



## **WILCANNIA COMMUNITY WORKING PARTY**

WILCANNIA HOUSING and ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PLAN

JULY 2022



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#### Document Status

Revision No	Revision/Action	Date	Authorised
1	Draft amended to incorporate CWP comments of 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	14 <sup>th</sup> Jul 2022	KC
2	Endorsed subject to incorporation of CWP comments of 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	HR
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**WILCANNIA COMMUNITY  
WORKING PARTY**

WILCANNIA HOUSING and ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PLAN



**WILCANNIA COMMUNITY  
WORKING PARTY**

WILCANNIA HOUSING and ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PLAN  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



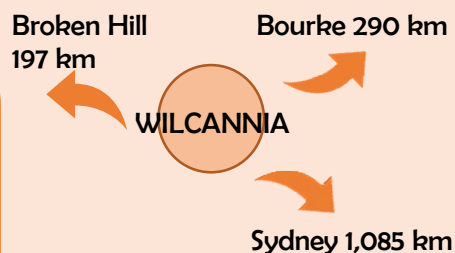


# WILCANNIA

## Housing and Environmental Health Plan Executive Summary

This Housing and Environmental Health Plan provides a Master Plan for housing, infrastructure and housing-related human services for the Aboriginal community of Wilcannia. The Master Plan is based on a body of evidence outlined in this Executive Summary. Much community input is drawn from the Household Survey organised by Murdi Paaki Services a few years ago, and from the Wilcannia CWP's Community Action Plan. The Plan describes the current situation and proposes measures to improve the state and supply of housing, the way it is allocated and managed, and what needs to be done in the future to meet community needs for housing, wrap-around services and economic development. The Executive Summary begins with some facts about the community, looks at the housing situation, then presents the key points of the Master Plan. The Plan belongs to the Aboriginal community of Wilcannia.

Where we are to be found?



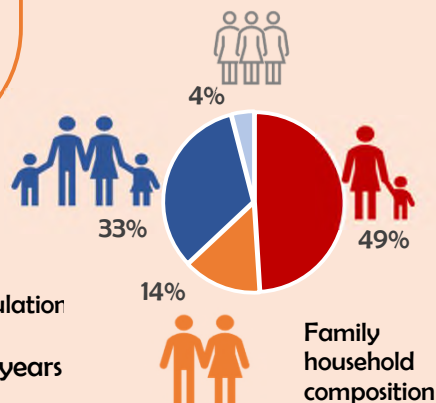
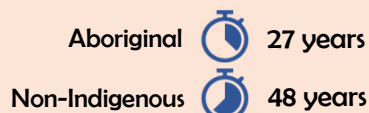
The Wilcannia climate is hot and dry. The number of days with extreme temperatures is increasing

About the community (Wilcannia town):



Aboriginal population = 82% of total population of 549 persons

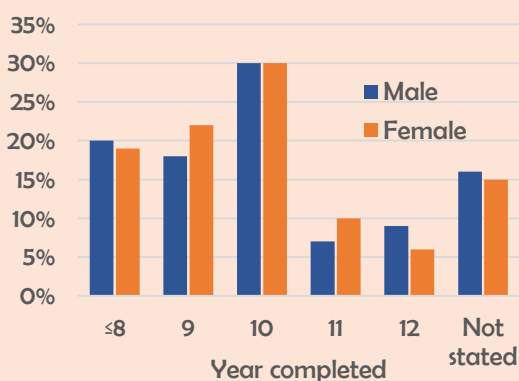
Median age of the population



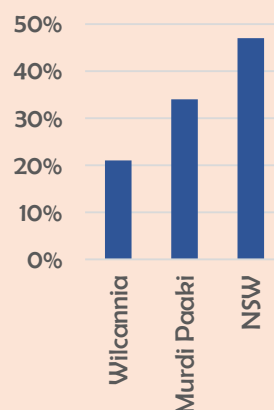
25% of the Aboriginal population is aged under 15 years



Highest year of schooling, all Aboriginal adults



Employment to population ratio





# Wilcannia

## Tenure type

- Owners
- Private renters
- Social housing renters
- Other

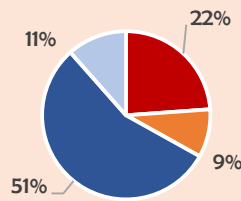


3.2 1.5  
Average household size

## Facts about housing in our community:



On Census night, 20% of private dwellings were not occupied



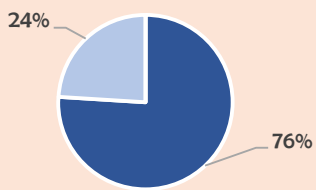
## Existing Aboriginal social housing

	Bedrooms		
	2	3	4+
Wilcannia LALC	-	39	23
AHO	4	10	6
Total dwellings	4	49	29

85% of households lived in the same house 5 years before the ABS Census 2016

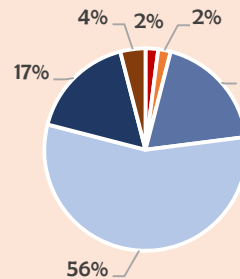


## Social housing manager(s)



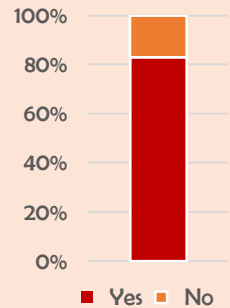
- Local ACHP
- Regional ACHP
- Out of Region ACHP
- Community housing manager
- Public housing manager

## Satisfaction with housing manager

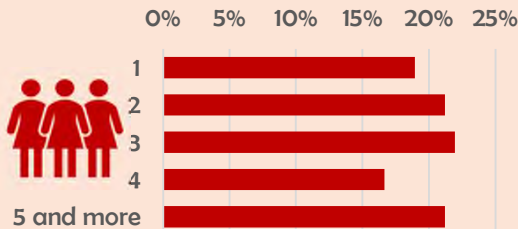


- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Not stated

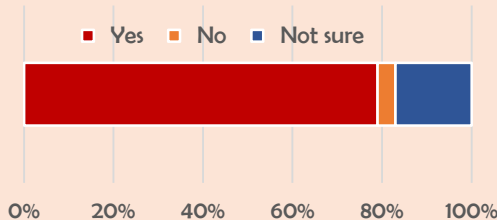
## Feeling safe



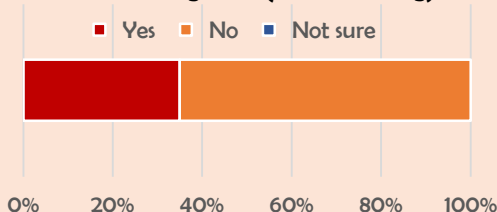
## Occupancy (number of persons per house)



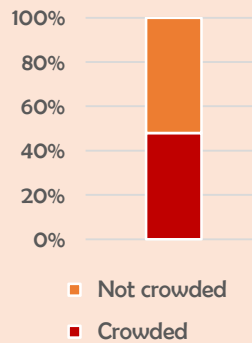
## Tenants with a tenancy agreement



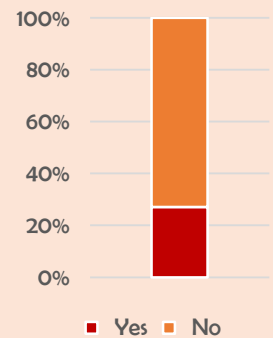
## Tenants claiming CRA (Social housing)



## Households crowded



## Households giving shelter to homeless persons



## Reasons for living in Wilcannia:

- I was born here - 85%
- My family has been here a long time - 38%
- To be close to family and relations - 31%





# Wilcannia

## ESTIMATE OF HOUSING NEED

### Predicted housing need

	Bedrooms		
	2	3	4
Families	-	17	-
Older persons	11	-	-
Young persons	29	-	-
Homeless families	8	-	-
Total dwellings	48	17	-

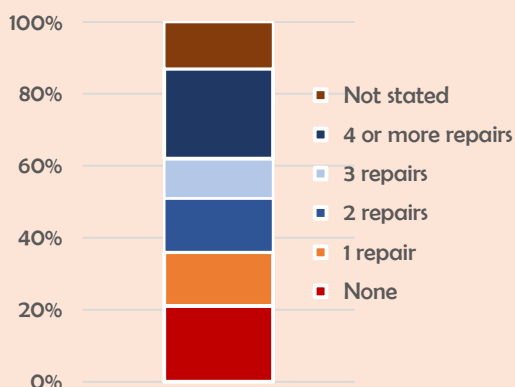
### Home modifications

Required	10
Completed	6
To be completed	4

### Extra bedrooms

	Bedrooms		
	1	2	3
Estimated	8	-	1

### Tenant reported condition (Social housing)



### Housing repairs

#### (Number of properties)

Degree of work	Number
↖	8
↖ ↗	28
↖ ↗ ↘	27
↖ ↗ ↘ ↙	3
↖ ↗ ↘ ↙ ↘	17

## MASTER PLAN - HOUSING



Transfer housing management responsibilities to a local ACHP

Arrange for housing manager to work closely with CWP, LALC, community and tenants. Have a shopfront in Wilcannia

Revisit rent levels in view of housing quality, remoteness and cost of living. Do away with Housing Pathways and substitute a local process

Support all eligible tenants to receive Commonwealth rent assistance

Increase housing supply to meet need. Consider building new houses on lots already developed where families wish to stay together. Priorities are smaller units for young people and the elderly, with larger homes for families

Involve the CWP in the planning and design processes to ensure future housing satisfies culturally informed ways of living

Replace housing unfit for occupation or lost through accident or other causes

Repair and maintain existing housing to a standard acceptable to the community and make safe and secure

Where extended families wish to stay together, add extra bedrooms to existing houses (and facilities)

Make homes more energy efficient

Ensure the Roads To Home project reaches the Mallee and Warrali Estates and fixes deficiencies in all infrastructure

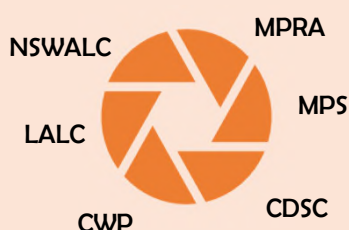
Negotiate with Council for improvements to municipal services and to the Wilcannia Cemetery



# Wilcannia

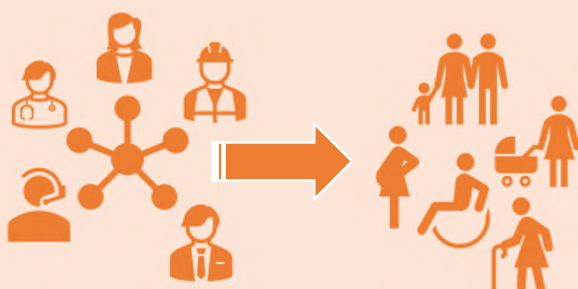
## MASTER PLAN - HUMAN SERVICES

Negotiate a **STRATEGIC ALLIANCE** between



to advance the Wilcannia HEHP,  
Wilcannia CWP Community Action Plan and  
Central Darling Shire Council Community Strategic Plan

Human service providers



Aspirations:

- Governments recognise that the community has the solutions to many of its issues
- Improve service coordination, integration and quality
- Expand range and accessibility of services
- Encourage providers to employ community members
- Engage CWP in provider selection and performance review



Aspirations:

- Expand capacity of the Wilcannia Safe House
- Add crisis accommodation for men and for children
- Improve access to AoD services

The Master Plan sets out the actions the CWP has adopted to secure a better future for the community. The actions come from the contributions of the community and from analysis of the gaps which prevent people from living healthy, prosperous and comfortable lives in Wilcannia. The actions written into this Executive Summary are shorthand versions of the actions in the Plan itself.

Children's and young adults services



Aspirations:

- Extend the range of early childhood services delivered through the preschool
- Improve access to specialist services to resolve health issues preventing children from achieving
- Provide a range of diversionary activities for children and young adults
- Redevelop the Wings Drop In Centre



Aspirations:

- Reinforce the community's capacity to manage its affairs
- Encourage children to be successful at school
- Increase the skills base through VET
- Grow the proportion of the population employed
- Foster the growth of Aboriginal businesses





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## GLOSSARY

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACDP	Aboriginal Communities Development Programme
ACHP	Aboriginal Community Housing Provider
ACFI	Aged Care Funding Instrument
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AHD	Australian Height Datum
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Management Information System
AHO	NSW Aboriginal Housing Office
ALRA	Aboriginal Land Rights Act
ALT	Aboriginal Lands Trust
APB	Aborigines Protection Board
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AWB	Aborigines Welfare Board
CAP	Community Action Plan
CDSC	Central Darling Shire Council
CHSP	Commonwealth Home Support Programme
CNOS	Canadian Occupancy Standard
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
CWP	Community Working Party
DCJ	NSW Department of Communities and Justice
DESE	Department of Education, Skills and Employment
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DIDO	Drive In, Drive Out
DPIE	NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
FIFO	Fly In, Fly Out
FWLHD	Far West Local Health District
FWWAHS	Far West Ward Aboriginal Health Service
HCP	Home Care Package
HEHP	Housing and Environmental Health Plan
HIPP	Health Infrastructure Priority Project
HLP	Healthy Living Practices
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
IFD	Intensity Frequency Duration
ILOC	Indigenous Location
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
MLAHMC	Mid Lachlan Aboriginal Housing Management Co-operative
MPRA	Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
MPRH&BC	Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Business Consortium
MPS	Murdi Paaki Services Limited
MP TSEP	Murdi Paaki Tenant Support and Education Programme
NAHS	National Aboriginal Health Strategy

NCAT	NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSHS	National Social Housing Survey
N-W NSW IREG	North-Western NSW Indigenous Region
NSWALC	New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
OCHRE	Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (NSW Government Aboriginal Affairs Plan)
OOHC	Out of Home Care
OoR	Out of Region
PHN	Primary Health Network
RAHLA	Regional Aboriginal Housing Leadership Assembly
REDI.E	Regional Enterprise Development Institute Ltd
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Service
RSD	Remote Service Delivery
SA1	ABS Statistical Area Level 1
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SSC	State Suburb
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UCM	Uniting Care Miraga
WLALC	Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Housing and Environmental Health Plan by the Wilcannia Community Working Party with the help of Murdi Paaki Services Ltd. The Wilcannia Community Working Party acknowledges the contributions of all community members and others who participated in the development of this plan through offering their advice, knowledge and encouragement.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past and present: those of the Baakantji Nation and those of other Nations who have found their home in Wilcannia. We also acknowledge and respect the efforts of those community members seeking to improve the wellbeing of all Aboriginal families and individuals living in our community.



For the purposes of this Plan, an Aboriginal person is a person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (person) and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.

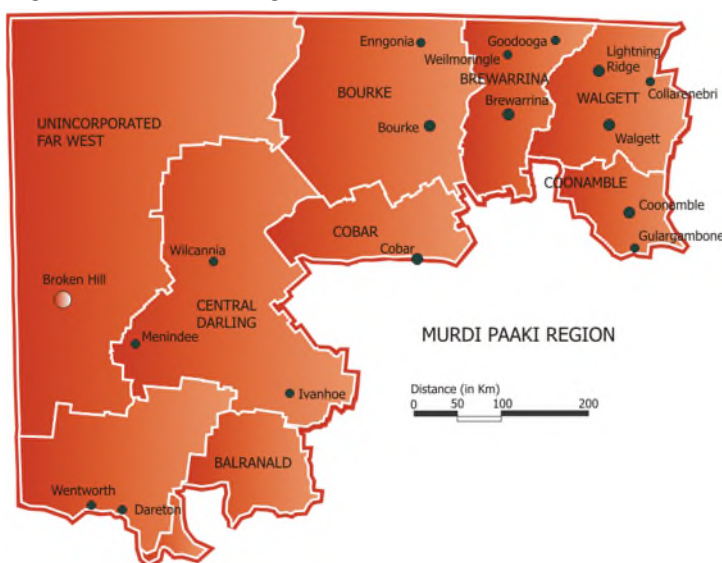


# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the Plan

This Housing and Environmental Health Plan (HEHP) has been prepared by the Aboriginal community of Wilcannia in western NSW. The Wilcannia community is one of sixteen larger communities within the Murdi Paaki Region as shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Murdi Paaki Region



- Give an assessment of 'wrap-around' human services;
- Determine the need for and form of tenant support and education services;
- Contribute to a review of requirements for financial wellbeing of the Aboriginal social housing sector;
- Provide an informed basis for planning for future housing need and development, and associated value-adding initiatives; and
- Report a high-level community-led approach to project master planning to shape the future of Aboriginal housing and related human services in Wilcannia.

The Plan describes the aspirations of Aboriginal people living in Wilcannia and outlines a strategic approach to achieving the community's goals. Planning is the necessary first step in a programme aimed at achieving better housing and environmental health outcomes by building and improving housing and environmental health infrastructure, together with related services and amenities in the community. The Aboriginal community of Wilcannia, and particularly existing and prospective tenant households, will benefit directly through having the foundation of a more strategic, informed and innovative approach to resourcing and managing the Aboriginal social housing sector in the community.

## 1.2 Governance arrangements

The purpose of this HEHP is to:

- In conjunction with data collected through the Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Business Consortium (MPRH&BC) project and described in the *Social Housing Providers and Assets Audit Report*, establish an evidence-base to guide the way in which housing policy is set and decisions are made in respect of Aboriginal social housing provision and management, and responses to environmental risk;
- Describe the current situation in relation to housing Aboriginal individuals and families in Wilcannia;
- Gauge interest in home ownership;
- To the extent possible, report on the condition of Aboriginal social housing assets;

HEHPs are an initiative of the Murdi Paaki Regional Aboriginal Housing and Leadership Assembly (RAHLA), a partnership of the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) and the NSW Government created through the OCHRE Local Decision-Making policy and directed by the Ministerial *Agreement to improve Aboriginal social housing outcomes in the Murdi Paaki Region*. The RAHLA sees the preparation of HEHPs in all Murdi Paaki communities as a priority project under the Agreement and has authorised Murdi Paaki Services Ltd (MPS) to carry out the project to begin the process of developing the evidence base for regional policy setting and decision making as a vital step in rebuilding the social housing sector and social and economic capabilities of the Region.

The Agreement sets a framework for the active participation of Murdi Paaki communities, through their elected representative peak bodies, in the development and delivery of better services; the creation of opportunities to raise collective skills, knowledge and competencies; and the building of individual and organisational capacity in community. In this regard, the Agreement recognises the status of the Wilcannia Community Working Party (CWP) as the principal point of contact for conducting business within the Aboriginal community and for leading the development of the HEHP planning process at community level.

### 1.3 Respecting Land Council autonomy

The roles and functions of Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) are defined in the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1982 (ALRA). Land Councils play a vital role in maintaining cultural practice and conserving Aboriginal heritage within their boundaries. They fulfil a critical function in NSW of restoring to the local Aboriginal population land which has been alienated by European colonisation. This land may be used for cultural or economic purposes; the rationale for each land claim is based upon the aspirations of the relevant LALC. LALCs also provide Community Benefit Schemes which may include Aboriginal social housing provision. In the Murdi Paaki Region, most LALCs are housing owners; some also manage their own housing. Individual LALCs have the inalienable right to make decisions in relation to their assets in accordance with the processes and constraints set out in the ALRA.

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly has made it a policy not to involve itself in matters of heritage and culture which are rightly the domain of the LALCs. Similarly, the Assembly recognises the autonomy of LALCs to make their own decisions in relation to their land and property. This Housing and Environmental Health Plan does not in any way impinge on the LALC's autonomy as a sovereign decision-maker in relation to its assets. In the interests of achieving maximum benefit for the community, the CWP invites the LALC to join its voice and hands in unity to advocate for and implement the change agenda set out in the

Master Plan.

### 1.4 The bigger picture

This HEHP is intended to supplement the work undertaken to date through the MPRH&BC project with more detailed and targeted development pathways at community level.

Plans have been produced to a similar degree of detail for all communities across the Murdi Paaki Region, providing the opportunity for MPRA to assess communities' strengths and needs both as individual communities and comparatively, in relation to each other. The Plans acknowledge the reality of the experiences of Aboriginal people living in far western NSW and form a resource for intelligent leadership and an integrated, creative response which places communities, to the greatest extent possible, as the principal drivers of sustainable local action.

Put together, it is hoped the HEHPs will:

- Reinstatement and strengthen the capacity of Murdi Paaki regional and local Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) to ensure that all Aboriginal people living in Aboriginal social housing in the community can receive culturally appropriate, professional and sustainable tenancy and asset management services from ACHPs which themselves are viable and supported;
- Increase access to, opportunity and choice in affordable, healthy and safe housing for Aboriginal persons and families living in Murdi Paaki communities through growing the size, mix and quality of the ACHP asset base;
- Work to ensure that assets are maintained in good condition in the long term;
- Ensure that tenants most at risk of a tenancy breach can access the services they need to sustain their tenancies;
- Provide greater opportunity for Aboriginal persons and families to engage with employment and education support that increase opportunities for housing independence;
- Establish the level of financial investment in respect of capital and recurrent costs to

- ensure sector viability; and
- Set the foundation for procurement practices and value add initiatives which respond to the 'failed market' environment and benefit the community.



## 2 BRIEF HISTORY OF WILCANNIA and ITS RESIDENTS

### 2.1 Snapshot

This Chapter draws heavily on *Part A: Aboriginal Thematic History of the Wilcannia Aboriginal Community Heritage Study (2018)*. This work was a collaborative community achievement guided by the Central Darling Shire Council and Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council. It includes interviews with Baakantji people about the traditional and historical associations with Wilcannia and the Baaka/Darling River.

Wilcannia is located on the site of earlier Aboriginal meeting places on a horseshoe bend of Baaka/Darling River, the centre of Baakantji country. Aboriginal relationships centre around the river or are understood by distance from the river. Baakantji speakers are the primary group in Wilcannia and surrounding areas.

Pastoral stations were established after the 1840s, bringing the violence of colonisation and disruption to traditional life. Baakantji defended these incursions of both men and livestock, attacking overlanders as they invaded country. Mount Murchison Station (Karania), originally part of the larger Momba Station, occupied the section of the river that was eventually to become the settlement of Wilcannia. Settlers constructed a punt/ferry as a crossing point for livestock travelling south to the southern markets in Melbourne, consolidating the village as a transit point.

The town was surveyed in 1865, proclaimed in 1866 and incorporated as a municipality in 1883.

In or about 1870, the Wilcannia wharf was built to service paddle steamers working the river. The river was cleared of debris and other obstructions to make way for navigation, but this had a negative effect on the habitats of fish and other animals which Baakantji relied upon as a food source. The settlement grew, becoming the third largest inland port for a time. Competition between promoters of alternative railway routes between Sydney and

Broken Hill in the early 1900s resulted in the current alignment through Menindee to the south being selected in preference to and extension of the Cobar line through Wilcannia. As a result, the economic importance of Wilcannia started to decline. It remains a small service town to this day with important associations for Baakantji people.

### 2.2 Aboriginal ownership

Wilcannia and surrounding areas are Baakantji country. The dialects of this area are understood by locations. The Baakantji Nation derive their name from Baaka, the river which is at the core of their identity. The Nation, although sharing a common language, comprises distinct dialect groups linked with ownership of specific Country and resources. The north-eastern dialects are Kurnu, Naualko and Paaruntji. The western dialects are Wilyakali, Pantjikali/Wanyipalku and the southern dialects, Southern Baarkandji/Parintji and Maraura/Thangakaali.

Baakantji land was held under a tenure system which operated at a range of scales, with small tenure units conferring inalienable rights to specific estates which others could only enter and use resources with permission. It appears that these small tenure units were held through patrilineal descent. The land around Wilcannia and the Baaka/Darling River is thus a rich narrative landscape, and dreamtime stories of the creation of Country by ancestral beings abound.

While pastoralism disrupted ties to traditional ways of living for Baakantji people, it did not completely sever them. In some instances, Baakantji people continued to live traditional lives while working on stations. Camps were formed on Momba and Mount Murchison Stations, including at Steamer Point on the river. The seasonal nature of the pastoral work enabled this dual way of life to persist between the 1850s and 1880s.

As the pastoral industry expanded, the Aboriginal economy changed as Baakantji people were denied access to resources and land. This transition occurred because of pastoral expansion, the growth of towns like Wilcannia, and the introduction of protection policy in the 1880s with

its ever-increasing interference in every aspect of Baakantji life, including, from 1912 and for decades afterwards, the removal of children. Together these forces changed the way that Baakantji people could live in and move across Country.

After the 1880s, pastoralism continued to be the mainstay of the settler economy. Station camps were permanently established on stations up and down the river. The Aborigines Protection Board (APB) commenced providing rations, building materials and other commodities to a small number of camps on pastoral properties as well as reserve populations in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Aboriginal population of Wilcannia at this time was small and variable.

By the early twentieth century, camps associated with pastoral stations were beginning to decline. Instead, Aboriginal people gathered at camps in sites around the town and along the river. One account places a camp near a public house in Wilcannia, while another locates it beside the river. A fringe camp in Wilcannia was made up of a series of improvised structures. The *Wilcannia Aboriginal Thematic Heritage Study* recognises Steamers Point, White Sandhill, Iron Pole Bend, and Union Bend as camp sites, some of which appear to be associated with family groups. In 2015, Steamers Point was declared a significant Aboriginal Place.

From the early 1930s, the APB initiated a policy of concentration: the many small reserves which had been gazetted from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1930s were progressively withdrawn, and their Aboriginal populations forcibly moved to larger managed stations. At the same time, town campers were also rounded up and relocated. Baakantji people at this time, as well as living in the Wilcannia town camps, also occupied a reserve at Pooncarie established from 1909 on land excised from two pastoral stations, and were camping, as well, in and around Menindee. Some Baakantji people were also living at Carowra Tank, another gazetted APB reserve located north-east of Ivanhoe, with a mainly Ngiyampaa population who had migrated in from pastoral stations across the region between Ivanhoe and Cobar. Carowra Tank also accommodated some Wiradjuri and Wayilwan people.

In 1933, on the pretext of failure of the water supply at Carowra Tank, the APB acted upon its concentration policy. On 29<sup>th</sup> September 1933, the 270 or so residents of Carowra Tank were loaded onto cattle trucks, their houses and shelters set alight, and population taken to the railway platform in Conoble, where they were put on a train to Menindee.

At the same time, the APB removed the Baakantji people living along the Darling River, from Wilcannia to Pooncarie, to the new Menindee Government Station, located about 11 km from Menindee on the Darling River. Housing provided was of sheet metal and had no windows. The houses had been built on a sandhill and dust continually blew in. The sandhill was the site of ancient burials; dust from the bones of ancestors was an ingredient of a potent traditional poison. Within the first year of occupation of Menindee Station many deaths occurred largely because of respiratory illness and poor environmental health conditions. For people originally from Wilcannia, the risk of death at Menindee was a far worse prospect than returning to Wilcannia and having their rations cut off, so many walked back up-river to Wilcannia and re-established their camps.

The APB was reconstituted as the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB) in 1940. In 1949, without warning, the AWB closed the Menindee Government Station and relocated the population to Murrin Bridge, located on Wiradjuri country near Lake Cargelligo. Many Baakantji declined to move and followed the path beaten by those first family members who walked off the Menindee Station in the 1930s, back to their traditional country along the Baaka/Darling River.

In 1942, in the face of the reality of return migration to Wilcannia, a reserve of 100 acres was gazetted (R. 70,716, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942). This reserve was on the left bank of the Darling River, further downstream (towards Union Bend) than the current location of the Warrali Estate. The map at Figure 2.1 shows the location of this original reserve in relation to the Catholic Church landholding where St Therese's School is situated; it is labelled W.L. 2963. The reserve was revoked on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950; on the same day, three further reserves were gazetted: R. 73514, a 7.25 acre site

(Portion 10) adjacent to the Barrier Highway and the River north-west of Warrali Avenue (see Figure 2.2), and two on the western fringe of the town, over Sections 54 and 38 (R. 73521 and R. 73522 respectively – see Figures 2.3 and 2.4). Then, on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1950, an area of 15 acres immediately downstream was leased to the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church for a church and school. Two years after the reserve was created next to the Barrier Highway, an area of 75 acres (Portion 20) was withdrawn from the temporary common and added to it (R. 74952, gazetted 18<sup>th</sup> April 1952). The annotation of this further reserve can be seen in faint pencil in Figure 2.1. The reserve which, at this point, reached its greatest extent, was known as the Mission (perhaps because of the church and school embedded within it) and, subsequently, the Warrali Estate (Figure 2.2). Three months later, the reserve over Section 54 was revoked, and replaced with a reserve over the adjacent Section 53 (R. 75222, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1952). There was clearly an expectation that town housing would be provided at some point, albeit on the outskirts of the settled areas.

Aboriginal families had camped in self-built dwellings along the left bank of the Baaka/Darling River, opposite the town, for some time prior to the gazettal of the series of reserves. The flurry of lands administration activity appears to have been associated with a ministerial announcement in December 1950 that twelve to fourteen houses would be built by the AWB on the reserve. Before this could take place, though, in January 1951, the river flooded forcing households living in camps along the river to relocate to the sandhills in the undeveloped area to the north-west and north-east of the town for the duration of the flood.

Following gazettal of The Mission, the non-Indigenous population called for Aboriginal people living in Wilcannia to be moved across the river, even though the AWB had also reserved sections within the town boundary. Despite attempts at intimidation by non-Indigenous residents who insisted that Aboriginal people were forbidden to live in town, some households decided to remain in the area to the north of the town, shown in Figure 2.5, which came to be known as The Mallee. While an advantage of The Mallee over the reserve

site was that it was flood-free; it had many disadvantages, not least that water had to be fetched a considerable distance from the river to be stored in 44-gallon drums. Council required families that wished to remain in this area to camp in tents; more permanent tin huts were demolished, and Aboriginal tenure over the site was not formalised for many years following the 1950s floods.

