now to Cockatoo”. They call (the

outstation) Cockatoo Creek. That’s the creek you know, Cockatoo Creek. Lots of names — Mt Denison — that’s whitefella way and Aboriginal way is Cockatoo Creek and Kiripi.

(We live there) because we like the bush and I learnt to live out bush — that’s why I like outstation. Because I was living on a cattle station, that’s why I been make outstation for me — me and my family and all the kids, children. We’ve got everything coming up slowly like shower room, bathroom, toilet room and we’ve got a little shed for washing clothes. We always been take ‘em all the kids for school, at Mt Allan and Yuendumu. The Government, they been give money all the time because we been do the right thing for kids for school. We always bring them to school early. In the afternoon we take them out to Kiripi outstation — that’s the way I been grow up all my family.

WE’ve got to talk about everything . . . new houses. We — the community — want to be supported. We need a lot of houses for Yuendumu because some houses are crowded — we’ve got to get new houses. Because they

live in one house, they can’t fit - too much family. They’re stuck, like, when all the dogs camping outside. That’s why they’re squashed — can’t fit in all the family. They’re going to put new houses. Maybe my kids are going to get them, you know? We’ve got to live in outstation me and my wife, but all the kids — they’ve got to get those new houses.

I’m living at an old tin house near Harry Dixon’s place (in Yuendumu) just for a little while because I’ve got to move back when our bore’s fixed. I’m out for water, trying to push all the council — I’m trying to push them but they tell me ‘next time, oh, maybe next week’. That’s why I’m really worried about water. It’s the main one.



Harry Jones: Left his outstation when the bore broke down



RUTH NAPALJARRI STEW/

‘Government don’t do it the proper way’

RUTH Stewart is a senior woman at Yuendumu. She was born at Yuendumu and lived and worked at Mt Allen Station after her father passed away. Ruth has two children. Ruth is a well-known painter with Warlukurlangu Artists. Ruth gave some of her interview in Warlpiri, which has been translated into English.



Ruth Stewart: Sees too much talk taking place without results

YUWAYI. Nyampurlaju Yurntumurla karnalu nyina, nyampurla yuwarlirla ngaju-nyanu karna wangkami. Nyinami karnalu family nyampurla karnalu nyinami nyarnumpa. Long time kujalpa nyanu nyinaja nyuruwarnu patu langu kujajuku yujukurla nyinajalpa yujukurla wiyi warlunarli nyinaja. Yuwarliwangu gurnalu warringiyi yujukurla wiyi. Nyampurla ngurrangka Yuendumurla. Yuwayi, kujalku jalangu wangkami nyampu.

YES, we live at this place here, Yuendumu. This house here is the one I’m talking about. My family, we live here together. In the old days we used to live in humpies in this country. We had no houses, we stayed in my grandfather’s humpy with him. This is home in Yuendumu. Yes, that’s the one I’m talking about today.

We make wind break, leaf — mulga leaves and witchetty leaves and tree — everything we get and we make ngurrju-nyayirni yuntaju (really good windbreak). And warluku (for fire), fire outside sometimes, we make windbreak, warluku (for fire) and we make damper, kuyu (meat), tea and kangaroo, ngurrju-nyayirni — we can sit down with windbreak.

Nyinami karnalu (we sit down) one place here. We look after old people, ngula piya (like that), yuwayi. And sometimes sick one too. We can only go for hunting Toyotarla (in a Toyota) or carngka (in a car). Long time ago all right, only footwalk, I was

really good one my legs, to do hunting.

Yuwayi sometimes, sometime we just sit down only Lucy and Ena and me. Lucy and Ena are staying there (Old People’s Home) and me and Yuna are sleeping here, yuwarli nyampuju (in this house here). And my son’s inside and young people — Yuna’s two sons sleeping and these two — Natasha and her husband.

Toilet blocks up, toilet blocked up and shower and problems are really wiri (big) — big ones. Stove is broken — funny one, no handle, everything lawa, broken one nyayirni (really). Stove and doors — open ones, took all the handles, some people get them out from another door. And stove punku, fridge punku and no carpets — inside punku. And washing machine ngajuku (mine), punku again. Yeah no good, punku.