In 1953, the fourteen houses promised almost three years earlier for The Mission site were completed. These small houses lined both sides of one street, closer than Aboriginal people were used to. Initially, there was neither electricity nor connected water and turnover of tenants was high because the houses were unsuitable. Most families had moved back to the riverbank; those who could not be housed in one of the fourteen AWB houses formed camps downstream of the reserve where they had always camped. The Mallee continued to be used as a flood refuge and semi-permanent camp and, over time, substantial self-built dwellings were erected; anthropologist Jeremy Beckett counted about twenty when he conducted his fieldwork in 1957. The first formal housing was provided in the late 1970s.

The gazettal of a reserve over The Mallee came surprisingly late: by the mid-1970s the NSW Government was busily revoking Aboriginal reserves all over NSW. The two reserves over The Mission were revoked on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1974 (Portion 10) and 30<sup>th</sup> September 1977 (Portion 20); the town reserve over Section 38 was revoked on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1976. The Mallee reserve was *proclaimed* on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1975; this reserve replaced the original reserve over Section 53 and incorporated the entire area to the north-east of the town as shown shaded in pale blue on Figure 2.5 (R. 89518). Then, on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1979, this reserve, too, was revoked. In 1973, the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) assumed ownership of all officially gazetted reserves. Wilcannia Reserve was placed in the hands of ALT, only to be transferred to the NSW Government in 1983 and then to the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council (Wilcannia LALC) on gazettal of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in the same year.



## 2.3 Aboriginal people and the town of Wilcannia

At the time of the repeal of the Aborigines Protection Act and the abolition of the AWB, Wilcannia and the surrounding areas along the river were already home for many Baakantji people. This period is also marked by the slow decline of pastoralism, where overstocking strategies had failed in the fragile environments experiencing drought. Work for Baakantji people in this sector dried up and work opportunities disappeared.

In 1980, the Barkandji Housing Co-op was formed to provide housing designed for and built by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. The Co-op championed houses built from concrete blocks and encouraged design that responded to the Wilcannia climate and environment. Government officials resisted the initiative.

Wilcannia people were instrumental in the land rights movement in NSW. The Mutawintji Blockade is a famous example of strategic action by Wilcannia-based activists under the leadership of the late William Bates. Traditional owners had been pressuring the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service to control access to sacred sites at Mutawintji, and to permit Aboriginal involvement in decision-making for some time. In 1983, the traditional owners, tired of waiting, established a bush camp and blockaded the Mutawintji National Park. The signs and posters said "Mootwingee: Closed by the Owners". The bush camp participants declared themselves the Mutawintji Local Aboriginal Land Council – this step had been planned before the ALRA had come into force, but it illustrates the strategic intent of the community to use whatever means were available, including the draft legislation, as a vehicle to organise resistance. Ultimately, the National Park was handed back to the traditional owners, and an agreement entered into with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for access and management.

More recent initiatives include the roll out of the Australian Government funded National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) Health Infrastructure Priority Project (HIPP) in Wilcannia in the late

1990s followed by the NSW Government funded Aboriginal Communities Development Project (ACDP) in the early 2000s. Both projects resulted in the construction of new housing and the renovation of existing housing. The project was contentious, with the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) noting in its *Annual Report 2005-2006* that new houses had been built on land not owned by the Wilcannia LALC and the quality of construction had been assessed independently as questionable.

The 1990s saw a succession of innovations which impacted positively on the ability of Wilcannia residents to chart their own destiny. The first of these was the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Wilcannia elected three representatives to the inaugural Far West Regional Council and then continued to elect delegates to the Murdi Paaki Regional Council. An early action of Regional Council was to establish a Regional Aboriginal community-controlled health service in Broken Hill, providing services into Wilcannia. The then Far West Ward Aboriginal Health Service (FWWAHS, later Maari Ma) became the lead organisation for the innovative Wilcannia Aboriginal Co-ordinated Care Trial, an initiative of the Australian Government Health Department. The trial involved a whole-of-community approach to co-ordination of health care by partners FWWAHS, Far West Area Health Service, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and, initially, the NSW Department of Community Services. A key element of the arrangement was the cashing out and pooling of health and health-related funding to the community. The Wilcannia CWP was intimately involved in directing the project and holding managers accountable.

The Wilcannia Community Working Party, initially the Maarama Committee, was one of the earliest CWPs in the Murdi Paaki Region. The CWP was formed to provide community input into and guide delivery of the NAHS/HIPP project and then, with reduced autonomy, the ACDP project. Aboriginal people living in Wilcannia continue to exercise active community governance via the Wilcannia CWP which, in turn, contributes a delegate to the MPRA. The Wilcannia CWP works with the Assembly to advocate for housing delivery, health

services and economic development options which meet community needs.

Structures and processes for governance are challenged from time to time: a particularly egregious example is the Remote Service Delivery (RSD) programme. The National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery focussed on 29 remote Indigenous communities across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. A partnership between the Australian and relevant state and territory, governments, its objectives related to service delivery, access and quality, governance and leadership, economic and social participation and 'personal responsibility', and it operated under the ultimate direction of the Coordinator General for Remote Service Delivery. Wilcannia was one of the two RSD communities in the Murdi Paaki Region. The logic for including communities which were, at the same time, covered by a Regional Partnership Agreement between MPRA and the Commonwealth can only be guessed at. Unfortunately, the RSD leadership completely

ignored existing governance structures within the Region, bypassed MPRA and the Wilcannia CWP completely, and took its business directly to local government.

More recently, failures of government policy and practice have been highlighted by the crisis in social housing provision in Wilcannia, in relation to quantity, quality and affordability. At the time of writing, Wilcannia has recently been in the grips of a severe outbreak of COVID-19. Crowded conditions in dwellings, many of which are only marginally fit for human habitation, have contributed to rapid spread of the disease within the community. The community has been on the receiving end of various externally prescribed interventions over many years. As the discussion of RSD indicates, these are rarely, if ever, successful. Future policy and practice will attain objectives only if the Aboriginal community is afforded the opportunity to lead change.



Figure 2.1: First Reserve R. 70,716 (WL 2963) gazetted 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942



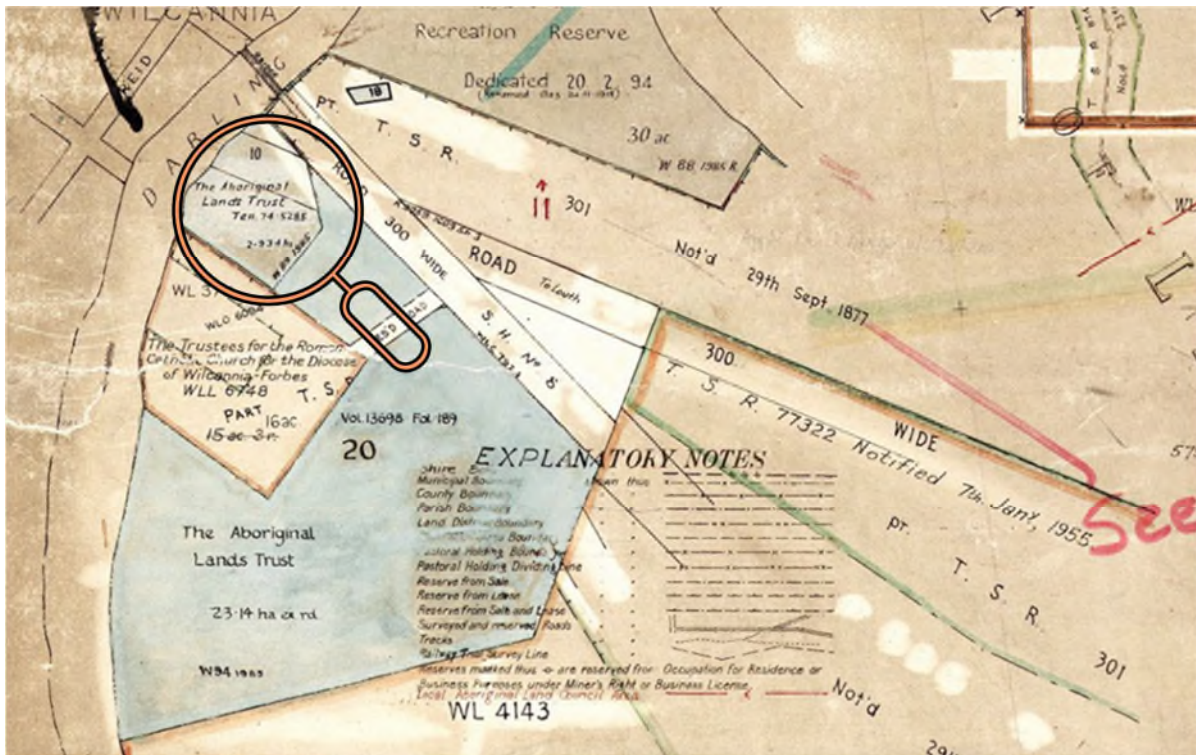
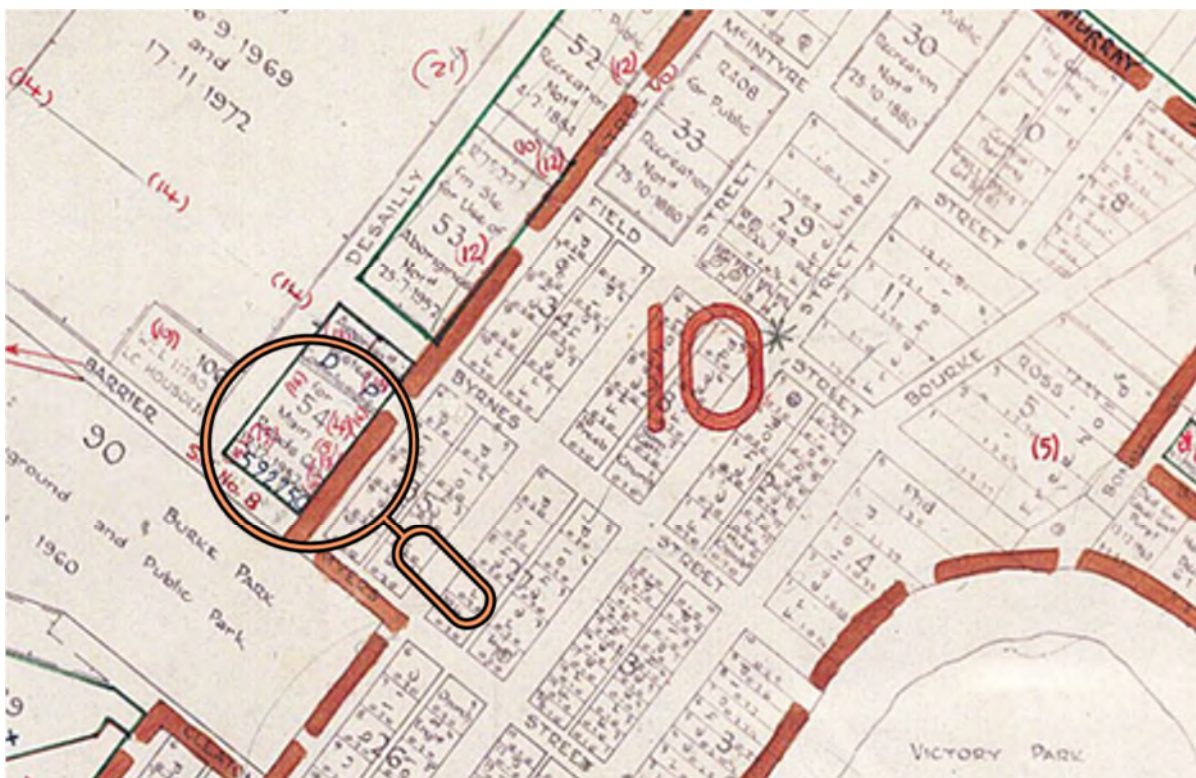
Figure 2.2: Portion 10, R. 73514 gazetted 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950 and Portion 20, R. 74952 gazetted 18<sup>th</sup> April 1952Figure 2.3: Section 54, R. 73521 gazetted 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950



Figure 2.4: Section 38, R. 73522 gazetted 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950Figure 2.5: The Mallee, R. 89518 proclaimed on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1975 replacing Section 53, R. 75222 gazetted on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1952

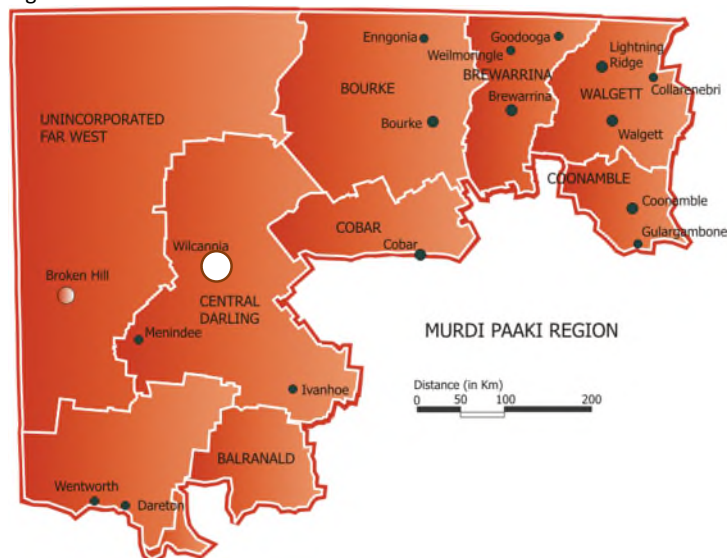
Sources: NSW Land Registry Service Parish and Historical Maps

### 3 GEOGRAPHY

#### 3.1 Location

Wilcannia is located in the far west of New South Wales, 1,085 km to the west of Sydney and 714 km to the north-east of Adelaide by way of sealed roads. The closest service centre is Broken Hill 197 km west of Wilcannia. The location of Wilcannia is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Location of Wilcannia



#### 3.2 Access

Wilcannia is a small town on the Baaka/Darling River, within Central Darling Shire in western NSW. Wilcannia was an important river port during the river-boat era during the mid-19th century and this legacy continues in ongoing links with other river towns.

The Barrier Highway which passes through Wilcannia links the town to Dubbo to the east and Broken Hill to the west. The opal mining town of White Cliffs is connected to Wilcannia by sealed road, Opal Miners Way, and work is proceeding to fully seal the Cobb Highway linking Wilcannia and Ivanhoe. Roads on both the eastern and western sides of the Darling River north to Bourke and south to Menindee are unsealed and are impassable during periods of wet weather and

flooding.

A daily XPT train service between Sydney and Dubbo connects with a coach service to Broken Hill, stopping at Wilcannia, while a daily bus service operates between Wilcannia and Broken Hill. There are no scheduled commercial air services to Wilcannia. The closest service is the Regional Express air service from Broken Hill Airport. The Wilcannia airstrip, 9 km from the town and with a sealed runway length of 930 m, is used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and recreational fliers.

#### 3.3 Topography

Wilcannia town is located on the western bank of the Baaka/Darling River within the river floodplain. Only the Warrali Mission and St Therese's Community Parish School are located on the east bank. The country immediately to the east of Wilcannia has little topographic relief, characterised by the floodplain with river channels and streams. There is a slight rise of 10-15 m to the north and west towards the airport and a further rise to Mt Murchison (198m) 25 km to the north. A slight fall in ground level occurs generally from the centre of town to the south and east towards the Baaka/Darling River but overall grades are shallow. Elevation in the centre of town is about 82 m above sea level.

#### 3.4 Soils

Wilcannia is located in the Darling Riverine Plains bioregion. The narrow river corridor is only 20-30 km wide and stretches from Bourke in the north, through Wilcannia to the Menindee Lakes and on to Wentworth and its junction with the River Murray.

The floodplain is mostly heavy, dark coloured alluvial clay deposits which crack extensively when dry. Clays are interspersed with some red brown soils. The commercial and residential areas of Wilcannia are situated on these red brown soils.

Soils to the eastern side of the Darling are heavier “black soils” with higher clay content. The main part of the township on the western side of the river sits on red brown soils that have less clay content and are less reactive.

### 3.5 Flora and fauna

The occurrence and types of native vegetation communities are influenced by past flooding and sedimentation regimes. Although the landscape has been extensively modified by clearing for agriculture, remnant vegetation communities of typically low open coolibah woodland exist on frequently flooded black and grey clay soils changing to black box woodland in red soil areas to the north of Wilcannia. Moderate to dense stands of river red gum woodlands line the Baaka/Darling River, with river cooba and some poplar box, black box and belah on sandier soils to the north of the town and on levees of older channels.

Depressions adjacent to the main channel support a range of wetlands including lignum and Old Man saltbush with some cane grass. Away from the river, saltbush, bluebush and open grasslands, survive primarily on grey cracking clays in less elevated areas.

The region supports many amphibian, reptile, bird, mammal and marsupial species including possums, flying foxes, predatory birds, water birds, parrots and emus, bats; larger mammals such as the red kangaroo, western grey and eastern grey kangaroo and common wallaroo with small numbers of koalas reported along the river in some studies.

The composition and structure of vegetation and animal communities has been altered as a result of grazing by stock, introduction of feral animals, and changed fire regimes. Feral animals: rabbits, pigs, foxes, goats, wild dogs and cats continue to have a significant impact. The resulting habitat loss and encroachment has depleted the species range and number of smaller mammals to the point that some are no longer to be found in the area.

### 3.6 Climate

Wilcannia’s climate may be described as hot dry

semi-arid. Climate and weather data have been recorded continuously at Wilcannia from 1879. The following climate data is for the recording station at Reid Street, Wilcannia (046043), using data from 1879 onwards.

Figure 3.2: Temperatures

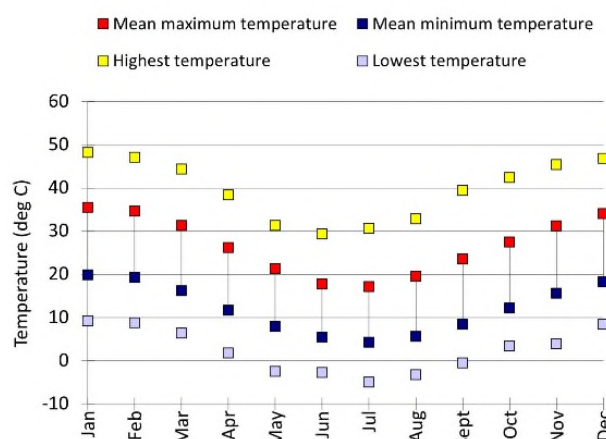
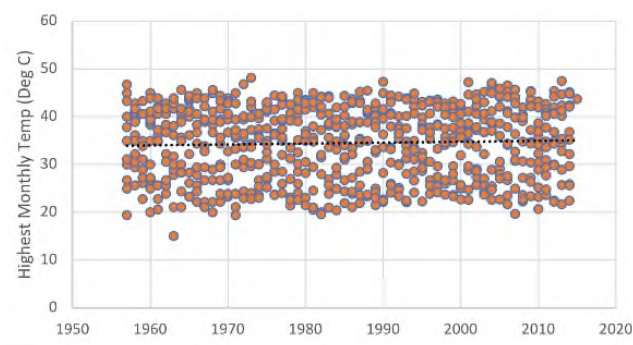


Figure 3.2 illustrates a climate of hot summers and cool winters. Over the course of the year, temperature typically varies from 4°C to 35°C but can fall to sub-zero and exceed 45°C in the extremes.

Figure 3.3 suggests the highest monthly temperatures experienced in Wilcannia have remained largely unchanged since the mid-1950s.

Figure 3.3: Increase in highest monthly temperatures



The number of days with temperatures exceeding 30°C is shown in Figure 3.4. This temperature is exceeded for one third of the year on average.



Figure 3.4: Days with extreme temperatures

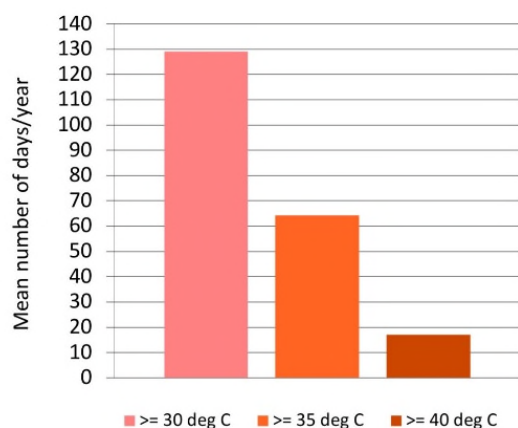
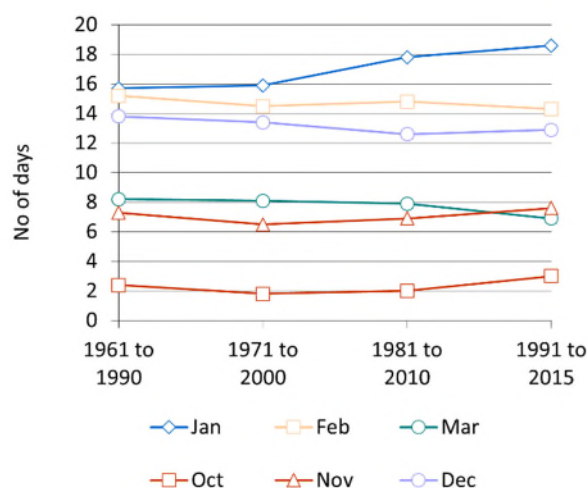


Figure 3.3 illustrates a slow gradual rise in maximum monthly temperature from the mid-1950s, suggesting that the mean number of days with extreme temperatures shown in Figure 3.4 will gradually increase if the trend continues. Figure 3.5 highlights change in the mean number of days with temperatures  $\geq 35^{\circ}\text{C}$  over the warmer months of the year. Unlike other communities in the Murdi Paaki Region, there appears to be little change over time except a slight rise in the number of days in January on which temperatures exceeded  $35^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

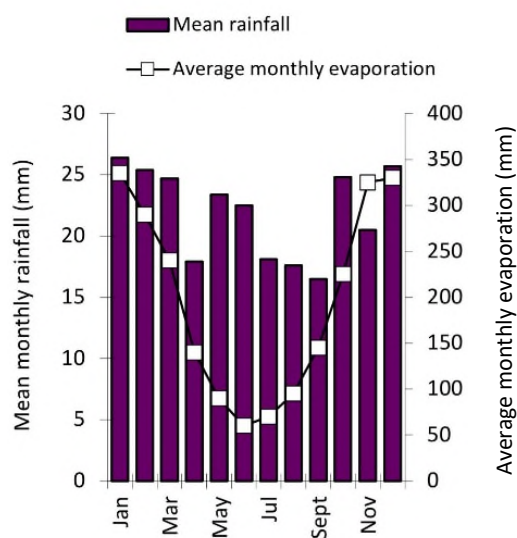
Figure 3.5: Mean number of days with temperatures  $\geq 35^{\circ}\text{C}$ 

The NSW Office of Environment & Heritage is projecting in its report, *Overview of Far West Region climate change*, November 2014, the

annual mean number of days with temperatures greater than  $35^{\circ}\text{C}$  to increase by between 20 and 30 by 2060-2079. This is over and above the corresponding mean of 64 days for the period 1957 to 2015. The inevitable conclusion is that Wilcannia can expect hotter temperatures for longer, with further exaggerated extremes and a consequent effect upon the ability of residents to live and work productively for longer periods of the year.

Mean annual rainfall calculated from the period of record is 265 mm. Monthly distribution is shown in Figure 3.6 with average monthly pan evaporation estimated from Bureau of Meteorology evaporation mapping for comparison. Average monthly evaporation greatly exceeds mean monthly rainfall for all months.

Figure 3.6: Rainfall and monthly pan evaporation



Change in relative humidity is shown in Figure 3.7. Mean humidity is typically above 40% in the morning, the threshold accepted as ideal for human health and comfort, for most of the year, but reduces to below 40% into the afternoon in the warmer months.



Figure 3.7: Relative humidity

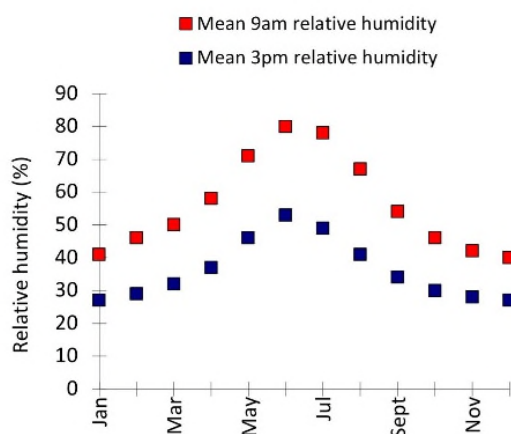


Figure 3.8: Wind speed

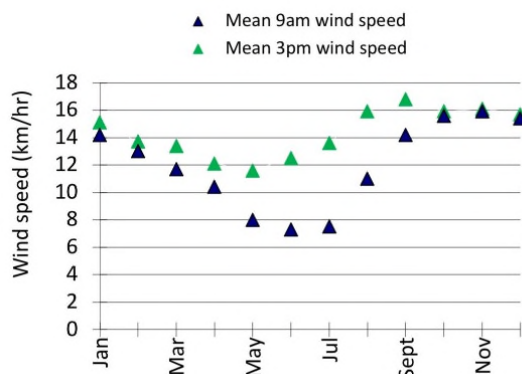
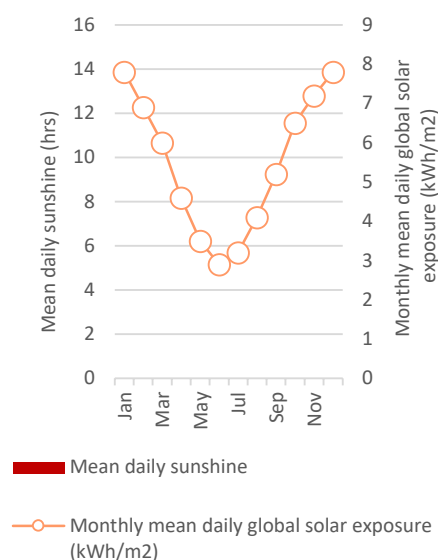


Figure 3.9: Monthly mean daily global solar exposure



A record of the daily hours of sunshine has not been kept so Figure 3.9 is incomplete.

### 3.7 Flooding and drainage

The Baaka/Darling River is part of the Murray Darling system, draining most of NSW west of the Great Dividing Range. Rarely does the catchment of the Baaka/Darling River in NSW contribute to significant river flows; most flooding events occurring at Wilcannia result from heavy rainfall in the upper catchment in southern Queensland. Floods can take weeks or months to reach the river towns of western NSW. Flows can be highly variable with lengthy channel travel times. The river has ceased to flow on many occasions.

Floods can occur at any time of the year but most frequently, depending upon the location of major rainfall events, in March and from July to September. Larger flooding events can also be caused by tropical cyclones in Queensland in summer. Flooding of the Baaka/Darling River system can cause roads north and west of Wilcannia to be cut but Wilcannia is rarely isolated.

River flow and height data has been recorded at Wilcannia since 1886. In the time since, several major floods have occurred, the largest and most recent being experienced in 1976 when floodwaters reached a gauge height of 11.59 m. More recently, the flood of 2012 reached a peak of 10.62 m. Flood classification for Wilcannia is given by Table 3.1. Gauge zero is at 63.222 m AHD.

Table 3.1: Flood classification

Gauge	Flood classification (Gauge height)		
	Minor	Moderate	Major
Wilcannia Main Channel (425008)	9.0	9.7	10.4

Source: Murray-Darling Basin Authority:  
<https://riverdata.mdba.gov.au/wilcannia>

Table 3.2 gives the highest daily rainfall on record for Wilcannia and the year of occurrence for each month.

Table 3.2: Highest daily rainfalls (mm) (046043)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
122	102	117	65	94	58
1976	1932	2012	2019	1906	1923
Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
44	40	41	88	46	173
1950	1903	2016	1894	1992	1936

The intensity-frequency-duration (IFD) values at Table 3.3 would suggest the December 1936 event was greater than the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) value or a 1 in 100-year average recurrence interval event, depending upon the rainfall pattern.

Table 3.3: Rainfall IFD (mm) (046043)

Duration	Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP)			
	10%	5%	2%	1%
1 min	3.00	3.72	4.79	5.69
2 min	4.91	6.09	7.92	9.49
3 min	6.83	8.48	11.0	13.1
4 min	8.58	10.7	13.8	16.4
5 min	10.2	12.6	16.2	19.3
10 min	16.0	19.8	25.4	30.1
20 min	22.4	27.8	35.6	42.3
30 min	26.1	32.5	41.7	49.7
1 hour	32.7	40.5	52.3	62.4
2 hour	40.0	49.5	64.0	76.4
6 hour	55.8	69.0	88.3	105
12 hour	69.2	85.3	108	128
18 hour	77.7	95.8	121	143
24 hour	83.7	103	130	153
48 hour	96.1	119	150	176
72 hour	101	125	159	186
96 hour	104	129	164	193
120 hour	106	132	167	198

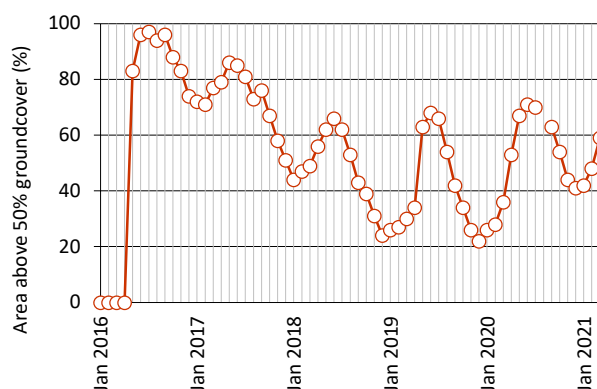
### 3.8 Environmental pollution

Data collected by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Rural Air Quality network DustWatch programme revealed that dust storms occurred with record-breaking frequency in 2019 in the Western Natural Resource Management (NRM)

Region. January 2019 was the dustiest month recorded across the Region since measurement commenced, and White Cliffs, the nearest recording station to Wilcannia, experienced 138 hours of dust during October that year. Figure 3.10 highlights the change in the amount of groundcover that is greater than 50% since 2016, capturing the effect of drought years.

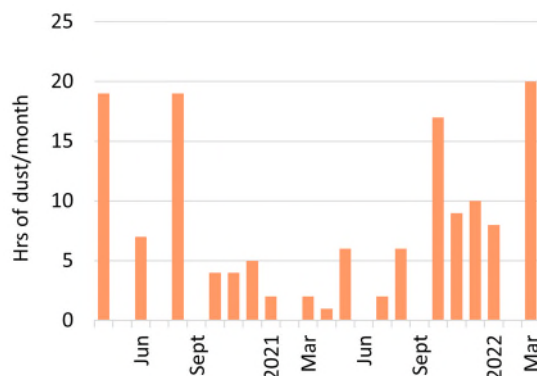
Figure 3.11 shows the persistence of airborne dust at White Cliffs over the period April 2020 to March 2022. The cause of dust generation is a combination of very low groundcover resulting from prolonged dry conditions, high temperatures and increased hours of strong winds (> 40km/h) associated with the passage of cold fronts bringing with them north to north westerly winds.

Figure 3.10: Seasonal variation in the land area with ground cover exceeding 50%, Western NRM



Dust particles can be harmful to human health: there is strong evidence of long-term exposure to fine particles (PM2.5) in the air contributing to adverse respiratory conditions. In the past two years, dust generation has been at lower levels as the extent of ground cover has increased as the drought has eased.

Figure 3.11: Persistence of dust of dust at White Cliffs



### 3.9 Native Title

In 2015, the Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation representing Baakandji and Malyangapa peoples were granted Native Title rights over a large part of western NSW (NNTT Number: NCD2015/001). The claim area included the town of Wilcannia and the determination granted Native Title rights to parcels of land in the town, including residential lots, as shown in Figure 3.12. A subsequent determination (NCD2017/001) granted exclusive rights to other lands to the east of Wilcannia along the Barrier Highway but not in the developed area.

Figure 3.12: Native Title rights over parts of Wilcannia



Source:

[http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleClaims/Pages/Determination\\_details.aspx?NNTT\\_Fileno=NCD2015/001](http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleClaims/Pages/Determination_details.aspx?NNTT_Fileno=NCD2015/001)

For areas designated 'Exclusive Areas', the native title rights and interests comprise the right of possession, occupation, use and enjoyment to the exclusion of all others. For 'Non-Exclusive Areas', native title rights and interests are as prescribed by the determination.

### 3.10 Sites of cultural significance

The Baaka/Darling River corridor is rich with sites of cultural significance. A preliminary search of the Heritage NSW Aboriginal Heritage Management Information System (AHIMS) for sites of cultural significance within a rectangle formed by latitude -31.5899 and -31.5179 and longitude 143.3218 and 143.4359 indicates the existence of numerous recorded Aboriginal sites. These sites contain, among other historic materials, middens, ovens and extensive artefact scatters either in isolation or within the bounds of open camp sites.

In the interests of sites preservation and as a condition of accessing the data, no details are included in this Plan other than to note the existence of historic materials.

### 3.11 Economic geography

From an economic perspective, principal activities within the Central Darling Shire are centred around rural industry, opal mining and tourism. Rural grazing properties, running predominantly sheep, cattle and goats, represent the largest land use within the Shire, accounting for 97% of the entire area. Wilcannia has not captured much of the economic value present in this activity.

Tourism is an emerging industry supported by the town's infrastructure of three motels, two caravan parks and one club. The town has several historic buildings of some note dating from the days of the paddle wheelers but cultural tourism is in its infancy. The principal attraction would be the Aboriginal owned and operated Mutawintji Heritage Tours to Mutawintji National Park.

### 3.12 Design influences

This chapter focusses on a range of environmental

and economic issues which bear upon the living conditions that the next generation of community members can expect to encounter over their lifetime and which help to define design criteria for new housing and other facilities. Any design decisions made now must recognise the more challenging environmental conditions predicted to occur within the serviceable life of a structure built in the near future.

Uppermost of the challenges is that presented by climate change and, in particular, the longer periods of temperatures  $> 35^{\circ}\text{C}$  as modelled by the former NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and discussed in the *Far West Climate Change Snapshot, 2014* which flags an additional 10-20 days of high temperatures in the period 2020 – 2039, increasing to 30-40 additional days of high temperatures by 2070. Separate bodies of work by Healthabitat and by NSW Health at Weilmoringle to assess the impacts of passive thermal control interventions verify that measures which reduce thermal gain result in much lower internal temperatures and make the active thermal controls such as air conditioning more effective and cost-efficient.

Retro-fitting improvements to existing housing is not easily accomplished although, by this time, all houses should have roof spaces fully insulated as a very minimum. Aboriginal social housing owned by Wilcannia LALC is scheduled in 2022 to be retrofitted with reverse cycle air conditioning and grid connected 5.0 kW solar systems and, similarly, the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) is thought to be installing rooftop solar and air conditioning to its housing but details have not been disclosed.





## 4 THE POPULATION

### 4.1 Population profile

The statistical information set out in this chapter has been derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Census using data available from ABS TableBuilder. Census data are generally for the Wilcannia State Suburb (SSC). The State Suburb geography was selected, even though it incorporates a substantial area of rural residue, because both the ABS's Indigenous geography and Location geography exclude the Warrali Estate. Location (L), Indigenous location (ILOC) or North-Western NSW Indigenous Region (N-W NSW IREG) geography has been used where SSC data are unavailable, as indicated in the table heading. The note to Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 is relevant.

Table 4.1: Total population, Wilcannia (Town area)

<b>549</b>	persons
Change from ABS 2011 Census	-55
Table 4.2: Aboriginal population	
<b>82%</b>	n=452
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>23%</b>
New South Wales	<b>3%</b>

Note: Aboriginal population estimate is derived from data for Wilcannia SSC geography and the non-Indigenous population from the Wilcannia Locality (L) geography. This approach is adopted to exclude the non-Indigenous population living on rural properties which, if included, would give an inflated and incorrect picture of the Wilcannia town population

Where possible, the Murdi Paaki Region comparison geography used in this Plan is the aggregated 154 SA1s (ABS Statistical Area Level 1) that approximate the Region. For variables where SA1 level data are not published, either the 8 Local Government Areas (LGAs) approximating the Murdi Paaki Region or the NW-NSW IREG has been adopted.

Figure 4.1 shows the level of non-Indigenous and Aboriginal populations between 2001 and 2016. The most accurate count of the population is the Estimated Resident Population (ERP); however, the

finest scale at which this is available is by local government area. At the ABS 2016 Census, based on comparison with the ERP, the Aboriginal population of Central Darling Shire was undercounted by 19.4%, and the non-Indigenous population by 11.8%. The notional population, adjusted for the undercount, is given at Table 4.3.

Figure 4.1: Population change, 2001 to 2016, Wilcannia (Town area)

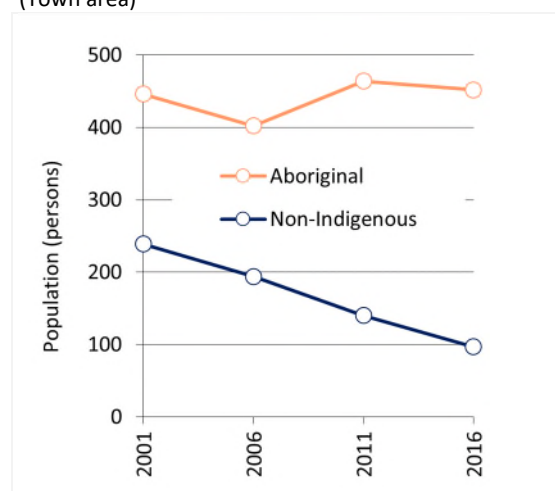


Table 4.3: Notional resident population, 2016, Wilcannia (Town area)

Aboriginal	561
Non-Indigenous	110
Aboriginal population as percentage of total population	<b>83.6%</b>

### KEY FINDINGS

- The Aboriginal population of Wilcannia greatly exceeds the non-Indigenous population and the population fraction is over three times greater than for the Murdi Paaki Region.
- Since 2001, the Aboriginal population in Wilcannia has increased by 0.09% on average each year. In contrast, the non-Indigenous population has decreased by 6.0% on average each year.
- The median age of the Aboriginal population, at 27 years, is just under half that of the non-Indigenous population but is slightly higher than for the Murdi Paaki Region on average, and for NSW.
- The Aboriginal population aged under 15 years is slightly lower than for the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole, and for NSW, but is

almost two times the population fraction for the non-Indigenous population of Wilcannia.

- Non-Indigenous households are two and half times as likely to comprise a person living alone as an Aboriginal household.
- When compared with a non-Indigenous family, Aboriginal families living together in a household are five times as likely to be a single parent family.
- Aboriginal adults were almost 45% less likely to be in a couple relationship than non-Indigenous adults, perhaps reflecting the younger population age structure.
- There were 9% of Aboriginal households which contained multiple families compared to no multi-family households in the non-Indigenous population.
- Aboriginal households had the same proportion of resident non-dependent children than non-Indigenous households.
- Of all those counted in Wilcannia on the night of the ABS 2016 Census, 26 (all non-Indigenous) were in a non-private dwelling (hotel or motel) or staff quarters.

Figure 4.2: Population age distribution

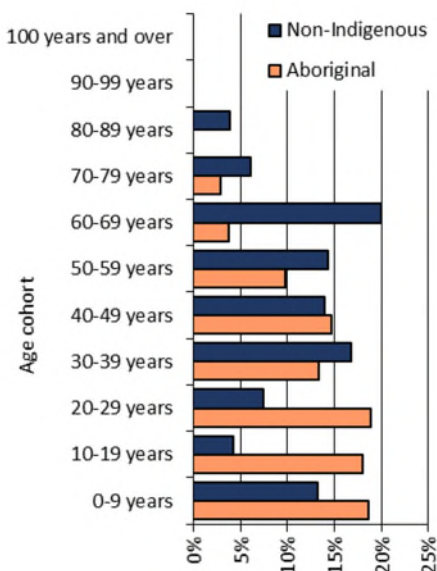
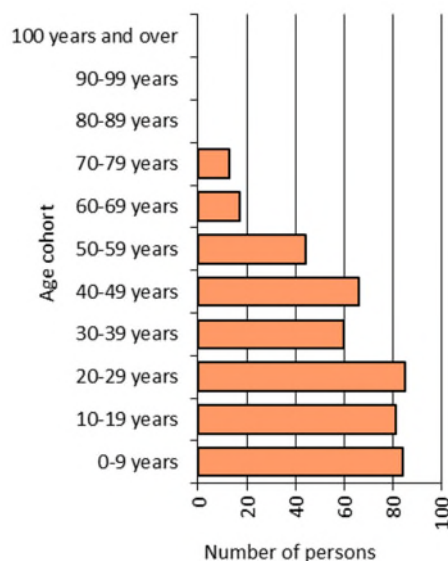


Figure 4.3: Aboriginal population age distribution



Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 4.4: Median age of persons (years) (Wilcannia (ILOC))

	27	48
Murdi Paaki Region	26	46
New South Wales	22	38

Table 4.5: Population aged under 15 years (2016)

	n=112	n=43
Of population fraction	25%	15%
Murdi Paaki Region	32%	16%
New South Wales	34%	18%

Table 4.6: Social marital status (Persons aged 15 years and over)

Registered marriage	6%	44%
De facto marriage	23%	12%
Not married	71%	45%

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 4.7: Lone person households

	n=131	n=92
Lone person households	<b>19%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>21%</b>	<b>36%</b>
New South Wales	<b>15%</b>	<b>24%</b>

Table 4.8: Family household composition

One parent	49%	9%
Couple, no children	14%	40%
Couple, with children	33%	51%
Other family	4%	0%
One parent families:		
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>43%</b>	<b>15%</b>
New South Wales	<b>36%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Table 4.9: Multi-family households (of all family households)

	n=131	n=92
	<b>9%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>
New South Wales	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>

Table 4.10: Families with resident non-dependent children (Wilcannia (L))

	n=26	n=8
	<b>34%</b>	<b>35%</b>
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>25%</b>	<b>18%</b>
New South Wales	<b>25%</b>	<b>21%</b>

A non-dependent child is a natural, adopted, step or foster child of a couple or lone parent usually resident in the household, who is aged 15 years and over and is not a full-time student aged 15-24 years, and who has no identified partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household

## 4.2 Educational status

Table 4.11: Educational institution attended by the Aboriginal population

	n=127
Preschool	6
Infants/primary - Government	26
Infants/primary – other non-Government	0
Secondary - Government	19
Secondary – Other Non-Government	4
University or other Tertiary Institution	7
Other educational institution	9
Not stated	56

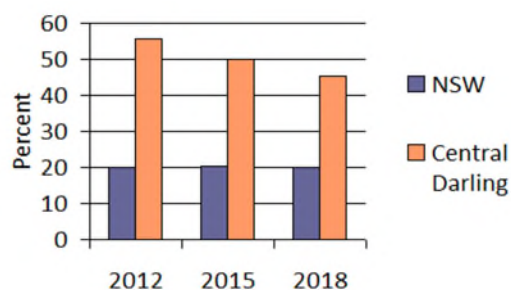
### KEY FINDINGS

- Half of the Aboriginal 4-year-olds enumerated in the ABS 2016 Census appear to attend pre-school compared to two-thirds of the non-Aboriginal children. Only 27% of the Aboriginal 3-year-olds attend pre-school.
- On Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) indicators, children starting their first year of full-time schooling in Central Darling LGA have not reached the same stage of early childhood development as other children in NSW, but the gap has narrowed.
- The Census shows that all children in Wilcannia attend government primary schools; however, the MySchool website says that in 2019 a total of 27 children attended St Therese's Community Parish School which is a non-government school.
- Attendance level (the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time) is quite poor at both Wilcannia Central School (25% of all 62 students) but better at St Therese's Parish School (56% of all 27 students).
- Educational attainment at both Wilcannia schools is well below the average of all Australian students.
- No Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people in Wilcannia aged 15 to 19 years who had left school had completed Year 12.
- No Aboriginal persons aged 17 or 18 years were engaged in learning or learning.
- Aboriginal adults were one-third as likely as non-Indigenous adults to hold a post-school qualification at any level. The Aboriginal population aged over 15 years has a lesser proportion of adults with a post-school

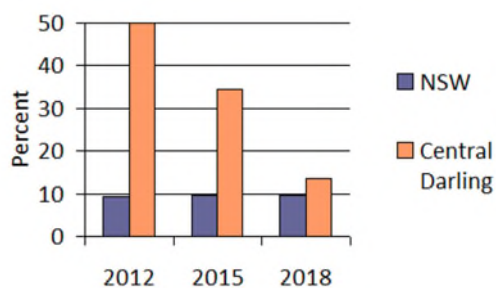
qualification than for the Murdi Paaki Region or for the Aboriginal population of NSW

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Table 4.12: Pre-school attendance		
	n=11	n=3
Children 3 years old	27%	67%
Murdi Paaki Region	41%	50%
New South Wales	52%	49%
	n=4	n=3
Children 4 years old	50%	67%
Murdi Paaki Region	82%	79%
New South Wales	72%	72%

Figure 4.4: AEDC summary indicator of developmental vulnerability (all children)  
One or more domains:



Two or more domains:



Aboriginal children (n=16 or 57% of 28)

Note: Includes Menindee, Ivanhoe, Wilcannia, White Cliffs and Tilpa

The AEDC survey collects data across five key areas of early childhood development:

- Physical health and wellbeing;
- Social competence;
- Emotional maturity;
- Language and cognitive skills (school-based);
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

Figure 4.4 and Table 4.13 show the percentage of all children in their first year of full-time schooling in the Shire who are at risk in one or more of the key early childhood development areas.

Table 4.13: AEDC vulnerability indicators

	Vuln 1	Vuln 2
Central Darling LGA	45.5%	13.6%

Source: Australian Early Development Census, Community Profile 2018, Far West NSW

Figure 4.5: Student attendance level (proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time), 2019 Semester 1

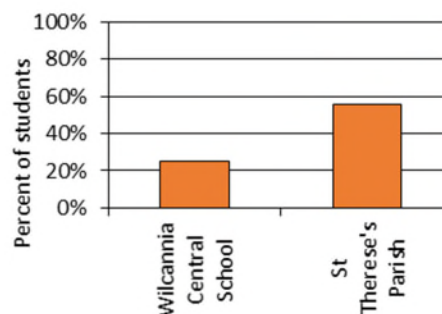




Table 4.14: Educational attainment, NAPLAN, School average when compared with all Australian students

	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Grammar	Numeracy
Year 5					
St Therese's Parish	5	5	5	5	5
Wilcannia Central School	5	5	5	5	5
Year 7					
Wilcannia Central School		5	5	5	5
Legend					
Above average	2	Close to			3
Below average	4	Well below			5

Source:acara MySchools website

Figure 4.6A: Highest year of schooling, all Aboriginal adults

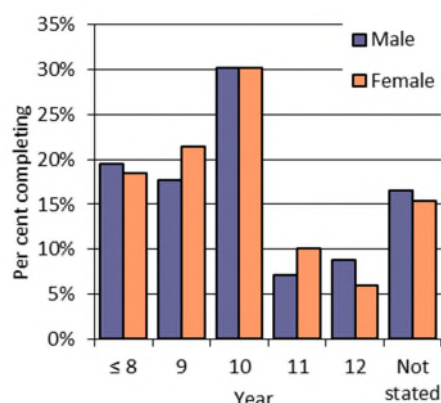
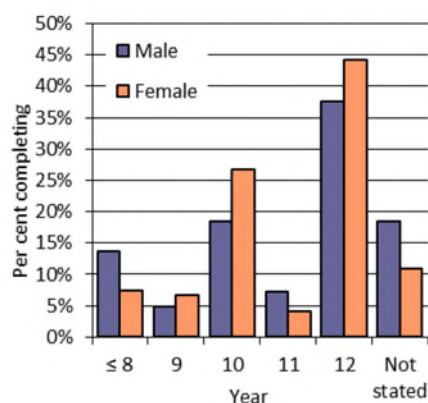


Figure 4.6B: Highest year of schooling, all non-Indigenous adults



Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Table 4.15: Percentage of students completed Year 12 (Persons aged 15 to 19 who have completed schooling and are no longer at school)		
	n=34	n=5
Percentage of students completed Year 12	0%	0%
Murdi Paaki Region	20%	48%
New South Wales	33%	51%

### 4.3 Economic participation

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Table 4.16: Labour force status (Percent of labour force)		
	n=99	n=143
In full-time or part-time work	72%	98%
Unemployed, looking for work	28%	2%
Murdi Paaki Region	76%	94%
New South Wales	85%	94%
16% of those employed worked part-time		

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Table 4.17: Participation in the labour market (Percent of population aged 15 and over)		
	n=308	n=203
In labour force	32%	70%
Not in labour force	68%	30%
Murdi Paaki Region	44%	61%
New South Wales	56%	64%

Table 4.18: Industry of employment – Total population

Industry	Aboriginal		Non-Indigenous	
	No employed	% of total employed	No employed	% of total employed
Health Care and Social Assistance	20	26%	9	7%
Public Administration and Safety	14	18%	18	14%
Education and Training	11	14%	19	15%
Other Services	9	12%	4	3%
Administrative and Support Services	6	8%	4	3%
Accommodation and Food Services	4	5%	4	3%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3	4%	61	48%
Construction	3	4%	3	2%
Information Media and Telecommunications	3	4%	0	-
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	0	-	4	3%
Inadequately described or not stated	4	5%	0	-

Table 4.19: Employment to population ratio (Percent of population aged 15 and over)

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
	n=71	n=140
Employment to population ratio	<b>21%</b>	<b>59%</b>
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>34%</b>	<b>57%</b>
New South Wales	<b>47%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Table 4.20: Occupation of all persons employed

Managers	8%	33%
Professionals	12%	13%
Technician/trades	5%	8%
Community service workers	45%	13%
Clerical/admin workers	11%	6%
Sales workers	0%	4%
Machinery operators	4%	4%
Labourers	15%	20%

Table 4.21: Number of Aboriginal workers employed in the public and private sectors

Australian Government	-
NSW Government	13
Central Darling Shire Council	8
Private sector	52
Not stated	-

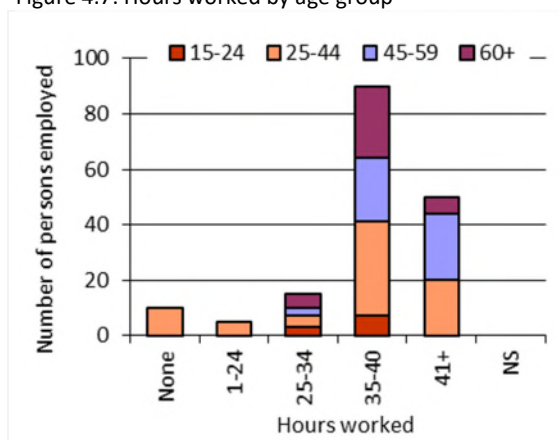
Table 4.22: Total number of businesses, Central Darling LGA, at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019

No of employees	No of businesses
Nil	94
1-4	39
5-19	11
20 or more	0

Table 4.23: Business entries and exits, Central Darling LGA, at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Year	Change in number
2015	0
2016	4
2017	-2
2018	2
2019	-11

Figure 4.7: Hours worked by age group



### KEY FINDINGS

- With an unemployment rate fourteen times that of the non-Aboriginal population, and a low labour force participation rate, the employment to population ratio for Aboriginal people in Wilcannia implies that only one in five adults are in any form of employment. This ratio is low, too, for the non-Indigenous population fraction.
- Investigation of the age structure of the Wilcannia Aboriginal population through calculation of the dependency ratio (40.6 for Wilcannia – lower than for the Murdi Paaki Region, at 61.6) indicates that this is not the cause of the very low employment to population ratio. It is simply that Aboriginal people of working age resident in Wilcannia have a very low workforce participation rate.
- Aboriginal workers are more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be employed as community/personal service workers or a clerical/admin worker but less likely to be employed as a manager or labourer.
- The agricultural, forestry and fishing industry employs the largest proportion of the workforce, followed by public administration, education and health care and social assistance.
- Data for Central Darling LGA indicate a slow decline over time in the number of businesses.

## 4.4 Income

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 4.24: Median total household income

\$/week	1,022	974
N-W NSW IREG	907	1,013
New South Wales	1,214	1,498

Table 4.25: Estimate of personal income, total population, Central Darling LGA

Median employee income (\$) (2017)	37,642
Income share of top 10% of earners (excl. government payments)	36%
FW and Orana SA4	44,418
New South Wales	49,256

Figure 4.8: Average annual growth in median employee income 2014-2017, Central Darling LGA

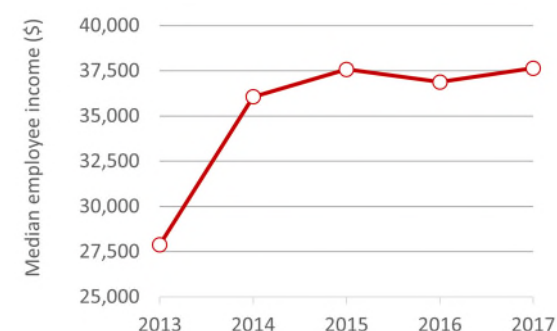


Table 4.26: Sources of income support

In 2018, percentage of total population aged 15 and over receiving:

Age pension (n=191)	13%
Carer payment (n=43)	3%
Disability support pension (n=149)	10%
Newstart allowance (n=143)	10%
Parenting payment, single (n=46)	3%
Family tax benefit A (n=153)	10%
Family tax benefit B (n=142)	10%

**Table 4.27: Proportion of population in receipt of Commonwealth rent assistance**

In 2018, percentage of total population aged 15 and over receiving:

Commonwealth rent assistance (n=111)	8%
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**Table 4.28: SEIFA Index of disadvantage 2016**

SEIFA Index (IRSD) – Wilcannia NSW	<b>739</b>
Rank in NSW (Of 4,112)	4104
SEIFA Index (IRSD) – Central Darling LGA	<b>817</b>
Murdi Paaki Region:	
Highest (Cobar)	<b>968</b>
Lowest (Brewarrina)	<b>757</b>

## KEY FINDINGS

- Although the median weekly income for Aboriginal households exceeds that for other households, the Aboriginal median weekly individual income is almost 60% lower than for non-Indigenous persons. The disparity between individual and household incomes reflects higher average Aboriginal household size.
- It is well established that the Murdi Paaki Region suffers the highest level of socio-economic disadvantage in NSW. Central Darling LGA is placed second lowest in NSW in the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) ranking. The IRSD for the Wilcannia SSC is lower than that of the LGA as a whole.



## 5 THE HOUSING LANDSCAPE

### 5.1 Housing generally

A total of 331 dwellings were counted in the Wilcannia SSC. As Chapter 4 indicates, the SSC geography was adopted because geographies at a finer scale excluded the Warrali Estate. Where data were unavailable for the SSC, data for other geographies are presented, as indicated in the table headings.

Table 5.1: Dwelling types, Wilcannia (SSC)

Total number	<b>331</b>	
Separate houses	283	85%
Terraces, town houses	22	7%
Apartments	13	4%
Other dwelling types	13	4%

Table 5.2: Private dwellings unoccupied on Census night (Wilcannia (SSC))

	n=331	
	<b>66</b>	<b>20%</b>
Change since 2011	n=42	+24
Murdi Paaki Region		19%
New South Wales		9%

77 people were counted elsewhere on Census night

Table 5.3: Households counted in a dwelling on Census night (Wilcannia (SSC))

Resident households	234	
Visitor households	22	
Non-classifiable	21	

Table 5.4: Number of bedrooms per dwelling (Wilcannia (SSC))

0 or 1 bedrooms	21	9%
2 bedrooms	47	20%
3 bedrooms	83	35%
4 bedrooms	51	22%
5 bedrooms and more	32	14%

Figure 5.1: Dwelling size by number of bedrooms

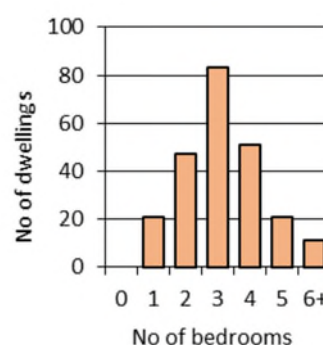


Table 5.5: Building approvals, 2019 (Central Darling (A))

Total building approvals	<b>1</b>
Private sector houses	-
Private other dwelling	-
Other dwelling units	1

Source: ABS Data by Region, 2011-19, Economy and Industry

Table 5.6: Median residential property price (Central Darling (A))

In 2019	<b>\$63,750</b>
No of transfers	19

Source: ABS, Data by Region, 2011-19, Economy and Industry

### 5.2 A statistical comparative snapshot

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 5.7: Average household size (Wilcannia (ILOC))

Persons	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>
N-W NSW IREG	3.0	2.1
New South Wales	3.1	2.6



Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 5.8: Average number of persons per bedroom (Wilcannia (ILOC))

Persons	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.7</b>
N-W NSW IREG	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.7</b>
New South Wales	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>

Table 5.9: Households enumerated (Wilcannia (SSC))

One family household	95	53
Multiple family household	7	0
Non-family household	30	45
Non-classifiable	0	0
Not applicable	0	0

Table 5.10: Occupancy (Wilcannia (SSC))

One person	25	44
Two people	28	25
Three people	29	14
Four people	22	8
Five people and greater	28	5

Table 5.11: Proportion of all households renting (Wilcannia (SSC))

Proportion of all households	<b>71%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Real estate agent	-	-
NSW housing authority	41%	10%
Community housing provider	31%	8%
Other private	12%	10%
Other	15%	72%
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>62%</b>	<b>24%</b>
New South Wales	<b>56%</b>	<b>32%</b>

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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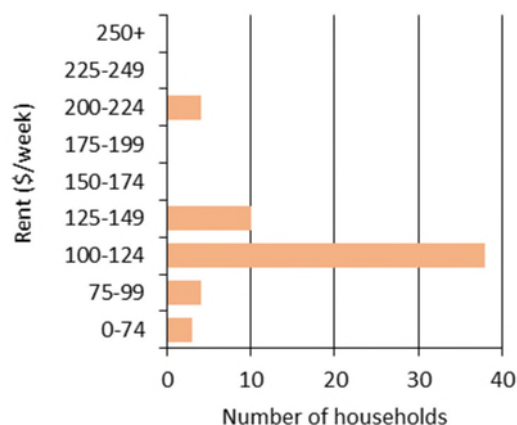
Table 5.12: Median rent (Wilcannia (ILOC))

\$/week	<b>\$110</b>	<b>\$43</b>
N-W NSW IREG	<b>160</b>	<b>150</b>
New South Wales	<b>270</b>	<b>390</b>

Table 5.13: Percentage of all households with rent equal to or greater than 30% of household income (2016) (Central Darling (A))

Renting	<b>4.5%</b>
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Figure 5.2: Weekly rent payable by Aboriginal households, social housing rentals (Wilcannia (SSC))



Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 5.14: Home ownership (including owned with a mortgage) (Wilcannia (SSC))

	n=31	n=71
Proportion of all households	<b>22%</b>	<b>51%</b>
Murdi Paaki Region	<b>38%</b>	<b>76%</b>
New South Wales	<b>44%</b>	<b>68%</b>

Table 5.15: Change in Aboriginal home ownership (Wilcannia (SSC))

	2016	2011
Proportion of all Aboriginal households	<b>22%</b>	<b>18%</b>

Table 5.16: Persons accommodated in non-private dwellings (Wilcannia (SSC))

Hotel, motel, B&B	0	3
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Table 5.17: Number of persons homeless in Far West SA3, including Broken Hill

(After Chamberlain and MacKenzie)		
Marginally housed		9
Tertiary homeless		24
Secondary homeless		34
Primary homeless		9
Living in crowded conditions		97

### 5.3 Population mobility

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 5.18: One year residential mobility (Wilcannia (SSC))

	n=126	n=98
Residents in the household aged one year and over with a different address one year ago		
All residents	<b>2%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Some of the residents	4%	9%
No resident	94%	79%
Murdi Paaki Region		
	<b>12%</b>	<b>10%</b>
New South Wales		
	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Residents in the household aged five years and over with a different address five years ago		
All residents	14%	23%
Some of the residents	13%	6%
No resident	73%	71%

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
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Table 5.19: Number of Aboriginal persons with a different address at stated location 1 year ago and five years ago (Wilcannia (SSC))

Place of residence	1 year ago	5 years ago
Within Central Darling	0	0
Broken Hill	5	4
Elsewhere in the MPR	0	0
Elsewhere in NSW	0	0
Other	4	9

Table 5.20: Access and mobility (Wilcannia (SSC))

No motor vehicles	42%	11%
One motor vehicle	27%	33%
Two motor vehicles	14%	20%
Three motor vehicles	6%	5%
Four or more motor vehicles	5%	11%
Not stated	7%	20%

### 5.4 The local housing market

House prices in Wilcannia vary markedly depending on the quality of construction and building age, size and condition. Information for seven sales in the last twelve months is available. For the 4 years 2017 to 2020 information is available for 38 sales; sale prices have been disclosed for 21 of these. The median price was \$35,000 and the range was \$500 for a small, older-style dwelling to \$275,000 for a house on a 1,073m<sup>2</sup> block. One 3-bedroom house is on the market at the time of writing; with an asking price of \$80,000.