They should make new houses. Government don’t do it proper way — lawa. They don’t like. Lawa. They just talk, only meetings. (I’d like my house to have) Fan, carpets inside, yard — really good one, look at this yard, really rubbish one — make it good one. The Government can make houses too — new ones. And bathroom ngurrju and stove. That’s why we sleep outside, more better. Inside’s punku — too many cockroaches.



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NED WILSON

'We've got to have blokes that are committed to Aboriginal people'

NED Wilson is a Warlpiri man and traditional owner. He works as a receptionist at Yuendumu Health Clinic, working at the men's reception desk and also on the men's night patrol. He has lived in Yuendumu all his life and is a father to five children. Prior to his work at the Health Clinic he was a plant operator and supervisor.

I LIVE here in Yuendumu and I've got a house. I live in Ti-Tree lot 600 and that house — that fence has never been put up since 2002, and half my painting on the wall inside the room are not even finished. I tried to tell the council that my house has never been finished but I still never got my house done. I'm a traditional owner of this place. Every house here belongs to the land trust — not to any organisation.

Over the years we've had CEOs and so-called housing managers or project officers or carpenters. They never really did a good job in this community. That's the problem — they send out all these people. They get paid maybe \$30-\$40 an hour to fix something. You've got Aboriginal housing that have been built out here and the measurements are all different — they are shoddily designed. Nobody comes and checks them like a building inspector or anything. Everybody's really fed up with this sort of thing but we can say nothing because the council's supposed to be ... well, they collect all the rent. They are supposed to put it all back into the community for housing projects, but as far as I'm concerned I've never seen that happen yet. That's why we get a lot of rundown from media — they say we trash houses, mainstream media, they

say we trash houses. I reckon we've got the wrong people working at the wrong places. We've got to have blokes that are committed to helping Aboriginal people.

Some people here, they've never been educated how to look after houses. They're just pulled straight from a humpy to a house with no consultation, no how to run a house properly. They say there's some people out here to learn people that, but out here I don't see — nothing like that happens like that here.

They never consulted anyone on these new houses they're building out here, they just send in excavators, loaders straightaway. We didn't even know they were building them — nobody gave them authority to build them. We're supposed to have a consultation.

WE'VE got to try and put a stop to it so we can work out things properly, not just rush in because we've still got a lot of family problems out here, and if you build a house in the wrong area for so-and-so mob they'll just wreck that house and they'll light it next drunken night. You've got to talk to the mob that lives in there in that community and they'll say 'it's better in that area' like that.

Ngurra — this is our country this one. In Aboriginal law, this ground is mine. I don't want him (Government) to claim nothing here — I don't go to his country over there next door and claim what I want — it won't work. We've got our own beliefs. We like to go back to our country. Like Russians, they've got Russia. And Chinese got China, and they're not allowed to go across next door and do things. Just like that — I'm

not allowed to go down to the Watson mob or the Egans (families in Yuendumu). I've got to ask permission from them — simple as that. That's how it is in Aboriginal law — we respect one another. We respect that that bloke and his family and that clan owns culture and law — that's his, he's got his own jukurrpa and that — you know Dreaming. I've got mine — like mine's the honey ant see, that's like here and Papunya — that's the same one that come down here from Yuelamu. That's mine. I'm the keeper of this land — me, from my grandfather. I can't go to (another man's) country and dig a hole or chop a tree down. I've got to go and ask him for permission.

We'll just see what comes out of this election. It looks like everybody's holding on to something — federal Government — and they don't know who's who. So, I don't know, maybe everything might just change back to normal. The Centrelink mob was here (for a meeting) and they're going back to see their boss — that'll be after the election or something. They mightn't return.

Ned Wilson: Critical of the way local housing is managed





'It's going to be hard for old people'

JEANNIE EGAN was a teacher at Yuendumu School for over 30 years. She now works for the Jaru Pirrjirdi program with young people. She's married to Thomas Jangala Rice, a senior Warpiri elder, and has many children and grandchildren.

(WE have) about six generations (living) in the one house. Ten adults and four babies. One bedroom is my two granddaughters' — with their babies and their husbands. And my son is in another bedroom. That's our way, our life. Aboriginal lives always, in remote communities we live together. It's good for us because we always eat together and we're brought up living together and eating together. Because Aboriginal people, we don't leave our families and go and live in other communities and things like that far away. We always live together in one community.