### 5.5 Building activity

Only one building approval for a new residential building was issued by Central Darling Shire Council in the period 2019-2020. The value attaching to this approval was \$120,000. The total value of alterations and additions, including conversions, to residential buildings was reported as \$1,471,000. The value of non-residential building for the same period was \$1,150,000. It is not known in which communities these expenditures occurred but it is clear that building activity is subdued.

## 5.6 Aboriginal social housing

Only one local Aboriginal organisation owns properties in Wilcannia: the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council. Developed residential properties, which number 62, are managed through the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office Build and Grow head lease/sub-lease arrangement by Mid Lachlan Aboriginal Housing Management Co-operative (MLAHMC). The Land Council also has title to three undeveloped lots. The Aboriginal Housing Office also provides Aboriginal social housing managed almost exclusively by Compass

Housing Services (CHS) as shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21: Aboriginal social housing (June 2020)		
Housing owner	Housing manager	Number of houses
Wilcannia LALC	MLAHMC	62
AHO	CHS	20

Property details are provided by Table 5.22 and Table 5.23.

Table 5.22: Cadastral information for Wilcannia LALC residential properties

Lot	Section no	Deposited Plan no.	Registered Proprietor	Area (m2)	Property Address	Property Type	Number of bedrooms
Housing Manager: Mid Lachlan Aboriginal Housing Management Corporation							
1		905929	WLALC		140-142 Woore Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		14 Wiradjuri Drive	Cottage	3
8	28	759091	WLALC		43-45 Hood Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		8 James Street	Cottage	3
B		90552	WLALC		139-141 Woore Street	Cottage	3
4	41	759091	WLALC		1-3 Palmer Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		24 Wiradjuri Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		47 Field Street	Cottage	3
3	32	759091	WLALC		34 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		67 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		31 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		16 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		27 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
3		907143	WLALC		148 Woore Street	Cottage	3
1		254411	WLALC		18 Ross Street	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		20 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		16 McIntyre Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		14 McIntyre Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		74 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		37 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		33 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
9	21	759091	WLALC		131-133 Woore Street	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		6 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		14 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		9 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		7 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		4 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		17 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		13 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		12 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		11 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	3
1		983707	WLALC		143 Hood Street	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		48 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3



Lot	Section no	Deposited Plan no.	Registered Proprietor	Area (m2)	Property Address	Property Type	Number of bedrooms
109		39794	WLALC		64 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		38 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		17 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		9B Bakandji Drive	Cottage	3
109		39794	WLALC		17 Wiradjuri Drive	Cottage	3
2	15	759091	WLALC		111-113B Woore Street	Cottage	3
20		757028	WLALC		5 Warrali Avenue	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		43 Field Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		49 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		65 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	4
2		906901	WLALC		141 Hood Street	Cottage	4
2	15	759091	WLALC		111-113A Woore Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		19 Wanaaring Road	Cottage	4
22		599893	WLALC		13A Reid Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		14 Parundji Street	Cottage	4
1		909409	WLALC		8-10 Hood Street	Cottage	5
1		983704	WLALC		59-61 Hood Street	Cottage	4
1	38	759091	WLALC		124-126 Hood Street	Cottage	4
1	38	759091	WLALC		120-122 Hood Street	Cottage	4
1	38	759091	WLALC		116-118 Hood Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		11 Hood Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		13 Hood Street	Cottage	4
1	38	759091	WLALC		128-130 Hood Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		52 Field Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		46 Field Street	Cottage	4
1		530163	WLALC		27-29 Byrnes Street	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		9A Bakandji Drive	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		21 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	4
109		39794	WLALC		56 Bakandji Drive	Cottage	4
Vacant lots							
1		909802	WLALC		135B Woore Street	-	-
1		907749	WLALC		137 Woore Street	-	-
10		757028	WLALC		8-10 Warrali Avenue	-	-

Table 5.23: Cadastral information for AHO residential properties

Lot	Section no	Deposited Plan no.	Registered Proprietor	Area (m2)	Property Address	Property Type	Number of bedrooms
Housing Manager: Compass Housing Services							
12		531200	AHO		100 Woore Street	Cottage	3
14		539920	AHO		114 Hood Street	Cottage	3
14		539920	AHO		112 Hood Street	Cottage	3
12		548399	AHO		25 Byrnes Street	Cottage	3
3		582322	AHO		122 Woore Street	Cottage	3
1		661829	AHO		12 Hood Street	Cottage	3
2	24	759091	AHO		134a Woore Street	Villa	2
2	24	759091	AHO		132b Woore Street	Villa	2
2	24	759091	AHO		132a Woore Street	Villa	2
2	24	759091	AHO		134 Woore Street	Villa	2
4	21	759091	AHO		92 Reid Street	Cottage	3
4	21	759091	AHO		90 Reid Street	Cottage	3

Lot	Section no	Deposited Plan no.	Registered Proprietor	Area (m2)	Property Address	Property Type	Number of bedrooms
Housing Manager: Compass Housing Services							
1	24	759091	AHO		38 Adams Street	Cottage	3
1	24	759091	AHO		48 Adams Street	Cottage	3
2	24	759091	AHO		134b Woore Street	Villa	4
2	24	759091	AHO		132 Woore Street	Villa	4
1	24	759091	AHO		40 Adams Street	Cottage	4
1	24	759091	AHO		44 Adams Street	Cottage	4
1	24	759091	AHO		46 Adams Street	Cottage	4
1		909647	AHO		22 Woore Street	Cottage	4

Figure 5.2: Aerial view of Wilcannia





## 5.7 Housing assets

Residential buildings shown in Figure 5.3 are illustrative of the lightweight forms of framed housing construction which are the greater part of the Aboriginal social housing portfolio in Wilcannia. Typically, houses are timber framed with suspended timber floors on piers, and fibre-cement plank cladding and metal roof.

Figure 5.3 Typical lightweight forms of construction



The portfolio also includes brick veneer houses built on concrete slab on ground and with metal roofs of which those shown in Figure 5.4 are typical.

Wilcannia LALC properties are subject to restrictions on dealing in accordance with Section 40 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983.

## 5.8 MPRH&BC household survey

### 5.8.1 Overview

A data gathering exercise was undertaken in 2016-2017 under the guidance of the Murdi Paaki

Regional Assembly to provide the evidence for reform of the Aboriginal social housing sector in the Murdi Paaki Region. Over 1,400 households took part, including 63 households in Wilcannia.

Figure 5.4 Typical brick veneer houses



As well as tenants living in social housing, homeowners, private renters, people staying in refuges and/or who were couch surfing contributed to the survey. The contribution from Wilcannia is presented below.

Figure 5.5: Housing mix (All households participating in the survey)

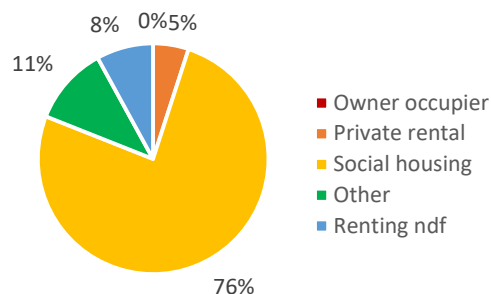


Figure 5.6: Managing organisation (Social housing tenants)

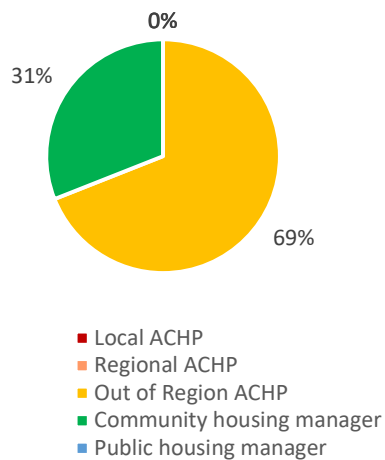


Figure 5.7: Preferred manager of Aboriginal social housing (Social housing tenants)

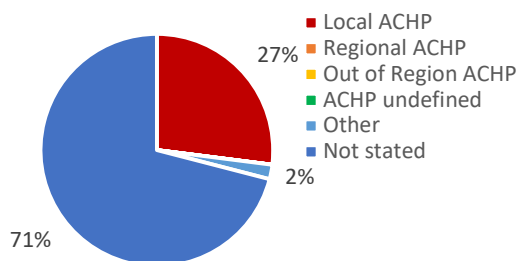


Figure 5.8: Level of satisfaction with manager

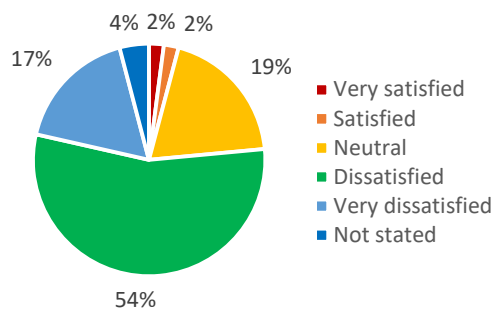


Figure 5.9: Social housing tenants with a tenancy agreement

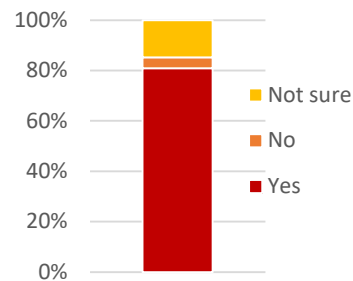


Figure 5.10: Social housing tenants claiming Commonwealth Rent Assistance

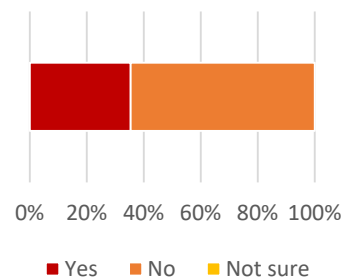


Figure 5.11: Household composition (All households)

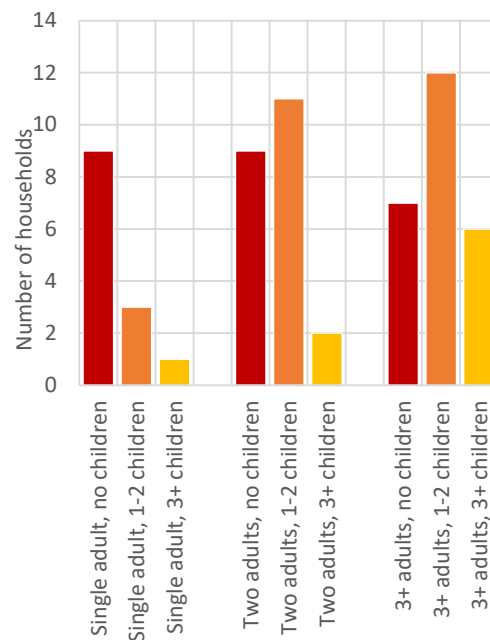


Figure 5.12: Address of tenants 5 years ago

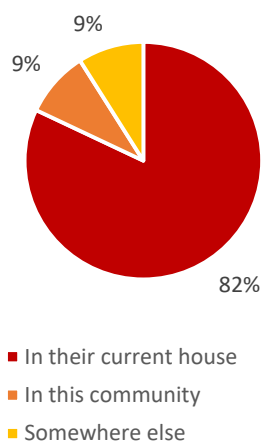
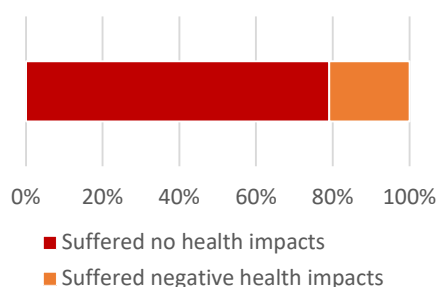


Figure 5.13: Suffered negative impacts from living conditions



## KEY FINDINGS

- Three quarters of respondents to the survey were renting social housing, 5% were in private rentals. No owner occupiers were captured by the survey.
- Of social housing tenants, 69% rented through an Out-of-Region (OoR) Aboriginal community-controlled housing manager while 31% of tenants lived in housing managed by a non-Indigenous community housing manager.
- Only 4% of tenants were satisfied or very satisfied with their housing manager, 19% were neutral, while a much larger number (73%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Those not stating a view accounted for the balance of 4%.
- When asked to nominate a preferred housing manager, 27% of respondents stated a choice for a local Aboriginal community-controlled provider. Almost all remaining social housing

tenants did not offer a preference.

- Four out of five households held a formal residential tenancy agreement.
- Rent levels for social housing tenants were predominantly in the ranges \$101 to \$150/week and \$201 to \$250/week with a handful paying \$100 or less. Worryingly, only between three and four out of ten tenants stated they were claiming Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).
- A little under half of households (42%) responding to the survey stated that their families were composed of adults only. Families with one or two children accounted for another 43% of households. Single parent households made up a fifth of all households.
- Mobility was quite low with four out of five respondents stating they were living at the same address five years ago. One in ten respondent households said that they had moved but only within Wilcannia in the same period.
- One quarter of respondents stated they were suffering adverse health effects from living in their current rental property.

### 5.8.2 The experiences of homeowners

No Aboriginal owner occupier households responded to the MPRH&BC household survey.

### 5.8.3 The experiences of tenants

The MPRH&BC household survey captured approximately 61% (n=57) of Aboriginal households living in rented accommodation. Sixteen households were in Aboriginal social housing managed by a mainstream community housing provider, thirty-seven households were in housing managed by an OoR ACHP, three were renting privately and one was in housing provided by an employer. Additionally, the survey captured five respondents experiencing homelessness, including one couple, and one other not defined. Aboriginal social housing tenants rented either AHO owned housing or housing owned by Wilcannia LALC.

Thirty-eight of forty-seven social housing tenants had a signed tenancy agreement, two did not and seven were unsure; two out of three respondents

in private rental housing stated they had a tenancy agreement. A third of social housing tenants were aware that a limit on occupancy was imposed by the agreement.

The mix of house sizes in Aboriginal social housing is stated in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24: Number of bedrooms

	Number of bedrooms				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of houses	0	4	49	28	1

Twelve out of forty-seven tenants in social housing believed they were paying a fair rent. By inference, three quarters of tenants felt that their rent was unfair. Underlying evidence of financial stress was reflected in 48% of households responding to the question reporting trouble in paying their electricity bills. The size of house did not appear to be a material factor in contributing to the difficulty tenants had in meeting energy costs.

Forty-five respondents renting social housing indicated that renting in the Aboriginal social housing sector was the only option available to them, nine others indicated it was the most affordable housing. Five of forty-eight respondents stated that they could not afford to buy their own home suggesting, perhaps, there was little interest among other tenants in this alternative.

At the time of the MPRH&BC household survey, there were fifty-eight young people wanting their own accommodation and twenty had applied and been accepted onto a waiting list for a unit or house in Wilcannia. Nine older persons were seeking accommodation but none had applied and been accepted onto a waiting list. No one had applied for a house or unit in another community. No older person was seeking to move out of the community into rented accommodation elsewhere. The waiting time for a unit or house could not be reliably determined but was assessed to exceed 24 months because tenancies were stable and opportunities rare. The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

interactive dashboard does not provide any indication of expected waiting times for the Wilcannia allocation zone.

Sixteen households indicated they did not have any intention of moving if their circumstances changed and twelve indicated they might consider relocating if their needs changed. Tenants were relatively stable: 85% of households were living in the same house five years prior to the MPRH&BC household survey and 92% of households were living in the same house one year previously. The median duration of tenancies was 10 years. One interviewee stated that someone in their household was paying rent on another property they rented elsewhere. Of twenty-eight tenants who responded to the question, only three indicated a strong preference for social housing tenancies to be passed down within the family.

No respondents indicated they had applied for a private rental in the three years prior to the survey and so experiences of interaction with the private rental market are absent.

When asked about their reasons for living in Wilcannia, most tenants stated that they were born in Wilcannia or their families had been resident for a long time. Being around family and friends was an important consideration; living on Country, a strong feeling of belonging and feeling part of the community also received a high number of responses. Employment was a factor for living in Wilcannia for four respondents, eight because they liked their house and seven because the climate suited.

Of the twenty-four tenants who responded to the question, fourteen stated their dwelling met their cultural needs. Of the ten that said their accommodation did not meet their cultural needs, none gave responses as to why this was the case.

Of forty-three respondents, nine tenants stated that their accommodation impacted negatively upon their health. Four tenants reported stress associated with lack of safety and worrying about break ins or discarded needles. Five respondents reported their health was affected by the condition

of their house, principally safety of electrical systems, and mould.

By far the highest level of dissatisfaction with social housing in Wilcannia was due to poor communication with the housing manager: the invisibility of field staff and an inability to listen. Ensuring urgent repairs and planned maintenance was scheduled and carried out competently in a timely manner was also a cause for comment. When asked how management services could be improved, twenty respondents wished to see urgent and cyclical maintenance carried out competently and in a timely manner and ten considered that services could be improved by establishing a local office employing local field staff.

5.9 Quantifying crowding

Crowding was a frequent stressor for thirteen respondents to the MPRH&BC household survey who said they were often or always stressed by the number of occupants in their house. Three tenants reported having visitors staying for longer than one week at the time of the survey and three reported visitors staying less than one week. Eleven tenants said that their house always felt crowded. In the three years prior to the survey, sixteen households had given shelter to one or more persons who would otherwise have been homeless while thirteen households were giving shelter to a person who would otherwise have been homeless at the time of interview. Figure 5.14 and Figure 5.15 refer.

Figure 5.14: Households reporting crowding

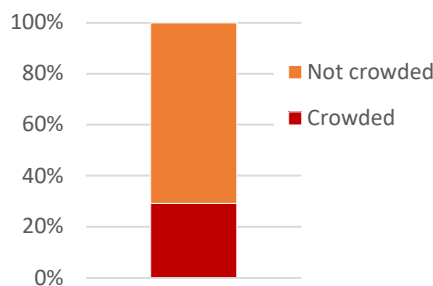


Figure 5.15: Households providing shelter to one or more people who would otherwise be homeless

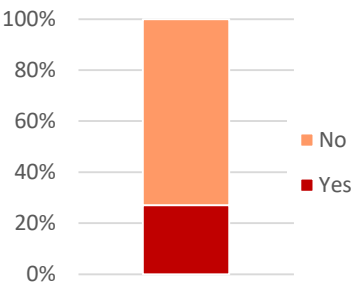


Table 5.25 sets out the number of Aboriginal social housing households occupying 1, 2, 3, 4 or more bedrooms to accommodate permanent residents based on household occupancy as recorded by the survey. The numbers stated do not account for visitors or family reformations. If the values from the small number of fully disclosed responses to the question offered are representative of the whole social housing landscape, underutilisation might be considered to be low. Clearly, this is at odds with the findings in relation to crowding which, in some cases, indicated up to twelve persons living under the one roof.

Table 5.25: Number of bedrooms required to accommodate permanent residents only					
Size of house occupied	Number of households using				
	1	2	3	4	5+
No of bedrooms	bedroom(s)				
1		-	-	-	-
2	1				
3	3	2	-		
4 and greater	4	3	1	1	
All	8	5	1	1	

The response rate to the question relating to utilisation was low so caution is required when interpreting data set out in Table 5.25.

Occupancy levels in all Aboriginal households were assessed against the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) for crowding.

#### Canadian National Occupancy Standard

CNOS adopts the following criteria to determine the number of bedrooms required by a household:

- There should be no more than 2 persons per bedroom;
- Children less than 5 years of age of different sexes may share a bedroom;
- Children 5 years of age or older of opposite sex should have separate bedrooms;
- Children less than 18 years of age and of the same sex may share a bedroom;
- Single household members 18 years or older should have a separate bedroom; and
- Couples share a bedroom.

At the time of the survey, ten Aboriginal social housing dwellings exceeded the threshold criteria for additional bedrooms and either required extension or alternative housing, five requiring one additional bedroom and one dwelling requiring an extra three bedrooms. Seven survey responses from Aboriginal social housing tenants could not be adequately assessed because of a lack of information.

### 5.10 Evaluation of housing need

Unadjusted housing need responses to questions from the MPRH&BC household survey are summarised in Table 5.26.

**Table 5.26: Reported need for new housing: Private and social housing renters, and homeless households**

	Number
Number of households	n=61
Households responding to the question	48
Young people requesting own housing	58
Older people requesting own housing	9
Multi-family households	14

A reliable estimate of need has been derived from assessment of housing composition and potential family reformation by considering each individual survey return. To generate a full appreciation of housing need, the assessment accounts for crowding, and for the preferences of younger and older persons to move into separate accommodation. Primary and secondary homeless persons as recorded by the survey are assigned a

2-bed unit except where a family is in a state of homelessness in which case a dwelling of appropriate size is allocated. Multi-family households, composed variously of couples only and couples with children, are allocated housing of a size commensurate with family composition in accordance with CNOS. As a minimum, younger couples are allocated a 3-bedroom dwelling in the expectation that family size will increase while older couples are allocated a 2-bedroom unit on the presumption that they will move out of the family home.

Table 5.27 indicates housing need for individuals and families living in Aboriginal social housing or who are homeless. Need derived from crowding in private rentals is excluded. The assessment is empirical in nature and requires to be refined with each household, often of multi-generational families, to determine who is willing to relocate.

**Table 5.27: Housing need as assessed for Aboriginal social housing renters and homeless persons and families from MPRH&BC household survey (n=58)**

	Bedrooms				
	2	3	4	5	6
Families	-	11	-	-	-
Older persons	7	-	-	-	-
Young persons	19	-	-	-	-
Homeless persons/families	5	-	-	-	-
Total	31	11	-	-	-

In addition, ten households stated a need for home modifications while six indicated their house had been modified for someone with special mobility needs.

The scale of need is not reflected in any way by Housing Pathways which indicates demand from the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous communities as <5 approved general applicants and <5 priority applicants as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Applications for housing are now online only, excluding potential Aboriginal housing applicants who do not have access to a computer or who have low levels of literacy. The Pathways application process is exceedingly difficult to work through, creating a further deterrent. Support is available through the Murdi Paaki Tenancy Support and Education



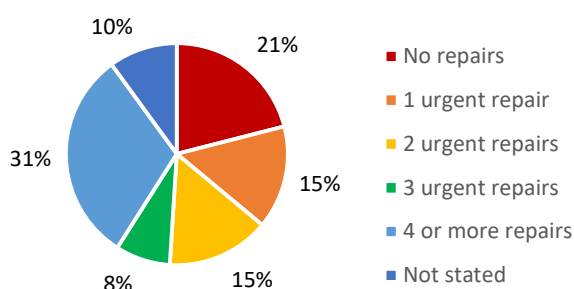
Programme team (MP TSEP), and the Wilcannia Safe House for women applicants but, too often, applicants do not have supporting documentation, including a recognised confirmation of Aboriginality. A widespread view within the community is that there are no rental properties available locally so why bother to apply?

The findings stated in Table 5.27 may underestimate need. Every attempt was made to ascertain actual household composition at the time of the MPRH&BC survey but household populations may be greater than recorded, and likewise demand. It is a requirement of the tenancy agreement that a tenant notify the housing manager of any change in the number of residents housed and identify any additional residents. Observing this process is likely to lead to a rent increase which, for obvious reasons, tenants are eager to avoid and so, although this places a tenant in breach, non-disclosure of some occupants is common.

### 5.11 Evaluation of asset condition

The MPRH&BC household survey invited private and social housing tenants to advise about the need for urgent repairs as a general indicator of housing manager responsiveness to critical defects and, subsequently in the survey, to provide a more detailed appreciation of condition. Responses from social housing tenants to the first enquiry are shown in Figure 5.16.

Figure 5.16: Respondents reporting need for urgent repairs



For the detailed enquiry, a method of data collection and analysis similar to that employed by the National Social Housing Survey (NSHS) conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and

Welfare on a two-to-three-year cycle has been used to characterise asset condition based on information self-reported by tenants: structural defects, failures of enclosing elements, and functionality of facilities. The basis of this assessment is the judgment that a house is deemed to be of acceptable standard if it has no more than two major specified structural, electrical and/or plumbing problems and has at least six working facilities. In this context, facilities are taken to be those comprising 'health hardware' in the Housing for Health terminology which characterise safety and nine healthy living practices (HLPs):

- HLP 1: Washing people
- HLP 2: Washing clothes and bedding
- HLP 3: Removing wastewater safely
- HLP 4: Improving nutrition – the ability to store, prepare and cook food
- HLP 5: Reducing the negative impacts of over-crowding (treated separately in this Plan)
- HLP 6: Reducing the negative effects of animals, insects and vermin
- HLP 7: Reducing the health impacts of dust
- HLP 8: Controlling the temperature of the living environment
- HLP 9: Reducing hazards that cause trauma

The household survey sought to establish observance of the practices using the indicators shown in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28: Indicators for meeting safety and HLPs

Practice	Represented by functional:
HLP 1	Bath or shower, and hot water heater
HLP 2	Laundry tub
HLP 3	Toilet and wastewater disposal/septic
HLP 4	Cooking stove and oven, kitchen sink
HLP 6	Flyscreens and site drainage
HLP 7	Glazed windows
HLP 8	Heating and cooling devices
HLP 9	Electrical installations

The single divergence from the NSHS methodology adopted in this project is to increase the number of working specified facilities to seven through the addition of air-conditioning which MPRA and HLP 8

consider to be essential to managing the health of residents at risk from heat, particularly children, older people and those with long term health conditions. A means of heating the home is also included.

#### Classification of structural and major services faults

Sinking/moving foundations  
 Uneven/sagging floors  
 Major cracks in wall and/or ceiling  
 Termite damage  
 Roof leaking inside  
 Major electrical faults  
 Major plumbing faults  
 Major air-conditioning problems  
 Malfunctioning on-site wastewater treatment system

The results of the evaluation of tenant responses are shown at Table 5.29. Classification in this way might be considered somewhat arbitrary in that a single major structural problem could objectively render the dwelling uninhabitable but it is to be expected that, if serious faults were present at the time of the household survey, the property would have been vacant and not included.

Table 5.29: Social housing condition as expressed by tenants

Condition	
No structural problems, and 7 working facilities	9%
No more than 2 structural problems, and 6 or more working facilities	34%
3 or more structural problems, and 6 or more working facilities	32%
None, 1 or 2 structural problems, and 5 or fewer working facilities	5%
3 or more structural problems, and 5 or fewer working facilities	20%

The principal deficiencies recorded in the quality of Aboriginal social housing are noted in Table 5.30.

The results of the assessment against the Housing for Health safety and healthy living practices are reported in Table 5.31. Whereas Table 5.30 indicates the proportion of installed systems, appliances and fixtures which are either non-functional or not functioning well, Table 5.31 captures those households which do not have the

benefit of some appliances, primarily wood or electric heaters or air conditioners. For example, 19 of 84 households reported they had neither a wood heater nor electric heating and 9 households stated their properties were not provided with any means of cooling.

Table 5.30: Social housing principal structural, electrical, plumbing and facilities problems (%)

Problem area	Houses affected
Cracks in wall and/or ceiling	73%
Termite damage	51%
Septic/sewerage problems outside	39%
Major electrical faults	29%
Major plumbing faults	27%
Moving foundations	24%
Roof leaking inside	24%
Uneven floors	18%
Major air conditioning problems	2%
Non-functional facilities	
Kitchen sink	16%
Kitchen stove/oven	16%
Laundry tub	14%
Toilet	14%
Air conditioning	10%
Shower	9%
Electric hot water heater	5%

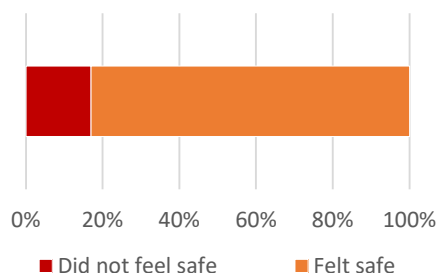
Table 5.31: Social housing observance of the HLPs (%)

Practice	Meeting the standard
HLP 1	Washing people 93%
HLP 2	Washing clothes and bedding 84%
HLP 3	Wastewater disposal 61%
HLP 4	Improving nutrition 84%
HLP 6	Pest control 63%
HLP 7	Reducing impact of dust 84%
HLP 8	Temperature control (heating) 57%
HLP 8	Temperature control (cooling) 80%
HLP 9	Free of electrical hazards 71%

Tenants also reported other minor defects such as fractured verandah decking (22%), no working clothesline (2%) and the like. An inability to secure the house because entry and/or back doors could not be closed or locked was noted by one

household in two, contributing to the feeling of insecurity mentioned by some tenants and reflected in Figure 5.17.

Figure 5.17: Fear for personal safety



In respect of HLP 2 and HLP 4, provision of whitegoods is a tenant responsibility. The percentage of household survey respondents stating access to a working washing machine and fridge were 80% and 84% respectively.

## 5.12 Asset preservation

### 5.12.1 Methodology for budgeting

As discussed above, and in answer to a series of objective, closed questions, tenants reported a range of structural, building fabric and facilities defects in response to the household survey. Unlike the original HEHP investigations of the early 2000's, no independent scoping of properties has been carried out to determine the scale of repairs needed to restore properties to a fully serviceable state and develop a schedule of fixes. This Plan relies on the household survey to generate a profile of asset condition.

The *Social Housing Providers and Assets Audit Report* commented on the serious omission of a requirement under the AHO *Build and Grow* head leasing arrangements for a managing ACHP to carry out planned maintenance during the lifetime of the Agreement so a backlog of higher value maintenance work is to be expected.

In the absence of detailed scopes of work, this HEHP adopts an analysis of previous repair and maintenance projects to derive an 'order of probable cost'. The sample totals 98 properties

spread across seven communities in the Region, large and small, and ranges from properties requiring little or no work to those in need of major refurbishment. The sample is grouped into five bands (quintiles) of increasing scope to generate median values for each band. No adjustment has been made for the average age of properties or type of construction, but values have been revised to account for remoteness as per Rawlinsons cost guide. Costs are to September 2020.

The analysis concentrates on social housing specifically identified as available for allocation to Aboriginal households.

### 5.12.2 Median values

For Wilcannia, band medians are listed in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32: Median values for property repair and maintenance, Wilcannia

Band	Median value (\$)
One	8,980
Two	27,320
Three	42,240
Four	63,150
Five	94,580

The median values for repair and maintenance quoted in Table 5.32 allow for minor routine works or responsive works in the case of Band 1 and Band 2 properties progressing through Band 3 to Bands 4 and 5 which include elements of works categorised as planned: life cycle (preventative) maintenance, but which have not been attended to, by and large, under the *Build & Grow* policy regime. Band 4 and Band 5 works would include internal and external repainting; replacement of floor coverings; replacement of kitchens, bathrooms and/or laundries; replacing appliances, fixtures and fittings where these are no longer serviceable; and ensuring roofing, gutters and downpipes are brought to a satisfactory condition. A number will require structural interventions.

The values quoted in Table 5.32 are median values so it is possible that repairs on the more distressed

properties could exceed \$100,000 at which point the value question arises as to whether it is more cost effective to replace rather than refurbish.

### 5.12.3 Repair and maintenance budget

Based on tenant responses to questions relating to property condition posed in the MPRH&BC household survey, the probable order of cost for repairs and maintenance is given by Table 5.33. Any expenditure since the time of the household survey which might influence cost projections in this HEHP is not available.

It is known that the AHO committed \$5,758 per property annually on average for cyclic maintenance between 2011-12 and 2015-2016, a total of \$1,425,181 across an average of 50 properties across Ivanhoe, Menindee and Wilcannia, but the amount committed to responsive and non-cyclical planned maintenance is not disclosed. It is not known how much of this funding was allocated to Wilcannia.

To derive an order of probable cost for all repairs and maintenance, the number of properties has been factored up in the inverse of the household survey response rate, extrapolating survey findings to the total social housing portfolio in the community; in the case of Wilcannia, the factor is 83/44 or 1.89. The total number is an aggregate of AHO and Wilcannia LALC properties.

Table 5.33: Repair and maintenance, probable order of cost

Band	Number of properties assessed in band from survey	Total number of properties for repair	Probable order of cost (\$)
One	4	8	71,880
Two	15	28	765,000
Three	14	27	1,140,500
Four	2	3	189,500
Five	9	17	1,607,900
Total	44	83	3,774,780
Average spend/property = \$45,479			

It is stressed that the cost projections are based on

tenant responses to the MPRH&BC household survey and the actual scale of repair and maintenance work will be identified through scoping once regional priorities have been established. From the data analysis and as identified in Table 5.33, twenty properties of the total of 83 would appear to require major refurbishment.

No housing manager was able to provide a current estimate of repair and maintenance costs.

### 5.12.4 Replacement

No properties have been identified at this stage for replacement. As noted above, up to twenty properties are reported to be in poor condition and some may, on scoping, be recommended for replacement. In consequence, no houses are proposed in this Plan for demolition.

## 5.13 Entrenched structural inequity

The 2015 report, *Demand and Supply of Aboriginal Housing in Remote and Outer Regional NSW*, prepared on behalf of the AHO, examined the housing situation in twenty-two remote locations, including Wilcannia. The purpose of the report was to inform the AHO in its planning activities and to provide insights into the causes of unstable or unsuitable housing and tenure arrangements and the effect these were having on Aboriginal households. The report found, in summary:

- Substantial levels of homelessness. Consultations with the community suggested at least 100 Aboriginal people were homeless in Wilcannia; and
- Serious to extreme crowding as defined by 8 to 10 persons living in a 3-bedroom house;
- A need for house designs to reflect the Wilcannia environment and include climate control measures.

The consultations provided an outline brief for appropriate housing: house designs should provide for climate, remoteness, large families, high usage and cultural appropriateness, and be air-conditioned.

While now a little dated, the report, when read in conjunction with the findings of the MPRH&BC household survey, illustrates the existence of longer term deep-seated structural and policy issues which negatively affect the Aboriginal population of Wilcannia and which have remained unaddressed for a lengthy period.



## 6 THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.1 Governance

Central Darling Shire is the largest incorporated local government area in NSW in terms of land mass. The area is classified as Remote and Very Remote. In respect of governance, management and operations, Council faces serious difficulties in financing and resourcing its operations. Council has been under administration since 2014 and will remain so until 2024.

### 6.2 Council strategic interests

The ten-year *Central Darling Shire Community Strategic Plan* (CSP) documents the strategic social, economic, environmental and leadership interests expressed by Council and the communities of the Shire. Council believes the Plan is inclusive, noting implementation to be in partnership with NSW Government agencies, community groups and individuals. A complicating factor in delivery of the Plan is the diversity of the Shire's main four communities, its constrained financial position and limited pool of human resources. The CSP is framed within the context of a broader planning framework defined by the *Far West Regional Plan 2030* and the *Far West Regional Economic Development Strategy*.

Priority areas for action stated in the CSP are:

- Goal 1: A healthy and cohesive community, receiving recognition and supported by coordinated, appropriate and affordable services;
- Goal 2: A strong regional economy supported by developing industries, strong businesses and increased employment;
- Goal 3: A protected and supported natural environment and a sustainable and well-maintained built environment; and
- A consultative and professional Council providing relevant, attainable and efficient delivery of services as per the standards set by Council and providing community development and succession planning.

The Plan invites greater participation by the Community Working Parties and Aboriginal service organisations in community affairs with some emphasis on economic development through growth in employment and economic activity.

The *Community Strategic Plan* is complemented by the *Central Darling Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement* (LSPS) which provides for economic, social and environmental land use needs over the next 20 years. Specifically, the LSPS indicates an intention to work with and support the Aboriginal communities to achieve:

- Structural, social, emotional and physical wellbeing;
- A culture of success;
- Economic independence and sustainability;
- Devolved decision making and community autonomy;
- Citizenship and political engagement; and
- Integrated service delivery.

Of direct relevance to this HEHP is a commitment to support diverse housing choice, where possible using existing infrastructure and buildings, and environmental improvements. Economic activity is focussed on the cultural, environmental and built heritage.

### 6.3 Council involvement in the Aboriginal social housing sector

Council reports that it has little involvement with ACHPs in respect of asset management. Property inspections are not undertaken unless specifically requested. Council does intervene when requested to address urgent plumbing problems which cannot be dealt with quickly by the housing managers.

In its *Local Strategic Planning Statement*, Council states that a large proportion of zoned land in Wilcannia consists of deceased estates. Houses are invariably dilapidated and vacant for want of maintenance. Council is trying to determine how these lots can be recovered for redevelopment; a step which would be beneficial to the Aboriginal community.



## 6.4 Planning controls

Areas within Wilcannia are utilised for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. Council, through the *Central Darling Local Environmental Plan (LEP)*, zones the developed residential area of Wilcannia as generally R1, General Residential, with the objectives of:

- Providing for the housing needs of the community;
- Providing for a variety of housing types and densities; and
- Enabling other land uses that provide facilities or services to meet the day to day needs of residents; and
- Minimising land use conflict between land uses on land within the zone and land uses on land within adjoining zones.

Within this zoning, building of dwelling houses is permitted with consent. Minimum lot size is 800 m<sup>2</sup> in the residential area. Council does not have a *Development Control Plan* and the LEP is silent on development controls such as building setbacks, height and floor to space ratio.

LEP Schedule 5, Environmental heritage, records an extensive list of heritage items which may require to be accounted for in any development. The objectives of the policy are to:

- Conserve the environmental heritage of Central Darling;
- Conserve the heritage significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas, including associated fabric, settings and views;
- Conserve archaeological sites; and
- Conserve Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal places of heritage significance.

Defined conservation areas are shown cross-hatched in red on the heritage mapping accompanying the LEP included at Figure 6.1. It is possible that heritage controls will bear on Aboriginal social housing assets and facilities, existing and proposed. Buildings of heritage value are shown in brown colour. When viewed in parallel with Figure 3.12, development options are tightly controlled.

## 6.5 Rates and charges

### 6.5.1 Municipal rates

General rate and waste management charges levied by Central Darling in 2020/21 are shown in Table 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Heritage controls



Table 6.1: Municipal charges (2020/21)

General rate	
Base amount	\$130.00
And variable rate based on unimproved capital value of property (currently 6.4774c/\$1.00 land value)	
Waste management	
Domestic waste service	646.00
Domestic waste service (vacant lot)	306.00
Filtered water access	
Filtered water availability	165.00
Filtered water usage per kL	3.57
Raw water access	
Raw water connected	165.00
Sewerage access	
Sewerage service charge	893.00

The residential lot 1/909409 of 2,023 m<sup>2</sup> has a land value of \$1,530. Total general rate would typically be approximately \$230.

Households are charged a water rate (base charge) where a water service is available close to the

property plus a metered per kilolitre charge for all water consumed. How much a householder pays is dependent on the amount of water used. Accounts are issued on a quarterly basis.

#### *6.5.2 Financial assistance grants*

The Australian Government's financial assistance grant funding is incorporated into Council's general revenue to provide services for all sectors of the community.

The NSW Department of Planning, in its 2019 population projections, suggest that the population of Central Darling is forecast to decrease by 150 people between 2016 and 2041, from 1,900 to 1,750. The Department gives the reason for the change to be working age people leaving to live in larger regional centres. This being the case, the Shire is likely to face increased financial stress which will place further pressure on already strained services unless greater assistance is offered.



## 7 COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILE

### 7.1 Community health profile summary

The community of Wilcannia is one of four small communities in the Central Darling Shire. The Central Darling Shire is considered remote and very remote on all remoteness scales. It is one of five local government areas in the Far West Local Health District.

Quantitative data for the Wilcannia community is not available due to its small size. A mixed methods approach to describe the health of the community has been used.

Combined methods show that the Wilcannia community has been impacted significantly by the social determinants of health. Overall, the underlying risks of poorer health are evident: risky birth outcomes, historically poorer access to educational opportunities, higher rates of admission to hospital, poorer health behaviours (like smoking and drinking) and more likely chronic condition diagnoses leading to death caused by these chronic conditions.

### 7.2 Health status – qualitative assessment

Qualitative evidence was gathered by interviewing local health care providers to assess the perceived health status of the Wilcannia community. Evidence indicates that the health of the Aboriginal population is considered to be poor and the community's health is mostly impacted by the social determinants of health, the lack of parenting and family structure and the state of the environment in which they live. The environmental factors such as the quality of the water, overcrowding of houses and the poorly maintained environment both within and external to homes have predominantly affected the health of the community. A feeling of neglect prevails and this combined with poor environmental health infrastructure and provision of services is manifesting in poor social, cultural and health

outcomes as outlined in the following:

- While not resulting in hospital presentations there has been an increase in impetigo (school sores) in young adults. There are also many people with non-infected, itchy, dry skin and rashes which can be alleviated with simple skin creams like Sorbolene or Vitamin E cream;
- Most of the community refuse to drink the water and some refuse to shower in it. The quality continues to be poor; even though water is now coming over the weir and is treated, it is very muddy;
- Because some people are refusing to shower in the water, personal hygiene habits have led to poorer health outcomes, for example wounds not healing;
- Compliance with healthcare advice, whether it be follow-up care requirements, medication, dressings, is poor;
- An increase in gambling and the availability and use of drugs and alcohol is taking its toll on the social and emotional wellbeing state of the community;
- There are few employment opportunities in Wilcannia. People are also reluctant to apply for jobs that might expose their inferior literacy and numeracy abilities or their lack of computer skills. They are also concerned about the increased requirement for criminal record checks. It was felt that many young people were not 'work-ready' as they had not learnt the life skills required (for example staying at school/work for the entire day/week);
- Overcrowded Aboriginal households are evident in the township and some people simply just move from house to house. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed grave systemic issues with housing supply and repairs and maintenance;
- Community Elders are now taking a much more active role in raising the children in town. This was identified as a poor outcome as the older Aboriginal people remember going to visit their Elders as a privilege and with great excitement as the Elders were held in such high regard. Now the Elders have a responsibility for the younger people and feel it is expected of them;
- Rubbish is accumulating both inside and

outside houses and does not seem to be removed. A feeling of hopelessness is evident – there is no motivation to clean up any areas and the problem escalates;

- Houses are poorly maintained and there is limited evidence of people being 'house proud'. It was reported that rent was not paid because maintenance had not been done but then maintenance had not been done because the rent had not been paid;
- The state of the town has deteriorated in the past 20 years. Health workers were told of poorer social and emotional wellbeing then and wonder if what we see now is a result of this.

In 2019, 71.7% of Far West Local Health District (FWLHD) residents who participated in the annual NSW Population Health Survey reported excellent, very good, or good health<sup>1</sup>.

### 7.3 Health status – quantitative assessment

Data for the Central Darling Shire, Far West Local Health District, the region covered by Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation and NSW is presented to describe the health status of the population.

#### 7.3.1 Mother and baby health<sup>2</sup>

In far western NSW, compared to all women

- There is a higher proportion of younger Aboriginal women aged 10-19 having a baby;
- More Aboriginal women are having their first antenatal visit early;
- Aboriginal women are almost 10 times more likely to smoke during pregnancy;
- Aboriginal women are almost 4 times more likely to have a baby with a low birthweight (<2,500g); and
- Aboriginal women are 3 times more likely to have a baby prematurely (<37 weeks gestation).

#### 7.3.2 Growth and development of children and young people<sup>2</sup>

In far western NSW, compared to all children:

- There is a higher proportion of Aboriginal children who are fully immunised at 9 months and again at 5 years;
- The percentage of Aboriginal 4-year-old children attending preschool has increased by 16% in the last 5 years;
- Aboriginal children in year 5 are 2 times more likely to have a lower standard of reading assessment in the NAPLAN test; and
- Almost 40% of Aboriginal young people who complete year 10 stay at school until they are in year 12 – an increase of almost 5% in the last 5 years.

#### 7.3.3 Morbidity

- Compared to all Aboriginal people in Australia, Aboriginal people in the Broken Hill and Far West SA3 are significantly more likely to present to the Emergency Department for all reasons. Overall, Aboriginal people in the Broken Hill and Far West SA3 are almost two times more likely to present to the Emergency Department compared to all Aboriginal people in Australia (109,107.6 per 100,000 people compared to 62,109.4 per 100,000 people).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2016/17 there were, on average more than 12,000 admissions to hospital by Far West LHD residents, of whom 17% were Aboriginal people, who form 11% of the total LHD population.<sup>4</sup>
- The leading cause of admission for Aboriginal people in the Far West LHD is dialysis (45%) then injury and poisoning (7%) and respiratory disease (7%).<sup>4</sup>
- The proportion of Aboriginal people in the Far West LHD admitted to hospital for dialysis is more than the three times that of the proportion expected when compared with the NSW Aboriginal population.<sup>4</sup>
- Compared to all Aboriginal people in Australia, Aboriginal people in the Broken Hill and Far West SA3 are significantly more likely to be admitted to hospital for eye diseases, asthma and chronic airways disease. There are significantly fewer admissions for infectious

and parasitic diseases, endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disease, nervous system diseases, heart failure, skin diseases, musculoskeletal diseases, urinary diseases, chronic kidney disease (which is different to dialysis), childbirth and babies with malformations.<sup>3</sup>

- Conversely, the admission rate for all people in the Far West LHD for skin infections is significantly higher than the rate in NSW (569.4 per 100,000 people compared to 355.3 per 100,000 people).<sup>5</sup>
- The rate of potentially avoidable admissions in the Central Darling Shire is significantly higher than in NSW (2,977.0 per 100,000 admissions compared to 2,160.7 per 100,000 admissions).<sup>6</sup>
- The leading cause of potentially avoidable admission in the Far West LHD is iron deficiency anaemia followed by chronic airways disease (COPD) and cellulitis.
- Aboriginal people in Broken Hill and Far West SA3 are significantly less likely to be admitted to hospital for a potentially preventable condition compared to all Aboriginal Australians (4,896.0 per 100,000 people compared to 5,395.2 per 100,000 people).<sup>3</sup>

#### 7.3.4 Mortality

- In 2018, there were 298 deaths of people who lived in the Far West LHD. For people who lived in the Far West LHD, the all causes death rate was significantly higher than the rate for all of NSW (634.6 per 100,000 people compared to 506.4 per 100,000 people).<sup>7</sup>
- For all Aboriginal people in the Broken Hill and Far West SA3, the median age at death is 64.0 years compared to 61.0 years in NSW.<sup>3</sup> By comparison, the median age at death for all people who live in the Central Darling Shire is 63.0 years compared to 82.0 years for all NSW residents.<sup>8</sup>
- The leading age-adjusted death rate for all Aboriginal people in NSW is circulatory disease (189.0 per 100,000 population) which is significantly higher than the rate of circulatory disease death in all of NSW (144.6 per 100,000 population).<sup>9</sup>
- In contrast, in the Far West LHD, the leading cause of death is malignant cancers (27.6% of

all deaths).<sup>10</sup>

- In the Central Darling Shire in 2016-2018 the death rate from injury and poisoning was significantly higher than in NSW (54.2 per 100,000 population compared to 35.6 per 100,000 population).<sup>11</sup>
- In NSW, 6.9% of all deaths in outer regional and remote areas are due to injury and poisoning and 1.5% are due to infectious and parasitic diseases.<sup>12</sup>
- The rate of potentially avoidable deaths in the Central Darling Shire is significantly higher than in NSW (128.1 per 100,000 population compared to 99.4 per 100,000 population).<sup>13</sup>
- Aboriginal people in Broken Hill and Far West SA3 are significantly more likely to die prematurely from respiratory diseases compared to all Aboriginal Australians (83.3 per 100,000 people compared to 26.9 per 100,000 people).<sup>3</sup>

#### 7.3.5 Health risk factors

- In NSW, 26.4% of the Aboriginal population smoked cigarettes daily. In the Far West LHD this proportion was 18.6%; by comparison the proportion of smokers in NSW was 11.2%.<sup>14</sup>
- In NSW, 48.7% of the Aboriginal population drank alcohol at levels that posed a long-term risk to health. In the Far West LHD this proportion was 38.3%; by comparison the proportion of at-risk drinkers in NSW was 32.8%.<sup>15</sup>

Tables 7.1 to 7.5 and Figure 7.1 provide detailed information of the health statistics for the region.

Table 7.1: Cause of presentation to Emergency Departments, all Aboriginal people, rate per 100,000, Far West SA3, NSW and Australia 2015/16-2017/18

	Far West SA3	NSW	Australia
All causes	109,107.6*	71,135.8	62,109.4
Infectious and parasitic disease	4,939.8*	3,393.1	3,293.9
Mental health and related conditions	5,127.4*	3,649.3	3,636.7
Circulatory system diseases	2,242.0*	1,274.2	1,570.1
Respiratory system diseases	12,178.5*	7,153.7	6,340.7
Digestive system diseases	6,273.1*	3,972.5	3,500.8
Musculoskeletal system diseases	5,710.7*	3,936.2	2,910.1
Urinary system diseases	3,037.5*	2,364.4	2,263.4
Injury, poisoning and external causes	27,940.2*	16,420.0	14,458.8
Other factors requiring contact with the health system	5,660.1*	5,889.1	4,664.0
Other reasons	36,081.0*	23,097.0	19,471.0

\* Significantly higher than the rate for Australia

Data source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia. Public Health Information Development Unit, Torrens University Australia

Table 7.2: Leading cause of admission for Aboriginal people, FWLHD, 2016-17

	% admissions: Aboriginal people in FWLHD	All NSW Aboriginal % admissions	All NSW % admissions
Dialysis	45%	27%	13%
Injury & poisoning	7%	7%	7%
Respiratory diseases	7%	7%	5%
Maternal, neonatal & congenital disorders	7%	10%	7%
Digestive system diseases	6%	7%	10%
Mental disorders	6%	5%	5%
Symptoms & abnormal findings	4%	7%	8%
Other factors infl. health	4%	7%	11%
Circulatory diseases	3%	3%	5%
Nervous & sense disorders	2%	4%	7%
Genitourinary diseases	2%	4%	5%
Skin diseases	2%	2%	2%
Musculoskeletal diseases	2%	3%	5%
Endocrine diseases	1%	2%	2%
Infectious diseases	1%	2%	2%
Malignant neoplasms	1%	2%	4%
Other neoplasms	1%	1%	2%
Blood & immune diseases	0%	1%	1%
Other causes	0	1%	0%

Data source: NSW CAPED, ABS (SAPHaRI). Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health



Table 7.3: Cause of admission, all Aboriginal people, rate per 100,000, Far West SA3, NSW and Australia 2015/16-2017/18

	Far West SA3	NSW	Australia
Infectious and parasitic disease	716.2 <sup>#</sup>	759.9	1,093.5
All cancers	1,005.0	926.1	983.8
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	733.8 <sup>#</sup>	704.9	1,101.0
- Diabetes	334.4	319.0	420.9
Mental health and related conditions	2,598.3	2,515.3	2,626.5
- Mood affective disorders	373.2	351.3	355.6
Nervous system diseases	638.0 <sup>#</sup>	807.1	916.5
Eye and adnexa diseases	696.8 <sup>*</sup>	465.4	531.6
Ear and mastoid process diseases	317.0	336.1	423.4
Circulatory system diseases	1,830.6	1,389.5	1,822.7
- Ischaemic heart disease	791.5	473.7	652.8
- Heart failure	126.0 <sup>#</sup>	163.4	238.4
Respiratory system diseases	3,551.2	2,659.0	3,373.8
- Asthma	487.1 <sup>*</sup>	280.6	300.4
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	947.2 <sup>*</sup>	548.3	594.9
Digestive system diseases	3,141.6	2,843.6	3,099.5
Skin diseases	1,031.7 <sup>#</sup>	821.0	1,370.0
Musculoskeletal system diseases	933.2 <sup>#</sup>	1,415.0	1,446.0
Urinary system diseases	1,087.7 <sup>#</sup>	1,460.8	1,696.2
- Chronic kidney disease	57.6 <sup>#</sup>	252.7	387.3
Pregnancy and childbirth	10,411.5 <sup>#</sup>	12,749.2	14,700.7
Congenital conditions	109.5 <sup>#</sup>	215.0	210.3
Injury, poisoning and external causes	4,264.7	3,305.9	4,364.1

<sup>\*</sup> Significantly higher than the rate for Australia

<sup>#</sup> Significantly lower than the rate for Australia

Data source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia. Public Health Information Development Unit, Torrens University Australia

Table 7.4: Leading cause of death, FWLHD and NSW, 2018-19

	FWLHD total population			NSW	
	Ave # deaths per year	Rate per 100,000	% deaths	Aboriginal % deaths	Total % deaths
Malignant cancers	86.0	179.0	27.6	25.3	28.3
Circulatory diseases	65.0	130.2	20.8	21.8	27.6
Respiratory diseases	32.5	70.4	10.4	11.6	9.8
Mental and behavioural disorders	29.5	56.9	9.5	6.7	6.9
Endocrine diseases	22.5	44.2	7.2	6.4	4.2
Injury and poisoning	76.5	192.7 <sup>1</sup>	24.5	13.6	5.9
All other causes				14.6	17.3
All causes	312	673.5			

Data source: NSW COC URF, ABS (SAPHaRI). Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health

Table 7.5: Premature deaths, Aboriginal people aged 0-74 years, rate per 100,000, Far West SA3, NSW and Australia 2013-2017

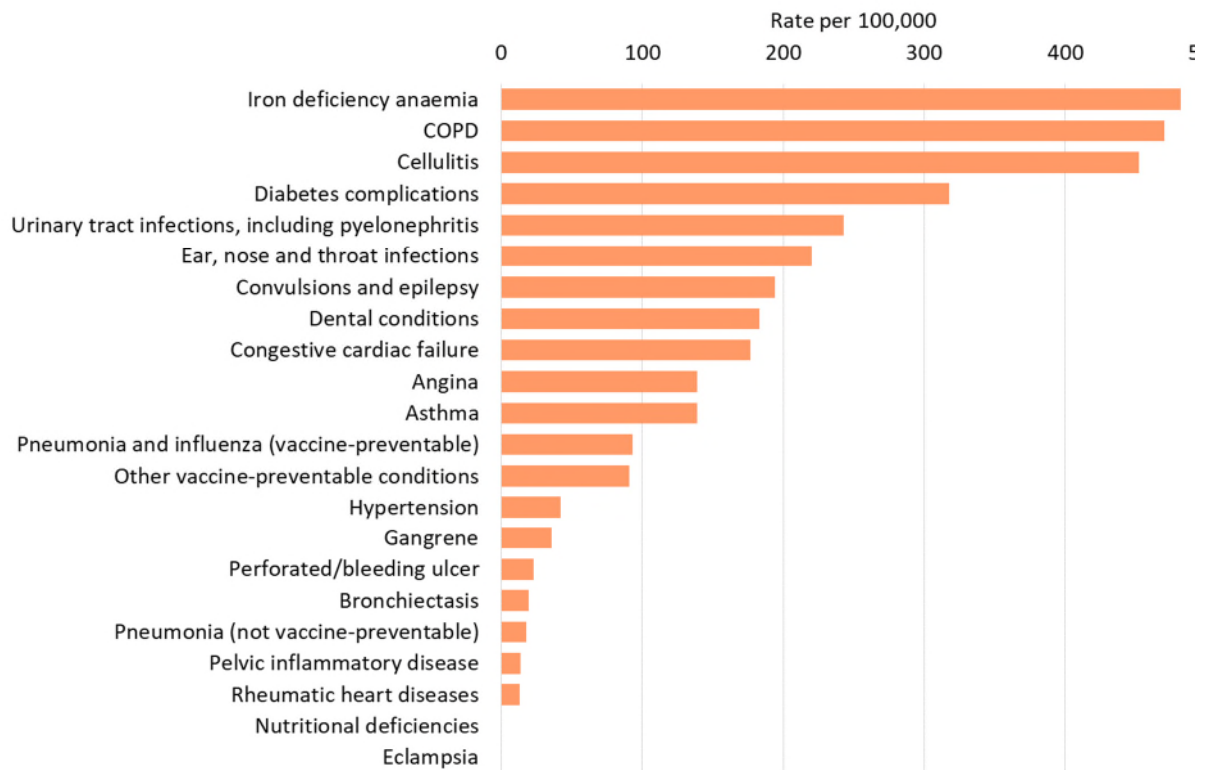
	Far West SA3	NSW	Australia
Deaths from cancer	97.4	56.3	72.1
Deaths from diabetes	37.6	10.0	23.4
Deaths from circulatory system diseases	88.2	46.1	69.8
Deaths from respiratory system diseases	83.3*	22.4	26.9
Deaths from external causes	55.7	41.5	58.1

\* Significantly higher than the rate for Australia

Data source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Atlas of Australia.  
Public Health Information Development Unit, Torrens University Australia

<sup>1</sup> Due to small numbers the data for deaths due to 'injury and poisoning' in the Far West LHD has been combined with 'other causes'. Injury and poisoning deaths data for the Local Government Area is included in the text.

Figure 7.1: Potentially avoidable admissions (rate per 100,000), total population FWLHD, 2018-19



Data source: NSW CAPED, ABS (SAPHaRI). Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health

#### 7.4 Available health services

Health services in Wilcannia are provided by the Far West LHD, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, Western NSW Primary Health Network (PHN) and some other, standalone providers.

Wilcannia Health Service is a multipurpose service staffed by resident nurses that provides first line emergency care, observation and stabilisation of people requiring transport to a larger service and high care residential aged care services. It is a 24-hour, 7-day facility.