Ngurra is home. Outstations are ngurra — that's homeland. It's families. In one community — we live together in one ngurra. My ngurra is Kirdirdi outstation, not far from here, about 1km.

(At the moment) we're renting from the council. They fix up the airconditioning, or if we have problems with the stove — the new stoves — or fix windows ... we just go into the council office and sign the papers to fix everything. Sometimes it takes a while ... yeah, it takes a while.

THE new changes make us worry and make us move. I will move to my outstation — to a better place to live. No rent and things there. That's what they say in that meeting. We're going to walk out from this community like at Kalkaringi. That's what they say if governments are really threatening to take over this remote community Yuendumu — they'll start to walk out.

(Home ownership in Yuendumu might be difficult because) when people pass away in the community they (their family) swaps (houses) with other families. That's what we do when someone passes away in a house — another mob moves in and that Sorry mob moves out to another house.

We don't know about these

new changes we read about. It's going to make it very hard in remote communities. That makes us very worried. And everything will be stopped. Like old people's pension will be getting pocket money \$200, and the rest of the money will be holding back and they won't be spending everywhere in other communities — they'll be holding back. They'll be spending in this community and in Alice Springs through Centrelink. Those sort of things. It's going to be hard for old people.



Jeannie Egan: Worried about housing and old people coping



'We don't understand your ideas, the things you want us to do, the way you want us to live'

NED is a leader of the Yuendumu community. He has worked as Sport & Recreation Officer, and in education. He currently has the role of acting Community Liaison Officer with Yuendumu Council.

I'VE lived in Yuendumu all my life. My house is west, west camp. I live with the people that I've got in my immediate family — my daughter, my son-in-law, my two granddaughters, my son and his wife and me and my wife and a dog. I've got a place where I can call my home — my ngurra. Yuendumu is our ngurra and so are our outstations — our father's father's ngurra — home. Homeland is very important to us. We have a very strong connection to the land, to the area where we are from and what was given to us. Jukurrpa is kuruwarri kuruwarri is your Dreamtime, Dreaming stories. Jukurrpa is when your Dreamtime tells the story and what does it mean to you. Kuruwarri is something that you hold

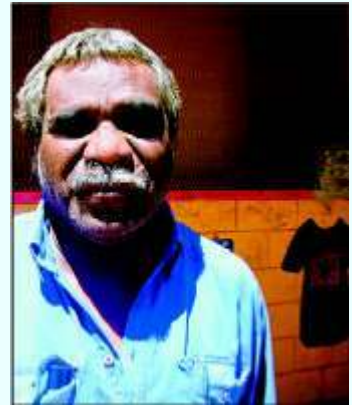
— it's for you, it's for me that I have that was given down from my warringiyi — grandfather. We are not nobody, we are something to this land and to our children and to our children to come.

I'M not happy about what the Government's proposing to us — that we give our land away, that we give Yuendumu away to Government to get, to run it. This Yuendumu, this ngurra, this yurrampi. Yurrampi means honey ants, which is jukurrpa for Yuendumu. That is the jukurrpa now — honey ants. We're not going to give it to the Government because they don't know nothing about this land. This land is something to us. It's a very important place. We play lots of roles into it, like ceremonies for this land. Government is only trying to get this land so that they can run it, to sell back to us. Well, this Government has no idea of this land. Right now, people still don't have enough money to pay rent. Not because

they spend it on grog and run away with it and do something else with it, no, it's because half the time they are worried about their family — they feed their family and put petrol in the car and sometimes there's not enough money to pay rent. With these things that have been put to us with mortgages and that other stuff with the housing, I think it's very bad, and it's not understandable for us. We don't know anything about mortgages and when it's going to occur to us, and when it's going to happen to us with our money and us living in the houses. Like, if I don't pay off my mortgage I might as well go and build a humpy, yujuku, go back to yujuku where I just don't have to pay mortgage. All I've got to do is build a tin shed or a humpy. I think that buying mortgage is not really a good way of doing things with us because putting these sort of things into words that we don't understand but that Government understands — it's pretty hard. It's like me

saying something in Warlpiri to Mal Brough or someone — he wouldn't understand a thing. That's the same thing with us — we don't understand you, with your ideas and the things that you want us to do, and the way that you want us to live.

It just sucks mate!



Ned Hargraves: Doesn't like the sound of mortgages