The Far West LHD provides:

- Registered nurses
- Administration support
- Security and domestic services

- Psychiatrist
- Sexual health
- Women's health
- Mental health
- Physiotherapist
- Access to other allied health services from Broken Hill on request
- Access to medical specialists (in Broken Hill)

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation manages the Primary Health Care Service within the Wilcannia Health Service building which is open Monday to Friday 9.00am-5.00pm. Maari Ma maintains a permanent local presence but all other health and medical needs are supported remotely. Regular chronic disease clinics are held two days a week. Services provided are:

- GPs (specialising in Aboriginal Health and Chronic Disease care)

- Aboriginal Health Practitioners and trainees
- Early childhood nurse
- Antenatal care (and specialist GP)
- Dietitian
- Child dental
- Mental health (including primary care for psychology and drug and alcohol services)
- Diabetes specialist nursing care
- Speech pathology
- Paediatric occupational therapy
- Transport
- Access to visiting medical and allied health specialists (endocrinology, renal medicine, cardiology, paediatrics, ENT, psychiatry, pain medicine, respiratory medicine, ophthalmology, echocardiography, smoking cessation, optometry)

Maari Ma is in the process of developing a new Wilcannia Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Centre from which to deliver services but, although supported by Council, the project has met with objections from some sections of the non-Indigenous community.

The RDFS holds a minimum of three GP clinics per week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, supported by telephone consultations and emergency retrievals. The dentist is in Wilcannia each Monday. Other services provided are:

- Medical specialists (dermatology, ophthalmology, ENT)
- Drug and alcohol and mental health workers
- Aboriginal Health Practitioner
- Early childhood counsellor

The Western NSW PHN provides:

- Podiatry (from University of South Australia)

Other, standalone providers include:

- Audiology (Hearing Australia)



## 8 HUMAN SERVICES

### 8.1 Human services target population

The sectors of the Aboriginal population which should be the target of human services are identified in Table 8.1 together with the corresponding population numbers. The figures are for 2016.

Table 8.1: Service age groups, 2016

Total persons (Usual residence)	Aboriginal		Non-Indigenous		Ratio
	Number	%	Number	%	
Service age group (years)					
Babies and pre-schoolers (0-4)	45	9.9	9	3.9	2.5
Primary schoolers (5-11)	49	10.8	14	6.0	1.8
Secondary schoolers (12-17)	51	11.3	6	2.6	4.3
Tertiary education and independence (18-24)	65	14.3	18	7.7	1.9
Young workforce (25-34)	87	19.2	25	10.7	1.8
Parents and homebuilders (35-49)	84	18.5	50	21.5	0.9
Older workers and pre-retirees (50-59)	45	9.9	33	14.2	0.7
Empty nesters and retirees (60-69)	20	4.4	49	21.0	0.2
Seniors (70-84)	7	1.5	21	9.0	0.2
Elderly aged (85 and over)	0	0	8	3.4	-
Total	453	100	233	100	-

Source: ABS Tablebuilder with age classifications as .id Consultants

Population fraction	Aboriginal	Non-Indigenous
Table 8.2: Core activity need for assistance		
	n=385	n=219
Of cohort population	6%	0%
Murdi Paaki Region	7%	7%
New South Wales	8%	6%

The proportion of the Aboriginal population requiring assistance in the core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of disability, long term health condition or old age is identified at Table 8.2, together with the non-Indigenous population for comparison. The age range of the Aboriginal population fraction is given at Table 8.3.

### 8.2 Human services in the community

Human services available to the Aboriginal community to cater for a range of needs are shown at Table 8.4 and the features of home care services are described at Table 8.5. Table 8.6 lists the NSW government principal agencies providing services to Wilcannia. There is no Australian Government presence.

Table 8.3: Core activity need for assistance by age group, Aboriginal population

0-9 years	0
10-19 years	0
20-29 years	0
30-39 years	0
40-49 years	0
50-59 years	10
60-69 years	3
70-79 years	4
80-89 years	3
Total	20

The NDIS is funding a total of 29 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) packages across Central Darling LGA as a whole. Total Aboriginal population requiring assistance across Central Darling LGA is 27 persons. The number of non-Indigenous persons is 30

Table 8.4: Human service providers and service mix

Sector	Provider	Principal services	Resident office	Target population	Funding agency
Health services	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation	Primary health care outreach clinic plus visiting specialists	Broken Hill	Aboriginal community	-
	Far West Local Health District	Wilcannia Multi-purpose service	Broken Hill	General population	-
	Royal Flying Doctor Service	Primary health care, retrieval plus visiting specialists	Broken Hill	General population	-
	University Department of Rural Health	Allied health student deployment	Broken Hill	School children	-
Aboriginal social housing services	Mid Lachlan Aboriginal Housing Management Corp	Aboriginal social housing	Dubbo	Aboriginal community	AHO
	Compass Housing Services	Aboriginal social housing	Broken Hill	Aboriginal community	DPIE/AHO
Tenant support	Murdi Paaki Services Ltd	Tenant education and support (MP TSEP)	Cobar	Aboriginal community	DPIE/AHO
	Western Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service	Tenant advocacy and representation	Dubbo	Aboriginal community	Fair Trading
Homelessness services	Domestic Violence NSW Service Management Ltd	Wilcannia Young People, Womens and Families Homelessness and Housing Support Service	Wilcannia	Aboriginal population	DCJ
	Mission Australia	Reconnect – Far West	Broken Hill	Young people aged 12 - 18 years	DSS
	Mission Australia	Far West Homeless Youth Assistance Program	Broken Hill	Young people aged 12 - 15 years	DCJ
Early childhood services	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation	Wilcannia Early Years Playgroup	Broken Hill	Young Aboriginal children	-
	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation	Aboriginal Parents as Teachers Programme	Broken Hill	Young Aboriginal children	-
	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation	Maari Ma Strong Young Families Wilcannia	Broken Hill	Young Aboriginal children	NIAA
	Mission Australia	Orana Far West Early Intervention Programme	Broken Hill	General population	DCJ
Family support services	CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Ltd	Targeted Early Intervention	Broken Hill	General population	DCJ
	Lifeline - Broken Hill Inc	Targeted Early Intervention	Broken Hill	General population	DCJ



Table 8.4: Human service providers and service mix

Sector	Provider	Principal services	Resident office	Target population	Funding agency
	Maari Ma Health	Wilcannia Wings Youth Centre	Broken Hill	General population	DCJ
	Mission Australia	Broken Hill & Districts Family Support Service	Broken Hill	General population	DCJ
Crisis/refuge	Domestic Violence NSW Service Management	Wilcannia Safe House	Wilcannia	Women and dependent children	DCJ
Employment services	REDI.E	Community Development Programme	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	NIAA
	REDI.E	Jobactive employment service	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	DESE
	Central Darling Shire Council	1000 Jobs Package	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	NIAA
	Cultural Solutions	1000 Jobs Package: NDIS and maintenance	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	NIAA
Social support	REDI.E	Centrelink service	Wilcannia	General population	-
Residential aged care services	Wilcannia Multi-Purpose Service	Residential aged care, respite high and low care	Wilcannia	General population	ACFI/HCP
Home care and home support services	Australian Unity Home Care – Aboriginal Home Care	Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and Home care packages (HCP), Levels 1 to 4 Refer to Table 8.5	Broken Hill	Aboriginal community	HCP/CHSP
	Uniting Home Care Far West (Miraga)		Broken Hill		
Cultural services	Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation	Land management and development	Broken Hill	Aboriginal community	-
	Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council	Culture and heritage, land management	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	NSWALC
	Regional Enterprise Development Institute	Wilcannia River Indigenous Radio Services	Wilcannia	Aboriginal community	NIAA
Disability services	Lifestyle Solutions (Aust) Ltd	Plan development, support coordination and support services	Broken Hill	General population	NDIS
	Aboriginal Ability Links (LALC)		Broken Hill	Aboriginal population	NDIS

Table 8.5: Home care services

Services	Transport	Meals	Other food services	Home maintenance	Home modifications	Social support individual	Flexible respite	Personal care	Domestic assistance	Social support group	Nursing	Centre-based respite	Specialised support services	Allied health and therapy services	Assistance with care and housing	Transition care
Australian Unity Home Care – Aboriginal Home Care		Y				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Uniting Home Care Far West (Miraga)	Y				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y		

Table 8.6: NSW Government agency representation in Wilcannia

Cluster	Principal department and agencies	Responsibilities	Service access
Stronger Communities	Department of Communities and Justice	Families, communities and disability services; public housing and homelessness services; law and justice; child protection; sport, seniors and veterans	Wilcannia
Customer Service	Department of Customer Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Office of Fair Trading</li> <li>Revenue NSW</li> </ul>	Customer services: primary access point to government services; registration and licencing; payment of fines	Wilcannia
Planning, Industry and Environment	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Parks and Wildlife Service</li> </ul>	Urban and regional planning; water and natural resources; industry; environment, energy and science; Aboriginal and social housing; and Aboriginal heritage and land use	Dubbo

## 8.3 Service mapping

### 8.3.1 Characterisation

Wilcannia might be described as a satellite town of Broken Hill in conventional planning terminology in that it depends heavily on the regional centre for its wellbeing. But being 200 km distant, this is hardly an apt definition and, despite the cultural and family ties, is not one recognised by the local community. Broken Hill is off-Country. Very few human services are domiciled in the town: most health and human services are fly in, fly out (FIFO) in the case of some health services and drive in, drive out (DIDO) for the remainder. Unless a resident service, access is controlled by the availability of specialist and support staff travelling four hours each trip to and from Broken Hill. In this regard, the Aboriginal community is poorly served.

### 8.3.2 Access to information

The CWP acknowledges the assistance of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice in providing the information used to compile Table 8.4. It has proven challenging, generally, to obtain access to human services information, and there is no centralised record of government, non-government and private sector services being delivered into Wilcannia. This is particularly the case with NDIS services which are entirely opaque.

### 8.3.3 Service demand

From the ABS 2016 Census, as reflected in Table 8.1, demand for children's and family services could be expected to arise from young children, from primary and secondary school aged children and from parents and homebuilders; and for youth services, from secondary school aged children and young people aged to 25 years. Non-Indigenous children to the age of 17 years are present in the community in much smaller numbers than Aboriginal children.

The need for assistance in the core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of disability, long term health condition or old age appears to be centred in the population cohort

aged 50 years and over; a total of 22 Aboriginal persons (29% of this cohort) reported a need for assistance at the time of the ABS 2016 Census. The proportion of the total Aboriginal population requiring assistance is about 6%, slightly below the level of the Region as a whole. Interestingly, the Census did not record any non-Indigenous person at that time as requiring need for assistance. Information sought to describe the level of support being accessed through the NDIS has not been forthcoming so this Plan is not able to comment on the adequacy or otherwise of service access.

### 8.3.4 Housing and housing services

The human services landscape would appear, as evidenced by Table 8.4, to be adequate. Support services are present although it is possible some provide overlapping services. Aboriginal social housing is provided by Wilcannia LALC and the AHO through managers Mid Lachlan Aboriginal Housing Management Corporation and Compass Housing. Options beyond the limited number of houses available through these providers are few. In practical terms, there is no private rental market in Wilcannia. The need for, and complexion of, housing-related services is amplified in Chapter 5 but there is clearly insufficient and inadequate shelter available for provide a secure and stable home environment for all Aboriginal individuals and families.

Two organisations, Domestic Violence NSW Service Management (DVSM) and Mission Australia, are funded by DCJ to deliver homelessness services in Wilcannia variously to young people, women and families depending upon programme design. DVSM supports young people aged 16 to 25 years, women, and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including those escaping domestic and family violence, to access accommodation and support in Wilcannia. The service assists clients to access crisis accommodation, transitional housing, and long-term stable housing, and works with people at risk of homelessness to support them to sustain their tenancies. Service nucleus is the Wilcannia Women and Children's Safe House. The service has a strong focus on responses for Aboriginal people.

For the last two to three years, Mission Australia has been providing the Homeless Youth Assistance Programme (HYAP) for young persons aged 12 to 15 years who are referred by DCJ or by other agencies and the Reconnect – Far West service which assists young persons aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There are generally five to ten clients at any one time in Wilcannia, and HYAP referrals have tended to arise from young people missing school or encountering the Police, rather than because of homelessness. Mission Australia works in partnership with the Safe House; for example, to support clients who have travelled from Wilcannia to Broken Hill to access emergency accommodation.

Compass Housing has no shopfront in Wilcannia but provides a visiting service on a no-less-than fortnightly basis, depending upon need. It was observed that tenants with housing issues tend to talk among themselves but do not necessarily refer for attention; discussion of issues remains in the community. No local services are available which act as a conduit between community and the housing manager and so Compass Housing is not always aware of a need for urgent repairs.

Compass Housing stated that its management processes are governed by AHO policy and practices although it tries to be flexible in cases of applicant and client vulnerability. All applications for housing are lodged online and assessed centrally which leaves little opportunity to exercise discretion at a local level. Although the Broken Hill office may be aware of an individual's or family's circumstances: risk of domestic and family violence (DFV), leaving custody, trying to regain care of children, unsuccessful efforts to meet own housing need; the ability to prioritise cases is much reduced by internal procedures. A big hurdle is remaining in contact with applicants who are mobile: applications lodged through Housing Pathways are closed if a client is not able to keep their application updated.

It is understood that Compass Housing uses its own rent setting policy guided by the DCJ *Rent and Sales Report*. Clients apply to Centrelink for CRA but Compass Housing completes rent certification. Rent collection is said to be high and debt levels

low. In case of difficulty, Compass Housing stated that it reaches repayment arrangements with a tenant, keeping evictions to a minimum. Low literacy levels are known to be an issue for some clients and effort is made to talk through any tenancy breach face to face before escalating action to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) if necessary. Notices, however, are required to be in writing which does disadvantage tenants in Wilcannia.

When asked about policy and process improvements, Compass Housing singled out:

- The online application process as being overly complex and in need of replacement; and
- Processes in relation to decision-making around housing applications and tenancy assessments were too inflexible and should be devolved to local level.

Lack of access to communications technology was the most significant barrier to service access, and a critical complicating factor in housing management. There is no postal delivery service in the community; mail has to be collected from the post office, which only holds mail for 14 days after which it is returned to sender. If community members cannot receive e-mail, and are unaware that they are required to collect mail from the post office within a specific timeframe, then communications with service providers become almost impossible. This can have dire consequences if the communication relates to a NCAT matter.

Compass Housing said that AHO was amenable to funding improvements and for agreeing to funding responsive and planned maintenance above the threshold amount of \$5,000 below which Compass Housing is responsible.

A perspective from the out of Region Aboriginal social housing manager was not sought.

### 8.3.5 Emergency accommodation

Despite the two-hour drive between Wilcannia and Broken Hill, discussions with service providers indicate strong linkages which arise from the

presence of services and infrastructure in one community but not the other, or from community members' need to access services in the other community for reasons of safety. For example, the lack of emergency accommodation in Broken Hill is such that people who become homeless may be transported by Broken Hill-based service providers to the women's refuge or single men's accommodation in Wilcannia if they have a link to Wilcannia. Wilcannia was reported to be better resourced in terms of emergency accommodation than Broken Hill. Conversely, if anyone is referred from the Safe House in Wilcannia, there is nowhere in Broken Hill to stay. Catherine Haven (the Salvation Army-operated women's refuge in Broken Hill) provides outreach services to Wilcannia but it was reported that they find it difficult to service the Wilcannia community because of the distances involved. Catherine Haven does receive referrals from the Safe House in Wilcannia and has access to motel accommodation in Broken Hill. Ability to assist is limited as the number of rooms available at Catherine Haven is few and they are invariably already occupied.

There is also a degree of mobility from Wilcannia to Broken Hill to access services, particularly in the health sector. For example, expectant mothers based in Wilcannia are required to relocate to Broken Hill at least two weeks before their due date and, if they are at risk of a complicated delivery, they may have to travel to Adelaide four weeks prior to their due date. The cost and disruption, and a general lack of accommodation in Broken Hill, are highly problematic for Wilcannia residents. It was also reported that Wilcannia residents who require renal dialysis must relocate to Broken Hill because the water quality in Wilcannia is inadequate to provide for in-situ dialysis services.

The Wilcannia Safe House assists women and women with children in times of individual and family crisis. It is the only refuge in Wilcannia for women experiencing domestic and family violence. Accommodation is modest: one overnight unit of one bedroom, two two-bedroom crisis units, two medium term two-bedroom stays and two three-bedroom exit houses: altogether seven units. No unit is provided for long term stay although people

have been temporarily housed for up to three years while waiting for housing in the town. The Safe House provides short term leases which, if required, are renewed quarterly subject to there being no property damage or DFV incident. The Safe House also has an agreement with one of the local motel owners to access two rooms for short stay (3 days) emergency accommodation. Beyond the Safe House, there is no emergency housing which can accept people who are evicted or have other problems with a tenancy. Men leaving the criminal justice system tend to stay at the 'Opera House', a dilapidated 4-bedroom house with shared facilities managed by MLAHMC and rented through the Men's Shed to a resident head-tenant. It appears to function as an unofficial boarding house.

Support is provided to clients and others to apply for social housing, there being no private rental market in Wilcannia, and to establish a tenancy history while staying at the centre. Relationships with Catherine Haven, Mission Australia and Uniting Care Miraga, all with a permanent presence in Broken Hill, are strong, and referrals can lead to housing in the private sector, although Aboriginal people frequently experience discrimination in the private rental market. Where the Safe House assists clients to apply for social housing in Broken Hill, the first offer is generally a dwelling in Creedon Street; adverse experience has led the Safe House to hold out for a more suitable offer. It is a requirement for a Broken Hill placement to be guaranteed by the Safe House: any damage caused by bad behaviour comes at a cost to the organisation.

Non-Indigenous property owners were reported not to be willing to rent to Aboriginal people in Wilcannia. Surplus police, teacher, health or Council employee housing is not made available, even for short-term rental. Employees living within 50 km of Wilcannia are not eligible for employer housing and so dwellings sit vacant. The Teacher Housing Authority knows in March if teacher housing will be unoccupied for the school teaching year and the comment was made that vacant properties could be put to good use during this time by offering short-term leases. Government housing which is no longer required may, from time to time, be converted for use as

social housing: four police flats are shortly to be reconfigured by the AHO under the ACHIF programme as two-bedroom flats for older members of the community.

The Safe House referred to the AHO 2015 study into crowding and homelessness in the Region to which it contributed. Crowding is viewed as the most pressing housing issue in Wilcannia. The largest houses to rent are of five-bedrooms and these can house family groups of twelve persons or more. They can also house older single men and women who have reared their families in the house; have accumulated a lot of possessions they do not want to dispose of, and do not wish to move. Crowding may not be a negative experience for those involved; the perception is that living together as an extended family unit may be preferred. Planning should follow the families to ensure that the built living environment is tailored closely to family need. It could be the lack of space that is the defining factor and properties need to be made larger.

A rent to buy scheme which operated in the town ten years ago was referred to as a successful model in moving households to independence and this may find interest again among some community members. Indigenous Business Australia could foster the possibility. Timing may not be opportune since a greater number of families are in financial distress because of COVID-19. As it is, too many would-be-tenants have a housing rental debt which they are unable to pay off. Payment plans are said not to work so, as an alternative, it was suggested that debt be repaid through the Office of State Revenue. Housing provider arrears officers are reported not to undertake preventative work with tenants.

Efforts have been made to engage with the Wilcannia LALC to access lots on which to build but without tangible progress. The Safe House considers that another six medium-term units, similar to teacher housing, are required to satisfy need for emergency accommodation.

### 8.3.6 *Child, youth and family support*

Mission Australia delivers the Stronger Families,

Brighter Futures programme for families with children aged 0 to 9 years or soon-to-be parents experiencing domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol use, mental health issues or parents with significant learning difficulties and/or intellectual disabilities. Families are referred by DCJ. Mission Australia also provides the Family Support service, which is similar but targets families at lower risk. Services are provided on a drive-in, drive-out basis one day per week. There are no staff resident in Wilcannia; this is regarded as a strength rather than a weakness because of the difficulties which arise in the child protection space where workers are members of the community, and possibly related to their clients. Mission Australia can use DCJ office space if required but usually works with clients in their own homes. At the time of writing, though, services are being delivered by phone and online because of the COVID pandemic. Mission Australia has provided mobile phones and computers into the community to facilitate ongoing support of families.

Wilcannia had the lowest incidence of children in out-of-home care (OOHC) in far western NSW in June 2020. The actual number is not stated to preserve anonymity.

Maari Ma is very active in the community supporting families to raise healthy children. Midwives provide antenatal and postnatal care, Healthy Start clinics open 2 days per week on average offer child and adult health checks and follow up, and the intensive supported playgroup, with its emphasis on play-based learning, supports early childhood development. The playgroup recorded more than 550 attendances during FY2019-2020. The Maari Ma Aboriginal Parents as Teachers Programme reaches 20 families fortnightly during the school term. Activities have a strong focus on early literacy and numeracy. To address the impacts of cultural identity loss, violence, stress, trauma and grief, and the relationship of these experiences with violence, Maari Ma has developed and has piloted its Kalypi Paaka Mirika healing programme in Wilcannia and other communities in the Murdi Paaki Region.

The Wings Drop-in Centre operated by Maari Ma provides youth development activities, including



school holiday programmes, after school programmes, support for the Far West Academy of Sport and the junior rugby league programme. It also is a centre for community cultural activities.

### 8.3.7 *Employment and training services*

Wilcannia campus of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) NSW offers foundational education courses and training programmes: in practical terms, a limited range of job readiness courses to Certificate 1 level.

Wilcannia Central School offers school-based traineeships and apprenticeships but take up is low as many students leave before Year 10. In the four-year period 2016 to 2019, seven students enrolled in VET courses; food, hospitality and personal services being the most popular, but no qualification was completed.

Regional Enterprise Development Institute (REDI.E) Wilcannia is the local Jobactive provider and auspice for the Community Development Programme which aims to link Aboriginal job seekers with training and workforce development. At the time of writing, no positions were being advertised. REDI.E has recently collaborated with TAFE and WaterNSW around the Wilcannia Weir project to offer locals fully subsidised courses in construction, tourism and hospitality.

### 8.3.8 *Aged care and disability care*

The Wilcannia Multi-Purpose Centre provides three residential high care beds. There is no Aboriginal specific residential aged care option. The multi-purpose centre also is funded for five low care beds.

Uniting Care Miraga (UCM) and Australian Unity Home Care – Ngangana Aboriginal Home Care are the two specific home care services with a presence in Wilcannia. Australian Unity provides care for older people (not people with disabilities). UCM has about 10 clients, mostly Aboriginal, and would like to expand the reach of the service but staffing is problematic: the provider has been unable to recruit locally and relies on sending a worker from Broken Hill once a week. As an

alternative, UCM is partnering with a local organisation, Cultural Solutions, to recruit and train potential employees. Internal compliance requirements are strictly observed and form a barrier to employment. Job candidates must undergo a criminal record check. Minor offences are not necessarily grounds for rejection but awareness of the process may be a sufficient deterrent. Candidates must also have a car, valid licence and comprehensive insurance. The provider is happy to use the kinship care model but carers must undergo the same criminal record check as potential employees.

UCM finds the Wilcannia community demanding. HACP guidelines are very prescriptive, with funding attaching to a care package only to be used for specified care needs as broadly set out in Table 8.5. Clients, however, have differing priorities which, when not acceded to, can become a source of conflict with the care provider.

The most pressing barrier to access of home care services is the unavailability of occupational therapy services. Wait time for assessment is currently more than twelve months and assessment will only be carried out when there are sufficient clients to warrant the journey from Broken Hill.



## 9 COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

### 9.1 Authority for change

The way Aboriginal social housing is managed has changed markedly since the first Murdi Paaki HEHPs were produced, that change being very much to the detriment of the Region:

- The forced retreat and discriminatory treatment of the regional and local managing ACHPs has adversely impacted management services, enfranchisement of tenants, and asset condition and preservation;
- Spatial variability of capital works programmes, coupled with disjointed rollout, inappropriate material and equipment specification, and ineffective quality supervision, has contributed to greater variability in the quantum and condition of housing assets and infrastructure;
- The skills base relevant to housing and infrastructure which was built through major capital works training programmes and the Healthy Housing Worker programme has been substantially eroded and dispersed;
- The integrity of physical infrastructure on former Reserves has declined as housing management services moved from Local Aboriginal Land Councils to managing ACHPs without adequate provision for recurrent expenditure; and
- The AHO *Build and Grow* policy created an operating and financial environment in which managing ACHPs could safely disregard requirements for planned maintenance, contributing to asset deterioration and tenant dissatisfaction

so there is a compelling need to redraw the sector landscape at community scale to reflect the status of Aboriginal housing and environmental health infrastructure in all Murdi Paaki communities.

### 9.2 Expected principles and standards

The CWP has articulated a set of principles and standards it wishes to see applied to community renewal in answer to the criticism levelled by §9.1 and the examination of services received. These

principles and standards may be summarised as:

- Participation should be inclusive and meaningful, give voice to all sections of the community and provide opportunities to contribute to the search of sustainable solutions;
- Service design should reflect the needs, and be driven primarily by the best interests, of the community, taking account of cultural norms and desire to become self-reliant;
- Solutions should attempt to build on existing resources and take into consideration the need for alternative technologies, capacity-building, and use of local skills, materials, methods of working and knowledge;
- Interventions should be planned and implemented to afford non-discriminatory access to facilities and services essential for health, shelter, nutrition, security and comfort and mitigate, to the extent possible, environmental impacts; and
- Safeguards should protect persons from retributive eviction, exploitation or abuse derived from a lack of tenure security.

### 9.3 Community priorities

These principles and standards are given effect to in the Wilcannia Community Action Plan (CAP) prepared by the CWP. The CAP informs external agencies and stakeholders of the priorities of the Wilcannia Aboriginal community and provides the foundation for improved service delivery across the full spectrum of health and human services. The Wilcannia CAP is in draft form pending further development of practical strategies informed by the findings of this HEHP.

The CAP identifies six key priority areas for action. Four goals are directly relevant to this HEHP and are listed in Table 9.1. All goals are weighted equally in their importance.

Further definition of CAP objectives on housing and human services, and observations on the challenges facing the community post-COVID 19 as offered by the CWP, are summarised at Table 9.2 and Table 9.3 respectively.

Table 9.1: Community Action Plan goals and objectives

Goal	Objective
2	To provide safe, affordable and quality housing to the Aboriginal community of Wilcannia in all mediums of housing opportunities
2.1	Engage the management of housing providers to interact regularly with the CWP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure housing providers regularly deliver maintenance schedules and notices regarding current standards of housing;</li> <li>Work with housing providers to conduct analysis of rental costings and forecast increases;</li> <li>Work with housing providers to evaluate over-crowding issues;</li> <li>Work with housing providers to prepare a localised allocation of housing agreement;</li> <li>Develop a communication strategy with all relevant stakeholders in the housing sector.</li> </ul>
3	To support community members to become strong and connected and forward from survival mode
3.1	Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community
3.2	Build the capacity and understanding of the Aboriginal community in engaging with service providers
3.3	Increase engagement opportunities for our youth such as projects and diversionary initiatives
3.4	Ensure offenders successfully reintegrate into their community
4	To increase initiatives that provide and support sustainable economic development opportunities
4.1	Build the capacity of the Aboriginal community to participate in economic development opportunities
6	To improve opportunities in training and employment for the Aboriginal community.
6.1	Build partnerships with employment providers and businesses to link training to employment

Critical housing and human service issues covered in this HEHP continue to be at the forefront of planning and advocacy by the Wilcannia CWP. Advocacy by CWP leaders through the worst period of the COVID crisis around shortage of homes, crowding, and the sheer impossibility of isolating resulted in stark images of disadvantage disseminated across mainstream media in a way that ought to be difficult to forget. The CWP wishes the impetus for change which built during the recent period of crisis to be sustained into the future.

Issues related to housing design, management and condition have been reported by the CWP, and were raised frequently by tenants who participated in the MPRH&BC household survey. The CWP observed that the design of existing housing in Wilcannia is not culturally appropriate, and that sufficient effort was not given to securing community input at the design and planning stage:

“They jumped the gun with how the homes have been designed and built.”

Design flaws have led to difficulties in retrofitting amenity and sustainability measures such as ceiling fans, and the CWP is concerned about the resulting equity impacts. The CWP is happy to see the work currently taking place as a result of ACHIF funding allocation; however, the view was expressed that homes still need to be modernised, and they are still poorly suited to the needs of tenants.

The quality of housing is viewed as inadequate to withstand the wear and tear resulting from large household populations. Also of concern are problems with pest control, particularly related to bed bugs, rodents and termites.

Respondents to the MPRH&BC household survey were quite clear in their views on the management and condition of Aboriginal social housing in Wilcannia; repeatedly:

Of the managers:

“The community is unsatisfied with the housing provider (MLAHMC) and COVID-19 has really highlighted the

issues.”

“We cannot contact them, we never see them, we don’t know them.”

“They don’t act on calls.”

“Need to carry out more inspections.”

“We need 1 on 1 visits and more of them.”

“We need an office in Wilcannia.”

**Tenants whose rental accounts are in credit complain that they are not consulted about decisions the housing manager makes, for example, to apply the tenant’s credit to payment of rates.**

**Of housing condition, of the three top things that the housing manager(s) can do to improve its services to tenants:**

“Repairs”

“Repairs”

“Repairs”

**Respondents 1342, 1346, 1349, 1368 and 1371 might be experiencing the extremes of neglect:**

“My home is condemned and very unsafe. I have no water and the toilet does not work. I am stressed by it and it makes me ill”

“I don’t feel safe. I cannot lock the doors and strangers are coming into the house. It increases my stress levels”

“I don’t feel safe living here. Doors don’t lock and there is no decent outdoor lighting. The toilet is broken and there is no hot water system. There are sewage problems”

“Nothing in the house works. I am living (with my partner) in the sleepout. There is no privacy and it is very cold”

“Worried about water going into the wall and leaking into the lounge – the kids slipping over. And the electricity. The mouldy walls are making us sick. I want the manager to see how my house is”

but the high cost projected in Table 5.33 for repairs and maintenance suggests these are far from isolated cases. The CWP, too, cited issues arising from lack of attention to repairs and maintenance. For example, one dwelling had a water leak for two and a half years; during this period, the tenant accumulated a \$3,000 water bill as a result. Electricity costs, too, are problematic; some

tenants are unable to interpret their electricity bills. One house has been missing a laundry roof for over two years following storm damage; screen doors do not have seals, and driveways are unsafe because of erosion of soil between the driveway strips. The condition of yards, too, is of concern, as tenants do not have access to equipment to take care of their yards:

“The community would like to see something be established for tenants to rent out equipment to tidy their yards.”

“Community also need garden sheds and carports for vehicles”.

**The CWP would like Central Darling Shire Council to provide a quarterly kerbside bulky waste collection service, with ample notice to the community:**

“Community members have been waiting from a few months to years to get stuff cleared.”

The CWP identified Wilcannia LALC as the largest asset-owner in the community but expressed a preference for LALC-owned housing to be managed by an ACHP based in the community. The CWP questioned withdrawal of AHO funding from the LALC. Extreme concern was expressed about the loss of 27 homes in Wilcannia; this is attributed to AHO policy, and the CWP is dissatisfied that funding for replacement of these dwellings has not been forthcoming from AHO.

“There are 62 homes but 27 homes were knocked down, but the AHO policy does not support community. Mid Lachlan took on the burden of the failed AHO policy too. The AHO have committed to building six new homes since COVID-19.”

Homelessness is a pressing issue for the CWP. In particular, a men’s refuge and a youth refuge are needed in the community. Too many homeless people are having to move in with other households, and this is exacerbating crowding. Temporary accommodation for visitors to Wilcannia is also required; the CWP suggested that cabins be provided to accommodate people with ties to the community when they return home for sorry business. The Wilcannia Hotel is no longer open to the public:

“Where can people go if they cannot stay at the hotel? The police ask where to take men but they don’t have anywhere to go.”

Infrastructure, too, is inadequate to meet community needs. Concern was expressed by the CWP about progress on the levee; there is a desire to see optimum use made of funding under the Roads To Home programme.

A strong desire was expressed for sustainable community engagement in delivery of capital works projects and programmes, and for development and deployment of skills in building trades:

“When external contractors come into the community, they hire people but when the jobs finish there is no room for the people to continue to grow and develop their skills. Contractors say they don’t have time to train someone.”

“There are properties in Wilcannia that require ongoing maintenance – hiring people and completing this work would pay for the wages.”

In relation to municipal infrastructure, the CWP has indicated that the community would like improvements to the cemetery and to road safety. Babies’ graves are not adequately protected at present; the community desires that areas where infants are buried be taped off. The community would also like a tap to be installed at the cemetery. Concern has been expressed about road safety in the vicinity of the Warrali Estate; the preference of the community is to have the 50km/h zone on the Barrier Highway extended to the current location of the 80 km/h sign on the eastern approach to Wilcannia.

Some commentary about lack of social infrastructure has been forthcoming from the CWP. A continuing need was expressed for facilities for teenagers: plans exist for construction of a Wings centre for teenagers adjacent to the existing Wings building but the project has never been fully funded. This is a priority for the community. In addition, lack of a community meeting space for adults has been noted. With closure of the Wilcannia Hotel, options are limited. The community would like to see facilities such as the commercial kitchen, perhaps a kiosk, and a

place to sell art provided for community use within the hotel. Another possibility noted by the CWP is construction of a football clubhouse. It was reported that room exists at the oval for such a facility.

Adequate housing is the absolute priority to those participating in the survey: there was no feedback on the presence and performance of other human services. In contrast, though, the CWP expressed strong dissatisfaction with the way in which human services are provided in Wilcannia. Place-based initiatives rolled out by governments are regarded as failures:

“The government did not get the place-based thing right. The local response to Wilcannia needs to be front and centre. Community needs to do what is in the best interests for the community”

It was acknowledged that governments wish to do business through place-based approaches; however, the CWP aspires to use such approaches in a way that meets the needs of the community. The community is frustrated that local aspirations for agency and self-reliance are unsupported:

“Why can’t we be our own NGO?”

“The government is still not willing to invest in local Aboriginal people.”

“The only people that will close the gap are the local people.”

In particular, the CWP is weary of government initiatives which involve importation of people from outside of the community to co-ordinate programmes which are not relevant to community needs or aspirations:

“More organisations keep popping up and getting to bring in people from outside the region.”

“Community needs to be in the driver’s seat, and sustainable. Government should be complementary to what the community needs versus just hiring ‘co-ordinators’. The community should be part of completing the works instead of going to tender.

The CWP and Wilcannia LALC are willing to work together to resolve the issues the community faces. There is keen collective interest in a strategic alliance with Central Darling Shire

Council. The community is aware of negotiations, commenced at the time of the COVID-19 debacle and underway at the time of writing, to establish a Section 355 Committee under the provisions of the Local Government Act and the CWP is eager to be involved in further discussions.

better coordinated.”

The purposes of establishment of the S355 Committee under the auspices of Council would include giving the CWP greater influence in decision-making around resource allocation, a more authoritative voice to governments, and access to better targeted and co-ordinated human services. The CWP sees the potential for the community to be in control of its own affairs as an attractive proposition. A number of specific benefits which the S355 Committee may be able to bring to bear have been identified by the CWP. These include:

- Ability to ensure that implementation of this HEHP and the CWP’s CAP is placed centrally within the strategic agenda promoted to governments;
- Provision of an administrative capacity to allow the community to be more proactive in responding to initiatives;
- Capacity to co-ordinate information about matters such as availability of employment in a way which provides best access for community members;
- Availability of a funds pooling arrangement to permit the community to control specification and procurement of services;
- Increased confidence among funding agencies in relation to the governance, allocation and acquittal of funding;
- Optimum use of scarce resources through better targeting of programmes and services to community needs; and
- A collaborative working relationship across the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population to the advantage of both sections of the community.

The S355 Committee is seen as a likely antidote to the frustrations continually felt by the CWP:

“The community have seen too many people come through the community to ‘scope’ projects and how much money is being wasted but services need to be



Table 9.2: Summary of housing and housing-related issues

Issue	Description
Responsive, cyclical and planned repairs and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspections of social housing properties are required to determine the extent of all work necessary to restore structural soundness, functionality, amenity and safety</li> <li>There is no sense of urgency in carrying out repair and maintenance work, even to essential services or major damage</li> <li>Some houses were built poorly and require on-going maintenance</li> <li>Houses are poorly insulated and are hot in summer and cold in winter</li> <li>Pest eradication is urgently required to deal with insect infestations, including termites, and rodents</li> <li>Some houses should be condemned as unfit to live in</li> <li>Driveway strips to some properties have been washed away by rain and are unsafe</li> </ul>
Housing management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing managers are difficult to contact by telephone and do not respond to messages</li> <li>There is no communication between housing managers and the CWP, so no level of accountability</li> <li>Housing managers are invisible, rarely seen, if ever</li> <li>Housing inspections are not carried out frequently enough, if at all, to identify needs for repair and maintenance</li> <li>Many houses have been lost and not replaced</li> <li>Preference is to consolidate the management function to reduce the number of managing providers</li> </ul>
Crowded housing and related stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many houses experience sustained crowding and are giving shelter to a homeless person or persons</li> <li>Social housing alternatives for young people and older persons are grossly inadequate</li> <li>Crowding causes greater wear and tear on houses, people are sleeping in lounges</li> <li>There are few private housing rentals and these would usually only be available to applicants with a tenancy history</li> </ul>
Housing affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rents are too high for a town like Wilcannia, the quality of housing provided and the difficulty of finding employment</li> <li>Rents should take account of the high cost of living</li> <li>Many people struggle to pay power bills due to high energy consumption, especially in the hotter months</li> <li>Help is needed to get all eligible tenants onto Commonwealth rent assistance</li> </ul>
Housing supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As there is no private rental market, the supply of Aboriginal social housing needs to be increased to meet the needs of the community</li> <li>Young people and older people cannot find a home of their own and should be a priority</li> </ul>
Housing accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is limited access to home modification services to support special living needs for older persons and people with a disability</li> </ul>
Housing design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The community should be involved in the design process for new housing to ensure they are fit for purpose both culturally and for liveability</li> <li>Houses should be design to be stronger to resist high levels of wear and tear</li> <li>Housing is to have adequate heating and cooling</li> </ul>
Emergency accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels of crisis accommodation, emergency housing and transition housing are grossly inadequate, and temporary accommodation lacking</li> <li>In addition to women at risk, crisis accommodation is required for men and for young people who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness</li> </ul>

Table 9.2: Summary of housing and housing-related issues

Issue	Description
Infrastructure and environmental amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A tap is required at the cemetery and the graves of infants should be fenced or otherwise protected</li> <li>50 km speed limit should be extended from the bridge further eastwards along the highway</li> <li>Rubbish collects in yards and streets and is not removed</li> </ul>

Table 9.3: Summary of human services issues

Issue	Description
Service and programme development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community experiences time and time again government imposed services and programmes which bring little lasting benefit to residents</li> <li>Community is to be placed front and centre of place-based initiatives</li> <li>CWP and LALC are seeking to collaborate strategically to address issues confronting the community</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most human service providers are FIFO and DIDO and do not spend enough time in the community</li> <li>Community lack of knowledge of the revolving door of funded services</li> <li>Many human services are unable to reach the community and, if they do, the processes to gain access present barriers</li> <li>Human services do not provide opportunities for local employment</li> <li>Poor levels of cultural awareness of visiting staff reduce the level of cultural safety and quality of service</li> <li>Services are poorly coordinated, partly because of a high reliance on visiting services and rotation of staff</li> <li>Competition rather than cooperation between providers leads to a lack of cohesion in service delivery</li> <li>Limited options for travel to Broken Hill for higher level care (health services) or for social purposes not catered for in Wilcannia</li> </ul>
Human capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider experience a high turnover of staff which decreases the quality of services and engagement with local community</li> <li>Professional isolation and short-term contracts contribute to a revolving door of human services personnel</li> </ul>
Mental health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to residential alcohol and other drug services is almost impossible due to a shortage of places. The nearest Aboriginal community controlled service is Orana Haven at Brewarrina</li> <li>Access to non-clinical mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services is limited</li> </ul>
Children's services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty in employing local staff because of personal connections with clients and/or inter-family conflict</li> </ul>
Youth services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people have few activities open to them and fewer facilities to attend</li> <li>Redevelopment of the Wings Drop In Centre is seen as an essential step in building community social infrastructure</li> </ul>
Aged and disability services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to aged care and disability support services is complicated and required services may not be available</li> </ul>
Post-release services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing and human services for people exiting the criminal justice system are inadequate</li> </ul>
Connectivity and digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most community members do not have access to a computer or broadband network, or are literate enough to manage government - driven online processes</li> </ul>
Employment and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The community wishes to become self-sufficient through investment in the knowledge, capacity and skills of Wilcannia people</li> <li>There are few opportunities for local employment. Training does not link to an employment outcome so a strategic whole-of-community approach is needed to increasing the skills base across a broad range of areas of economic activity</li> </ul>

Table 9.3: Summary of human services issues

Issue	Description
Food insecurity and affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ School-based traineeships and apprenticeships should be focussed on areas of greater potential employment</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Cost, quality and range of food products (fresh and packaged) has resulted in significant food stress and poor nutrition at a population scale</li></ul>
The river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The cultural and psycho-social health and wellbeing of the community is dependent upon a flowing Baaka/Darling River</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The quality of water abstracted from the Baaka/Darling River, its treatment and supply is inadequate. Water is undrinkable</li></ul>

## 10 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

### 10.1 Infrastructure asset schedule

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.1 WATER SUPPLY		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council	
Baseline data			
Annual residential water supplied (potable):			
	Average day water supplied: 0.4ML/d		
	Peak day water supplied: 0.7ML/d		
Works	Description		
Source	Offtake on the River Darling at Wilcannia weir pool, pumping station capacity = 1.2 ML/day, 900 m x DN200 transfer main	Wilcannia weir upgrade project proceeding. Replaces existing weir constructed in 1942	
	Three bores at Union Bend with a total maximum yield of 1.2 ML/day, 4.5 km x DN200 transfer main		
Treatment	Wilcannia Water Treatment Plant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Coagulation</li><li>▪ Settlement</li><li>▪ Sand filtration</li><li>▪ Chlorination</li><li>▪ Activated carbon dissolved for organics, toxins and taste and odour removal</li><li>▪ Final pH correction</li></ul>	Treatment capacity = 0.7 ML/day Manually controlled plant built in 1985 Monitors: turbidity, pH, chlorine residual, salinity, iron, manganese and temperature  New WTP capacity = 1.2 ML/day Treatment as opposite but with addition of membrane and granular activated carbon filtration	
Storage	Steel standpipe tanks , 25 m high, capacities 1.0 ML (potable) and 2.0 ML (raw)		
Distribution	Reticulation of DN50 to DN200 in AC and uPVC		
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	New WTP under construction. No further action required	-
			-
Indicative performance metrics		Weighted median	Central Darling
Number of connections: Water		-	733
Number of connections: Sewerage		-	324
Service complaints per 1,000 properties: Water		2.29	84.58
Service complaints per 1,000 properties: Sewerage		4.84	209.81
Billing complaints: Water and sewerage		4.00	36.00
Water main breaks/100 km		11.58	54.55
Sewer breaks and chokes		32.89	26.09
Operating cost, W&S (\$/prop)		1,034.00	1,715.00
Cost to bring systems to satisfactory condition: Water			17,324,000
Cost to bring systems to satisfactory condition: Sewerage			1,302,000
Source: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment local water utilities online performance monitoring database -			

The Commonwealth funded Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewer Programme contributes to Council's operational costs for services supplied to the Mallee precinct and Warrali Estate.

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.2 WASTEWATER		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council	
Works	Description		
Collection	CDL to some properties but gravity sewerage with sewage pumping stations to the Mallee precinct and Warrali Estate		
Treatment	On-site treatment with septic tanks		
	Wilcannia Sewage Treatment Plant: Oxidation ponds with a capacity of 1,500 ep	180 x 50 x 2.0 m deep 100 x 80 x 2.0 m deep 90 x 45 x 2.0 m deep 90 x 45 x 2.0 m deep	
Pumping stations	Total of 4 sewage pumping stations	Capacity = 5.0 L/s	
Reticulation	Network of DN50 to DN 100 uPVC		
Effluent use	-		
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	Wilcannia gravity sewer scoping study proceeding. Funded by the Safe and Secure Programme. No action	--

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE				
10.3 STORMWATER DRAINAGE		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council		
Works	Description			
Trunk drainage	Largely overland flow with concrete kerb and gutter, piped drainage system and gross pollutant trap at the Baaka/Darling River discharge		Developed areas are generally flood-free but the Warrali Estate is protected by a levee.	
Local drainage			Council estimate major flooding occurs every 10 years Council has a flood evacuation plan for residents who might be isolated by flooding	
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action		Estimated cost
-	-	No action required		-



INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.4 ROADS		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council	
Works	Description		
Roads	Wide, sealed carriageways throughout the town with kerb and gutter and/or graded gravel shoulders. Road reserve width usually = 20 m with sealed carriageway 6.0 m to 10.0 m		
Speed limit	50 km/hr		
Black spots	Nil		
Heavy traffic routes	Heavy vehicles, 25/25 m B-doubles are permitted on the Barrier Highway, Reid Street and Bourke Street		
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	No action required	-

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE					
10.5 ENVIRONMENTAL AMENITY		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council			
Works	Description				
Streetscape	Streetscape plantings to all streets of flowering gums in otherwise unvegetated verge. Council does not have a street tree planting scheme				
Public spaces	Baker Park, Burke Park, Reconciliation Park and Ray Hunter Memorial Park serve as the main areas of public recreation and community activity with playgrounds, toilets, carparks, barbecues, picnic facilities and paths				
Dust	Nuisance in drought conditions. No control measures are in place				
Air quality	Air Quality Index (2020 and 2021 Jan – Aug) (White Cliffs)				
	Air pollution level PM <sub>2.5</sub>		Good	Moderate	Unhealthy SG
	No of days of record 2020	323	318 days	1 days	4 days
	No of days of record 2021	238	238 days	-	-
	Daily AQI is based on the 24 hours average of hourly readings Good: Air quality is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk Moderate: Air quality is acceptable but some pollutants may be of concern to people unusually sensitive Unhealthy SG: Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects <a href="https://aqicn.org/city/australia/nsw/western-ls/white-cliffs">https://aqicn.org/city/australia/nsw/western-ls/white-cliffs</a>				
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action		Estimated cost	
-	-	No action required		-	



INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.6 FIRE CONTROL		Responsible Authority: NSW Rural Fire Service: Western Command	
Works	Description		
Mobile plant	Two operational appliances based in town with a brigade strength of 12±		Incidents: Call out to residential fires is rare. Frequency of grass fires at domestic premises is 5 to 6 per year
Fixed plant	Hydrants located throughout the town connected to the raw water reticulation. Mains pressure adequate for appliance to operate effectively		
Fire safety	Reduction in fuel load by Council through annual slashing of grass around the town perimeter		
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	
-	-	No action required	

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.7 POWER AND STREET LIGHTING		Responsible Authority: Essential Energy	
Works	Description		
Service	33 kV supply from Essential Energy 66/33/22kV zone substation at Sunset Strip, Menindee to 33/6.6 kV substation in Wilcannia. Pole mounted cabling distributed throughout developed area of town; LV distributed as single and three phase power		
Connection	Dwellings are connected via aerial cabling		
Outage	Frequency and duration not known		
Street lighting	Pole mounted lamps		
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	No action required	-

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE					
10.8 COMMUNICATIONS			Responsible Authority: Telstra		
Works	Description				
Digital service		Telstra	Optus	Vodaphone	Number of towers providing mobile phone coverage in Wilcannia
	3G	1	-	-	Note: For indoor coverage using the 3G network, an external antenna may be required
	4G	1	-	-	
	5G	Not planned	-	-	
NBN	Sky Muster satellite				All parts available for connection
TV satellite	VAST satellite TV and Foxtel satellite TV				Free to air and pay TV services
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action			Estimated cost
-	-	Action required to improve accessibility. Telstra is planning to install a small cell at Wilcannia hospital			-

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.9 SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council	
Works	Description		
Collection	Kerbside household waste service weekly		
Disposal	Land disposal to single cell at the Council Waste Management Depot	Council has discontinued charging for domestic refuse at the depot gate	
Recycling	There is no recycling service		
Clean up	Town clean up annually	Littering and illegal dumping of waste is a problem	
Safety	The site is fenced but public access to the landfill area is unrestricted	Burning is a problem from time to time	
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	No action required	-

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET SCHEDULE			
10.10 ANIMAL CONTROL		Responsible Authority: Central Darling Shire Council	
Works	Description		
Services	Ranger patrol. Mandatory cat and dog registration		
Facilities	Nil		
Domestic pets	Action in respect of dangerous and menacing dogs, restricted dogs, and nuisance dogs and cats		Council reports that uncontrolled dogs are a safety issue
Item	Strategy Ref	Proposed Action	Estimated cost
-	-	No action required	-

## 10.2 Infrastructure improvements

Environmental health infrastructure services in Wilcannia are the responsibility of Central Darling Shire Council. No infrastructure elements are owned, operated or maintained by any local Aboriginal community organisation.

Residents of Wilcannia have the benefit of a full range of municipal and essential services provided to a basic standard. The nature and extent of each service has been investigated and analysed where appropriate to determine the current level of service, serviceability and, where appropriate, compliance with environmental health standards.

This HEHP proposes improvements to environmental health infrastructure as flagged by Action WIL-12 in Table 11.7 following advice of the CWP. Additional commitments have been made already in respect of several major projects:

- Water NSW to improve the reliability of the water supply by constructing the new Wilcannia weir;
- Central Darling Shire Council (CDSC) to construct a new water treatment plant to ensure a high-quality drinking water supply;
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to resurface the road, and upgrade footpaths, street lighting, kerb and gutter and drainage at the Warrali Estate under the Roads To Home programme; and
- Telstra to improve mobile phone coverage and internet connectivity.

In anticipation of a major house building project, and the additional load on the Essential Energy distribution network, it would be advisable to open discussion with the distributed network service provider to ensure that any network improvements can take place in advance. A small contingency is included at Table 11.8 should the project be required to contribute to network upgrading.



## 11 MASTER PLAN

### 11.1 Aspiration

Development of the Wilcannia HEHP marks the culmination of the second round of the MPRA's approach to sector strategic planning at a community scale. The HEHP provides clarity about sector investment; makes transparent the core demand drivers that are affecting the sector; and documents an evidence base for the community's housing and infrastructure assets and how long-term trends would change their use. The lead time for and long lifetime of housing infrastructure requires a long-term view so identifying, planning and prioritising a package of measures is vital to ensure the sector delivers sustainable long-term outcomes for the community. Yet a long-term strategic approach is challenged by uncertainties, be they political, financial, social technical or environmental. And interdependencies between the housing and human services sectors add to complexity and uncertainty in the strategic planning process, particularly from a cultural perspective. Learning lessons is a central part of any project so, with the RAHLA now firmly established and evidence collected and synthesised, the community is optimistic that informed policy-setting and decision-making will lead to positive change.

### 11.2 Cultural influences on decision-making

The NSW Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Programmes Implementation Manual (1999), an initiative of the then Murdi Paaki Regional Council and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (as was) flowing from the successful Australian Government National Aboriginal Health Strategy projects, placed the concept of effective community management of capital works and associated housing and infrastructure projects onto a practical footing. CWP's, working with a community-selected professional Project Manager, demonstrated ample capacity to set community objectives, and to control and co-ordinate overall programme delivery on behalf of, and in the best interests of, their communities. The agreed negotiated system of rules governing projects roll

out was formal acknowledgement of the ongoing position and competence of CWP's as the local decision-making body. The Regional and local governance structures remain in place and CWP's are still well positioned to bring their local knowledge and cultural perspectives to inform the shape and substance of housing and infrastructure developments. This Master Plan evidences that decision-making in practice.

### 11.3 Community snapshot

Census data analysis indicates that the Aboriginal community of Wilcannia, in terms of most variables, is unlike those of other settlements within the Murdi Paaki Region. The Aboriginal population fraction was 62% of the total population at the ABS 2016 Census, and rising, while the non-Indigenous population is static. In relation to housing, there is a lower proportion of lone person households compared to the rest of the Region, and over one third of families have resident non-dependent single adult children residing with them. Almost half of families are one parent families, higher than the Region as a whole.

Aboriginal adults in Wilcannia have a much lower level of labour market participation than their Aboriginal counterparts in the Region; the proportion of all adults in the labour market being about one in three. The employment to population ratio is only two-thirds that of the Region as a whole and under half that for NSW so creating job opportunities and developing local Aboriginal enterprise activity are essential drivers of socio-economic improvement. Reinvigoration of an Aboriginal business base must occur in the face of a declining non-Indigenous business sector. Most employment for Aboriginal people is in human services, including health care and social assistance. Nearly half of Aboriginal persons employed are community service workers, reinforcing the importance of intra-community services as a cornerstone of local employment.

Of all Aboriginal households in Wilcannia, almost three-quarters were renting. This figure is over two and a half times higher than for the non-Indigenous population, and higher than for the Murdi Paaki Region as a whole. The proportion of

owner occupier Aboriginal households increased by about half again between 2011 and 2016 to 22% so some households are seeing value in home ownership and finding the resources necessary to pursue it successfully. This is not reflected in the MPRH&BC household survey which failed to gain insights of homeowners into the reasons why they viewed the future of Wilcannia sufficiently favourably to invest. It is known that purchases can be made very cheaply through auctions for unpaid Council rates so moving into home ownership may be an economic choice for some families.

Most Aboriginal households renting in Wilcannia were tenants of Aboriginal social housing landlords; private housing supply is weak. The median rent for Aboriginal households was over double that for non-Indigenous households but still low in absolute terms at \$110 per week. Median Aboriginal household size was slightly higher than for the ABS North-West NSW Indigenous Region but over double that for non-Indigenous households in Wilcannia. Tenancies are stable; the Census recorded relatively low rates of residential mobility at the one year and five-year horizons, with all movement being from Broken Hill. This stability in tenancies was also evident in the MPRH&BC household survey. In terms of day-to-day movement, four out of ten Aboriginal households did not have a motor vehicle. This compares to one in ten of non-Indigenous households.

## 11.4 Defining need for growth and preservation

### 11.4.1 Expressed need for new housing

The total number of Aboriginal social housing dwellings in Wilcannia is 82, having reduced by eight from a total of 90 as at June 2018.

From the investigations and consultations carried out, the need for significant new development in Wilcannia has been firmly established. At the time of the MPRH&BC household survey there was a waiting list for social housing in the community across all age groups. The estimates shown in Table 11.1 are derived by extrapolating the

findings of the MPRH&BC household survey across all Aboriginal households living in Aboriginal social housing, plus households experiencing homelessness, to capture those that did not participate. With family formation occurring within the large cohort of young adults, demand for social housing will only continue to grow.

The number of new dwellings required exceeds the number of applicants accepted onto the NSW Housing Register by an order of magnitude because, as discussed in §5.10, with little prospect of securing a tenancy, individuals and families do not apply, and because the application process is inaccessible for various reasons.

Table 11.1: Unmet demand for new Aboriginal social housing, number of dwellings

Factor for all renting households =  $82/53 = 1.55$

Bedrooms	MPRH&BC	Total
Social housing households		
2	26	40
3	11	17
Households experiencing homelessness		
2	5	8
Households in private rentals and employer housing		
-	3	-
Responses inadequately defined		
-	1	-
Total	46	65

Note: Ratio is number of existing social housing dwellings divided by the number of social housing renters responding to the MPRH&BC household survey

The number of new dwellings has been determined by responses to the MPRH&BC household survey to direct questions in relation to need and dispersal of individuals and families from extended family or multi-family groupings into their own accommodation where the respondent indicated that this is desired. The age profile is such that the majority of those in search of their own housing are single young people or couples without children. A couple or sole parent with child(ren) is allocated a house size commensurate with family size. It is notable that the survey did not capture any larger families requiring houses of four bedrooms or larger.

Effort was made to keep the older persons of a family in the house they were occupying at the time of the survey since the older member was most likely to be the nominated tenant. In some instances, in larger houses, it would be more efficient use of the property to relocate the older members of the family and allow a co-located family with children to remain in residence.

The size of dwelling stated in Table 11.1 is matched to household size, subject to the minimum size being two-bedrooms, and does not include an additional bedroom. It is anticipated that entitlement to one more bedroom than the minimum number of bedrooms required for the household will be a matter for determination on a case-by-case basis as part of an allocation process.

A breakdown of social housing waitlist numbers by bedroom capacity as of June 2018 provided by the AHO is shown at Table 11.2 for comparison. As noted in §5.10, the number of approved applicants as of June 2020 had fallen to < 5. COVID-19 has amply demonstrated the inadequacy of Housing Pathways as a reliable platform from which to project current or future need.

Table 11.2: Estimated number of dwellings by bedroom size

	Number of bedrooms					
	1	2	3	4+	NK	Σ
2018 waitlist	-	-	5	-	2	7

Feedback received from the community and summarised in Chapter 9 reinforces the need for additional housing on the scale and with the mix proposed. Spot purchase may be an immediate solution in view of the number of unoccupied dwellings but quality of private housing likely to be offered for purchase will be at the lower end and purchases are likely to require refurbishment and

extension. The planning aspects of further development will require serious consideration as proposals for new builds may be influenced by zoning restrictions and the Native Title determination which extends over both the Mallee precinct and the Warrali Estate. At this stage, planning matters, which include obtaining access to deceased estates, must be a work in progress. Council has indicated that it has recovered some properties for unpaid rates and offered these to the NSW Government for residential development.

The AHO has no undeveloped sites while Wilcannia LALC has three urban lots, two being small lots in Woore Street and the third a larger lot of 24.94 ha designated Wilcannia Mission on the east bank of the Baaka/Darling River between the Wilcannia bridge and the Warrali Estate. The Woore Street lots are serviced with road access and utilities provided and are suitable for smaller houses while the Warrali site is undeveloped and not serviced. It is probable that 10/757028 is flood liable.

A commercial lot of 702m<sup>2</sup> at 32 Reid Street is on the market at \$48,000, setting an upper bound for acquisitions. Land purchases are then assumed to range from \$30,000 to \$50,000 including legal fees and other statutory charges, depending upon size and location. In the context of the increased supply indicated by Table 11.1, any land acquisition programme will be of a major scale. At the lower range quoted above, the budget for 65 new sites is \$1,950,000.

Table 11.3 puts an order of cost against increased supply based on new builds.





Table 11.3: Estimated cost of new builds (GST excl)				
Number of bedrooms	GFA (m2)	Unit cost (\$/m2)	No	Estimate (\$)
2	120	3,470	48	19,987,200
3	160	2,850	17	7,752,000
4	185	2,850	-	
5 and more	200	2,850	-	
Total				27,739,200

Clearly, the numbers and costs predicted above are extraordinary but a fair reflection of the neglect the sector has suffered over the years. The decision by the AHO to divert a large portion of the NPARIH budget from the Murdi Paaki Region is brought into stark focus by this planning process. Demand has always been present as reported in §5.13 but has been ignored by decision-makers to the detriment of Aboriginal families left to experience a catalogue of misery. This HEHP is not blind to the assumptions made in deriving the order of unmet need, such as that the full projection may not be realised as family formation will occur between individual men and women on the waitlist, but the challenge is of such a magnitude that any programme of works will not satisfy other than just a few households in the short term. The nature and scale of this project necessitates a strategic and carefully planned response led by the CWP so that the community is reassured that its plight is being treated seriously and comprehensively.

#### 11.4.2 Co-location options

Advice suggests that some extended family households do not regard their household complement as a problem and would prefer to remain together: lack of physical space within the dwelling is the reason why some respondents indicated a desire for alternative accommodation. Solutions put forward include the provision of larger homes (larger than five bedrooms) or construction of additional dwelling units on the block where the family home is situated. This cultural dimension will need to be teased out during the allocation process. If it is the preference for some families to adopt this collective arrangement, then this will ease pressure on land acquisition. Planning issues will

need to be resolved with Council but, by and large, these are technical matters which should be easier to resolve in the Wilcannia context than elsewhere.

#### 11.4.3 Replacement housing

No dwellings are recommended for replacement as stated in §5.12.4. The MPRH&BC household survey did record a handful of respondents describing their properties as 'condemned' or 'unliveable' so the HEHP takes the position that scoping of existing social housing properties will identify those which are beyond economic repair and a determination on ongoing serviceability will then be required.

#### 11.4.4 Housing extensions and modifications

The expressed need for housing extensions identified in §5.9, projected on the same basis as Table 11.1, is stated in Table 11.4. A budget of \$35,000/additional bedroom is allowed for extension and \$3,000 for home modification. This allowance assumes that no additional wet area facilities are required for one and two additional bedrooms but a three-bedroom addition will require an extra bathroom for which an allowance of \$50,000 is made.

Table 11.4: Requirement for housing extensions and modifications			
Extensions	Number of bedrooms		
(Factor 1.55)	1	2	3
MPRH&BC Household survey	5		1
Number of extensions	8	-	1
Total number of bedrooms	8	-	3
Modifications			
Number of dwellings			4

The number of extensions is contingent on the desire of households to reconfigure their living arrangements. For example, the presumption has been made that young adults will move out to a small, two-bedroom unit rather than stay in the family home. This presumption will not be correct in every case.



Estimated budget to attend to extensions and modifications quantified in Table 11.4 is given in Table 11.5.

**Table 11.5: Estimated budget for housing extensions and modifications**

	Estimate (\$)
Additional bedroom(s)	385,000
Additional bathroom(s)	50,000
Modifications	12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>447,000</b>

#### 11.4.5 Infrastructure

All elements of infrastructure investigated in Chapter 9 are, based on information available, serviceable and adequate except as noted below:

- Reliability and quality of water supply is a serious issue but both deficiencies are being rectified with major capital works upgrades to the Wilcannia Weir and Wilcannia WTP;
- Investigations to upgrade the town wastewater management arrangements have been commissioned and are proceeding as an initial step to moving from site-based collection and treatment to gravity sewerage; and
- Telstra is pursuing an upgrade to town communications capacity to improve digital connectivity.

No cost is attached to any of the above projects as both are the responsibility of utilities.

Additionally, through DPIE and NIAA, work has progressed on the Baaka Cultural Centre which is intended to become a focal point for cultural activities in the town, reversing the slow erosion of the Baakantji traditions and culture observed by Elders. Apart from becoming the prime archive for tangible and non-tangible Baakantji culture, the Centre will be a place of intergenerational learning and knowledge transfer, and a destination for visitors and academics.

### 11.5 Asset preservation

All social housing properties are, or should be, subject to planned inspection cycles. Details of planned maintenance have not been obtained so there is not a clear programme and scope of work this HEHP is able to evaluate. The AHO has committed a budget of about \$1.4M to carry out repairs and maintenance on Wilcannia LALC properties at the conclusion of the Build and Grow head lease/sub-lease arrangement but, based on the projections summarised at Table 11.6, this is unlikely to be an adequate allocation given that planned maintenance was not a feature of the head lease/sub-lease contracts. Compass Housing reported that its maintenance of AHO properties was consistent with the requirements of the AHO and no special provision need be made for heavy use. The relationship between lessor and lessee was such that repairs to \$5,000 could be made routinely and work above this amount negotiated amicably with the agency. The cost of any repair and maintenance work may be in the lower bands of Table 5.31.

Estimated costs for routine repair and maintenance required to attend to immediate restoration and asset preservation are summarised in Table 11.6. Average spend/property is approximately \$45,479.

**Table 11.6: Repair and maintenance, probable order of cost**

	Cost
Responsive and planned maintenance	3,774,780
Particular repairs	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,774,780</b>

### 11.6 Tenant support and education

MP TSEP has become an essential provider of support in the social housing space in Wilcannia, owing to its key role in supporting community members to establish and maintain tenancies, negotiate application and compliance processes and leverage partnerships to deliver wrap-around services. It also plays an increasingly strategic part in support of CWP and MPRA initiatives. Funding is, at present, committed by AHO on an annual

basis. At the time of writing, application has been made for an extension of the initiative for twelve months to October 2022. Given the complexity of the housing and related human services landscape from a community perspective, ongoing resourcing of MP TSEP is considered critical to the sustainability of gains which are made because of implementation of this Master Plan.

### 11.7 Home ownership

No respondents to the MPRH&BC household survey were owners so it is not possible to unpack the reasons why some Aboriginal households saw value in investing in a community where the real estate market is absent. The CWP has not expressed any desire to pursue this form of tenure on behalf of tenants but this HEHP does contain a recommendation for an information session for those tenants who might wish to consider this option further.

### 11.8 Emergency accommodation

The only emergency accommodation in Wilcannia is the Women and Children's Safe House: a complex of five short- and medium-term units, and two transition units. The service estimates an additional six units are required. Attempts to secure access to lots locally to develop have not been successful so the proposal for expansion is incorporated within this HEHP as an element of a broader vision to address housing and homelessness issues.

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
CAP-2.1	5.8 5.10 Chapter 8	Work with housing providers to improve accessibility and quality of housing – Tenancy management of Aboriginal social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the completion of the AHO/WIALC headlease, transfer management of WIALC properties to MPRHC in line with the preferences of the community for a local ACHP housing manager and the aspirations of MPRA and the Consortium to rationalise housing management services</li> <li>Foster a more inclusive partnership between the CWP and housing manager(s), including regular communication with, and performance reporting to, the CWP, and closer interaction with tenants</li> <li>Establish a shopfront in the community</li> <li>Conduct a rent review as the CWP considers rent levels are not consistent with housing condition, level of amenity and the high costs of living in a remote community.</li> <li>Additionally, require managing ACHP(s) to verify that, for tenants in credit, the surplus is not appropriated to the detriment of the tenant</li> <li>Investigate whether housing application, allocation and transfer processes can be localised</li> <li>Examine the relevance and/or accessibility of Housing Pathways as an appropriate application process in view of its complexity and inability to generate accurate housing demand data and replace with a simpler and more flexible Region-specific process</li> <li>Advocate with housing manager(s) for improved responsiveness to tenant circumstances, perceptions of safety, enquiries and requests for assistance, including repairs and maintenance</li> <li>Foster an enduring partnership between MP TSEP, housing provider(s) and homelessness services which ensures that vulnerable Aboriginal members of the community are able to receive support needed to remain safe and healthy</li> <li>Maintain the role of MP TSEP in supporting tenants at risk of breach to retain their tenancies and assisting with access to human services</li> </ul>	<p>The community, through the MPRH&amp;BC household survey, the CWP, and human service providers consistently flagged a series of concerns in relation to tenancy and asset management services. Particular issues were raised in relation to accessibility and visibility, communications, and repairs and maintenance, responses to which are itemised in detail in the Strategy column</p> <p>It is no surprise, then, that the community rejected the placing of housing management responsibilities with managers based out of the community. Of those that offered an opinion, 93% would prefer a local ACHP managing their housing but many declined to state a view. With the recent creation of the Consortium and the aim of Consortium member MPRHC to obtain NRSCH registration, the Regional provider is the only housing manager able to satisfy the community's aspirations.</p> <p>Some actions proposed by the CWP, as documented in the CAP, sit within a Regional context and should be referred by the CWP Chair to MPRA for a Regional response. Rent levels and aspects of the application and allocation process fall within this category</p> <p>Acceptance of MP TSEP by the community is allowing tenants and others in need to access much needed housing support services. The team is building an impressive capability to work across a wide range of human services and tackle barriers to housing on behalf of applicants, including the current online application process</p>

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
CAP-2.1	5.8	Work with housing providers to improve accessibility and quality of housing – Raise the number of tenants taking advantage of financial benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange for housing manage(s) and MP TSEP to assist tenants with applications for Commonwealth Rent Assistance</li> </ul>	The MPRH&BC household survey indicated that only a third of tenants were claiming CRA. Targeted support by the housing manager and MP TSEP can assist tenants not yet taking advantage of this financial benefit
CAP-3.1 CAP-3.2	7.2 9.3 Chapter 8	<p>Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community - Support people affected by alcohol and other drugs</p> <p>Build the capacity and understanding of the Aboriginal community in engaging with service providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate through MPRA for a comprehensive review of Aboriginal alcohol and other drug residential and counselling services across western NSW with a view to developing a strategy and the infrastructure to address the unmet need for services in the Region and locally</li> <li>Increase availability of non-clinical mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services</li> </ul>	Access to alcohol and other drug services, particularly early intervention and prevention services, for Aboriginal people living in far western NSW is extremely problematic. There are no residential services within sensible reach and counselling services are primarily delivered by visiting mainstream providers. Service providers in the justice space, in particular, cite lack of culturally safe alcohol and other drug services as a barrier to permanent exit from the criminal justice system
CAP-3.1 CAP-3.2	Chapter 8	Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community - Ensure services and programmes supporting individuals and families are coordinated, communicated and equitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster a closer relationship between the CWP and all tiers of government to drive improvements in human services including a tighter focus on service availability, cooperation and integration, and community wellbeing</li> <li>In conjunction with MPS and MPRA, ensure that funding allocations guided by population numbers are based on the latest ERPs, not the most recent ABS Census counts</li> <li>Develop a constructive relationship with service providers which allows for open, two-way communication of service matters between parties; transparency and accountability</li> <li>Include the CWP in any decision-making process relating to</li> </ul>	CWP input indicates that community awareness of availability of various human services, and of the presence of some providers, is patchy at best: some organisations receiving funding to deliver services and transport are known to be inactive. Apart from WLALC, which operates by statute, there are no operating Aboriginal community controlled enterprises headquartered in the town: service organisations appear, achieve little in the way of lasting value, and disappear. The CWP sees contracting out of town services (typically from Broken Hill or Dubbo) as creating a barrier to community being able to access culturally safe services. The limited time allowance for providers in the

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
		Build the capacity and understanding of the Aboriginal community in engaging with service providers	<p>procurement and evaluation of Aboriginal-specific human services delivery to the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiate with human service providers for more opportunities for local employment to improve cultural safety and accessibility</li> <li>Seek MPS assistance in conjunction with MP TSEP housing staff to mount a multi-service expo with representation from all service providers</li> <li>Dispense with the contestability model of procurement in favour of negotiation with known regional/local values-aligned providers having a track record of collaboration and community acceptance</li> </ul>	<p>disability and home care and home support services sectors strongly suggests that services cannot be client-centred. Service providers find it difficult to recruit and retain local Aboriginal staff so opportunities exist to improve cultural safety through encouraging interested local young people into employment in the human services sector</p> <p>The CWP aspires to a closer working relationship with governments in respect of decision-making, monitoring and performance evaluation of human services. The procurement process is entirely remote and does not necessarily lead to efficient service delivery. It is the view of the CWP that a community contribution in this space would assist in rationalising and guiding service implementation</p>
CAP-3.1	8.3	Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community – Ensure our individuals and families have access to support, refuge and counselling that is culturally safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate with DCJ and other responsible departments for review of the current service response to domestic and family violence with the aim of supporting Aboriginal parents and children who are survivors of domestic and family violence to remain in their home where it is safe to do so or providing alternative housing options, including expanding the capacity of the Wilcannia Safe House</li> <li>Similarly, address the needs of men in need of crisis or transition accommodation, and of children</li> </ul>	<p>The 2015 AHO report, <i>Demand and Supply of Aboriginal Housing in Remote and Outer Regional NSW</i>, identified DFV as a significant problem in many communities, with a lack of emergency accommodation and other forms of support available to women and children. The need in Wilcannia is echoed by the CWP and service providers in consultations to inform this HEHP. Existing seven unit capacity at the Wilcannia Safe House is inadequate but development options may be available in the community which could satisfy demand subject to funding. Formalisation of the accommodation available to men at the Opera House and a young persons facility have also been flagged as essential</p>
CAP-3.1	6.2	Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community – Enter into a strategic partnership with Central Darling Shire Council	Establish areas of common strategic interest and negotiate a cross-sector collaboration with Central Darling Shire Council, MPRA and MPS with a view to working to the strengths of each to bring about meaningful change in the community. Refer to Figure 11.1 for a potential framework for collaboration	<p>Partnership and collaboration are at the heart of Council's strategic aspirations. The weak governance and financial position of local government creates the opportunity for a new model of civic participation which reflects the demographic character of Wilcannia and unlocks latent human capital. The CWP is keen to explore the feasibility of a strategic and collaborative alliance between the peak Aboriginal representative bodies, the Wilcannia Aboriginal community and Central Darling Shire Council under the Local Government Act Section 355 provisions with the objective of jointly and</p>

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
				cooperatively bringing about community-wide social, economic and environmental improvement. The community insist on being 'front and centre' in the conceptualisation, planning, design and implementation of place-based initiatives. These initiatives are to be informed by the community's CAP and HEHP, and by CDSC community strategic plans, rather than be thought bubbles of government imposed without regard for the community's capacity, aspirations and long term interests
CAP-3.1	-	Increase the provision and quality of localised services in the community - Food security	Establish an Aboriginal-owned and operated store to improve access to a greater range of fresh and packaged foodstuffs and other commodities, and to act as a retail outlet for local products	Cost, quality and range of food products (fresh and packaged) has resulted in significant food stress and poor nutrition at a population scale. Shopping in Broken Hill deprives the town of the financial benefits of retaining household income in town.
CAP-3.3	9.3	Provide opportunities for young people to participate in diversionary initiatives which aid personal development and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In collaboration with young people in the community, develop and implement a youth strategy, design and deliver youth programmes and diversionary initiatives</li> <li>Support Junior Rugby League and Far West Academy programmes delivered locally</li> </ul>	Approximately 36% of the Aboriginal population is aged between five and 24 years. Recreational and personal development activities are few. Maari Ma operates the Wings Drop in Centre but alternative activities are required for those with other interests. Organised sporting opportunities are thin on the ground, and activities which link to improved school participation would be beneficial.
CAP-4.1 CAP-6.1	6.2 8.3 9.3	Build capacity to participate in economic development activities – Increase competencies and skills across areas of interest, including financial management, and participate in growing an Aboriginal business base  Build partnerships with employment providers and businesses to link training to employment	<p>With MPS support and in conjunction with interested local businesses and services, develop a package of initiatives relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equipping young adults to fill vacancies in the health and human services sectors</li> <li>Encouraging enrolment in and completion of school-based apprenticeships</li> <li>Transition from school to work and further learning</li> <li>Targeted training and pathways to employment</li> <li>Culturally safe technology hub to support people with limited computer literacy to access services</li> <li>Support to transition to small business start-ups</li> <li>A means of supporting individuals returning from the criminal justice system to reintegrate into the community through work</li> </ul>	<p>The CWP aspires to improve the economic situation of the community in an holistic and integrated way by increasing the level of active participation in the labour market. No Aboriginal people aged 17 and 18 years were engaged in employment, education or training at the time of the 2016 Census. The employment to population ratio for Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over was only 36% that for non-Indigenous people. There were no Aboriginal-owned and operated private businesses other than self-employed sole traders and the CWP aspires to start a discussion around establishing its own NGO to provide services through an integrated human services initiative. In the opinion of the CWP, the only people that will close the gap are the local people</p>



Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
CAP-5.1	9.3	Support the schools in strategies that give children a greater chance of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop cultural mentor programmes and activities designed to ensure students are engaged and succeeding at school</li> <li>Advocate with Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly to review educational attainment and develop a higher-level strategy aimed at measurably improving education outcomes at every level of schooling</li> <li>Advocate for more Cert III school-based apprenticeships and for pathways from school into local employment and work</li> </ul>	Greatly raise educational outcomes through aligning school education with cultural norms and aspirations for self-determination, and with potential employment interests. Respond energetically to poor school attendance and low numbers of young people leaving secondary education having completed Year 12
WIL-01	6.3 11.4	Land acquisition	Commence building a land bank through a rolling programme of acquisitions of vacant and suitable abandoned blocks to provide sites for future residential development. Title to rest with WLALC and/or MPRHC as a step to rebuilding the local ACHP property portfolio	The AHO has no vacant blocks remaining for development while WLALC has title to three undeveloped blocks, two of which (1/909082 and 1/907749) are likely to be suitable for residential development. With a waiting list of in excess of 50, it is clear that new builds will be required to satisfy, in part or whole, the growing needs of the community. A rolling programme is suggested to match supply with demand, and capacity to deliver new homes. It is further suggested that discussions be held with CDSC to understand planning considerations and determine the programme, extent and timeframe for access to lots suitable for development
WIL-02	5.12	Demolition	Subject to scoping to determine existing asset condition, no Aboriginal social housing dwellings are recommended at this stage for demolition	-
WIL-03	5.10 9.3 11.4	New housing	<p>Greatly boost Aboriginal rental housing supply through new builds and/or acquisitions. Priority to be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young singles and couples</li> <li>Elderly persons</li> <li>Homes for families in crowded households</li> </ul> <p>Engage the CWP in the planning and design process for all new development to ensure that future housing is culturally and environmentally appropriate to Wilcannia</p>	This HEHP shows clearly the housing status of Aboriginal individuals and families is dire by any measure. The MPRH&BC household survey identified 14 families, 58 young people and 9 older persons as in need of accommodation which, when factored to reflect need across the whole community, greatly exceeds Housing Pathways approvals. Priorities are consistent with those stated in the 2015 AHO report, <i>Demand and Supply of Aboriginal Housing in Remote and Outer Regional NSW</i>



Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
WIL-04	5.12	Replacement housing	Assign ownership of new supply to WLAC and/or MPRHC  All existing Aboriginal social housing is deemed serviceable although up to twenty dwellings are reported by tenants to be in a poor state of repair and some may be candidates for replacement when scoping is carried out	The CWP advise that twenty seven homes have been lost during the life of the <i>Build and Grow</i> policy for a variety of reasons and funding has not been made available to the Land Council by the AHO for these to be replaced. If this is factual, and a substantial number of dwellings are assessed on inspection to be so dilapidated or otherwise unfit for occupation as to require replacement, then the housing situation in Wilcannia can only be described as shameful
WIL-05	5.9 11.4	Housing extensions and modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide eight additional bedrooms to alleviate crowding in existing dwellings</li> <li>Arrange for OT assessment of tenants with a disability requiring home modifications</li> </ul>	The ABS 2016 Census identified that 20.4% of Aboriginal households, excluding those at the Warrali Estate, required at least one extra bedroom to accommodate residents while the MPRH&BC household survey recorded six households in need of additional bedrooms which, across the full Aboriginal social housing portfolio equates to 7 x 1 bedroom extensions and 2 x 3 bedroom extensions  Many of those requiring modifications because of a physical impairment had had modifications carried out but four respondents required assessment and installation of aids
WIL-06	Chapter 5 8.3 9.3 11.4	Permanent accommodation for homeless people	<p>In addition to provision of additional housing as per Strategy WIL-03:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As an interim measure until additional housing is developed to meet need, introduce a moratorium on evictions and refocus social housing tenancy management to case manage difficult tenancies. In particular, suspend all disciplinary action relating to housing complement even if this means accepting degrees of crowding</li> <li>Erect flat pack natural disaster temporary housing to house families until permanent accommodation becomes available</li> </ul>	There is no value in providing co-ordinated services where there is nowhere for the services to place homeless people.  Homelessness is a 'hidden' consequence of the lack of housing in Wilcannia and so the number of individuals and families without adequate shelter is difficult to quantify. The ABS 2016 Census indicated a total of 63 persons across the Far West, including Broken Hill, while the MPRH&BC household survey recorded 13 households providing shelter to person(s) who would otherwise be homeless

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
WIL-07	5.12 9.3 11.5	Housing repair and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit adequate investment to restore asset condition, amenity and longevity, to modernise and to carry out alterations, where practical, to satisfy cultural needs</li> <li>Set cost and residual service life thresholds above which dilapidated properties are replaced</li> <li>Arrange with housing provider(s) to carry out housing inspections at no greater than six monthly intervals</li> <li>Investigate health hardware and design solutions to increase the functionality of crowded houses and reduce the impacts of crowding, with a focus on healthy living practices and reducing the disease impact of crowding</li> <li>Ensure that security and safety measures are regularly maintained in functional condition</li> <li>Require the housing manager to carry out regular pest eradication measures, including treatment for termites</li> <li>Upgrade concrete driveway strips to full width pavements where unsafe and/or damaged</li> </ul>	<p>Tenants reported on asset condition as at the time of the MPRH&amp;BC household survey. Reports, as might be expected were mixed, ranging from favourable to not so favourable. Response time and quality of repairs were bones of contention. Under the AHO <i>Build and Grow</i> policy, asset condition has deteriorated and decline in condition requires to be reversed. Survey responses indicated that landlord responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act may not be being complied with. One property has been awaiting replacement of the laundry roof blown off two and a half years ago. In addition to various states of dilapidation, the community complain of serious pest infestations</p>
WIL-08	5.1 5.2 11.3 11.7	Home ownership	<p>Arrange with AHO and Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to deliver community information workshops on support for home ownership. Examine the feasibility of rent/buy schemes as a means of moving to home ownership</p>	<p>The MPRH&amp;BC household survey did not identify interest in home ownership nor has the CWP promoted the option but it is likely to be beneficial to hold an information session to provide guidance on the steps to ownership, and pros and cons. The 2015 AHO report, <i>Demand and Supply of Aboriginal Housing in Remote and Outer Regional NSW</i>, noted some interest in a rent/buy arrangement</p>
WIL-09	8.3	Emergency accommodation	<p>Advocate for the construction of an additional six medium-term units at the Wilcannia Safe House to house women and children escaping domestic and family violence</p>	<p>Capacity of the Wilcannia Safe House is insufficient to accommodate all women and their children in need of a place of safety. Access to rooms negotiated with a local motel are short-term only. Referral to Catherine Haven or other places of safety in Broken Hill is also constrained by a lack of suitable places. Additionally, the Wilcannia Safe House is eager to expand the range of support programmes delivered locally and is restricted by space limitations</p>
WIL-10	5.8 9.3	Energy affordability	<p>Install residential solar PV panels to all dwellings not currently provided with solar power and include associated energy saving</p>	<p>Energy poverty is rife in communities across the Region, including Wilcannia. Previous energy affordability measures</p>

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
WIL-11	3.12 5.11	To ensure adequate heating and cooling	measures  In conjunction with Strategy WIL-09: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide reverse cycle split system type air conditioning, ceiling fans (where practical) and draught proofing measures to all Aboriginal social housing</li> <li>▪ Upgrade passive thermal controls where it is practical to do so</li> </ul>	have not addressed the needs of all Aboriginal social housing tenants so this proposal is a step to an equitable solution to those households which have not benefited so far with the objective of reducing the burden of electricity bills  The MPRH&BC household survey established that 23% of Aboriginal social housing dwellings in Wilcannia had neither heating or cooling appliances installed. With the duration of extreme temperatures increasing, it is essential for reasons of personal health and general wellbeing for air conditioning to be provided to each household
WIL-12	10.1 10.2 11.4	Infrastructure and municipal services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negotiate with the relevant utility and/or CDSC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade power distribution to ensure that new developments can be adequately serviced</li> <li>- Obtain access to free broadband and WIFI services to raise standards of digital literacy</li> <li>- Carry out regular clean-up of rubbish and unwanted bulk items</li> <li>- Mark and protect the graves of infants resting at the Wilcannia Cemetery</li> <li>- Install at tap at the Cemetery</li> <li>- Extend the 50 km speed zone east from the bridge to the position of the 80 km post</li> <li>- Obtain access to equipment to maintain yards</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Ensure that the Roads To Home programme attends to deficiencies across all infrastructure works at both the Mallee and Warrali Estate</li> </ul>	-
WIL-13	9.3	Youth facilities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for adequate funding to allow (re)development of the Wings complex to provide for structured youth development activities and cultural activities</li> </ul>	The Wings Drop-in Centre provides youth development activities in Wilcannia including school holiday programmes, after school programmes, support for the Far West Academy of Sport including the junior rugby league programme as well as providing a space for community cultural activities. An attempt to progress redevelopment eight years ago was not fruitful partly because previously approved funding was diverted to the Northern Territory as the project was not sufficiently advanced

Table 11.7: Master Plan

Strategy	Chapter reference	Action area	Strategy	Justification
WIL-14	4.2 8.3 9.3	Children's facilities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend early childhood services available through the Barlu Kurli preschool</li> <li>Negotiate greater allied health funding to support improved access to specialist services, especially OT, audiology and speech pathology</li> <li>Promote the role of Aboriginal Allied Health assistants to strengthen cultural safety and provide continuity of care</li> </ul>	to be 'shovel ready' Efforts to advance the work commenced by the Department of Education Report, 2012, <i>Wilcannia Care, Early Childhood Hub and Belonging Centre</i> and the DEEWR <i>Childcare Facilitation Project – Wilcannia Report</i> , 2011 stalled in 2014. In the context of supporting the educational and social development of young children through their first 2,000 days, the community aspires to greater opportunity for access to an expanded range of early childhood services Ensure access to specialist diagnosis, early intervention and intensive support for children with learning and development difficulties. Excessive wait times are impacting upon children attaining development milestones and achieving at school
WIL-15	9.3	Temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for a form of temporary accommodation to provide a place to stay for individuals and families returning for sorry business or who would otherwise be without shelter</li> </ul>	The community are concerned that there are few places for people returning for funerals or who are without a place to stay. The Wilcannia hotel is no longer open to the public while motel rooms are limited in number. Those in need, especially men, often approach the police hoping for assistance but there are no options

## 11.9 Probable order of cost

Probable orders of cost for each strategy are shown in Table 11.8. The estimates were prepared on the following basis:

- Costs for building-related work are derived from industry standard cost information and/or for project costs for similar work in the Murdi Paaki Region;
- Prices are current to September 2020;
- An index appropriate to locality is applied;
- Building costs assume that construction takes place in accordance with MPS procurement practice. Projections may need to be re-evaluated if training schemes are integrated;
- Allowance for project management has been assumed to be generally between 10% and 15% of the construction budget depending upon the nature of the work involved and the degree of investigative work required;
- Estimates are stated as GST exclusive.

Table 11.8: Probable orders of cost, housing and environmental health infrastructure

Strategy	Description	Order of cost (\$)
Housing		
	Planning and development	162,500
	Land acquisition	1,950,000
	Infrastructure (nominal)	200,000
	New house building	27,739,200
	Replacement housing	-
	Housing extensions	447,000
	Repair and maintenance	3,775,000
	Sub-total	34,273,700
	Unquantified risk allowance	1,608,100
	Project management (12.5%)	4,284,200
	Programme admin (3%)	1,028,000
	Total for housing and infrastructure	41,194,000

No costs have been assigned to improvement in and extension of human services because these services are already the subject of government programme planning and resource allocation processes. Performance monitoring of government services is a key area of focus under

the OCHRE Murdi Paaki LDM Accord II and Accord processes should be brought to bear on areas of underperformance.

## 11.10 Funding sources

Funding for the project will need to be negotiated through the RAHLA as the principal decision-maker on matters of Aboriginal social housing in the Region. No ACHP or CHP is in a sufficiently robust financial position to contribute to these extraordinary costs from revenue derived from property rents and subsidies so realising a solution is dependent upon grant funding from governments. Table 11.9 is a notional income/expenditure statement for AHO and Wilcannia LALC properties based on typical property information for FY2020-21, Council charges as shown at Table 6.1, and an unimproved land value of \$1,600. The calculation optimistically assumes 100% rent collection.

Table 11.9: Notional income and expenditures relating to Wilcannia Aboriginal social housing

		Amount (\$)
Income	Rents	977,625
	Subsidy	312,000
	Total revenue	1,289,625
Outgoings	Rates/charges	158,765
	Administration	601,000
	Property costs	632,000
	Other costs	0
	Total outgoings	1,391,765
	Balance	(102,140)

A fair assessment would be that both Compass and MLAHMC would be operating at a loss of about \$50,000/year with the current financial structure. Based on the current level of rent setting and provider subsidy, the Aboriginal social housing sector is not sustainable in remote communities under the current subsidy regime. The easier options to achieve and maintain financial equilibrium are to trim management services to tenants and/or expenditures on property maintenance.

Viability of the service to the Wilcannia community

is subject to the on-going financial support in the form of government grants and subsidies from the AHO. Alternative financial investment models such as social impact investing may provide solutions to funding capital and/or recurrent costs but proving social benefit might be problematic.

### 11.11 Staging of works

There are no priorities attaching to the improvements listed in Table 11.7. All works may be classified as immediate. Repair and maintenance work should be programmed to proceed as one integrated contract following scoping. Programming may be subject to building sector capacity which can be mobilised locally and/or using the work as a vehicle for an Aboriginal apprentice training scheme. Building extensions should be included within the scope of any repair and maintenance contract.

Key to rolling out new building work at any scale may be resolution of the planning and land acquisition issues. Neither the Land Council nor the AHO has a land bank of note so it is inevitable that residential development of scale will need to be preceded by a process of acquisitions. The ability of Council to move on deceased estates to free encumbered lots could influence the speed of the overall programme. As for previous major capital works projects, scheduling of works must balance the need to satisfy community housing needs with the benefits of skills acquisition.

### 11.12 Value-adding initiatives

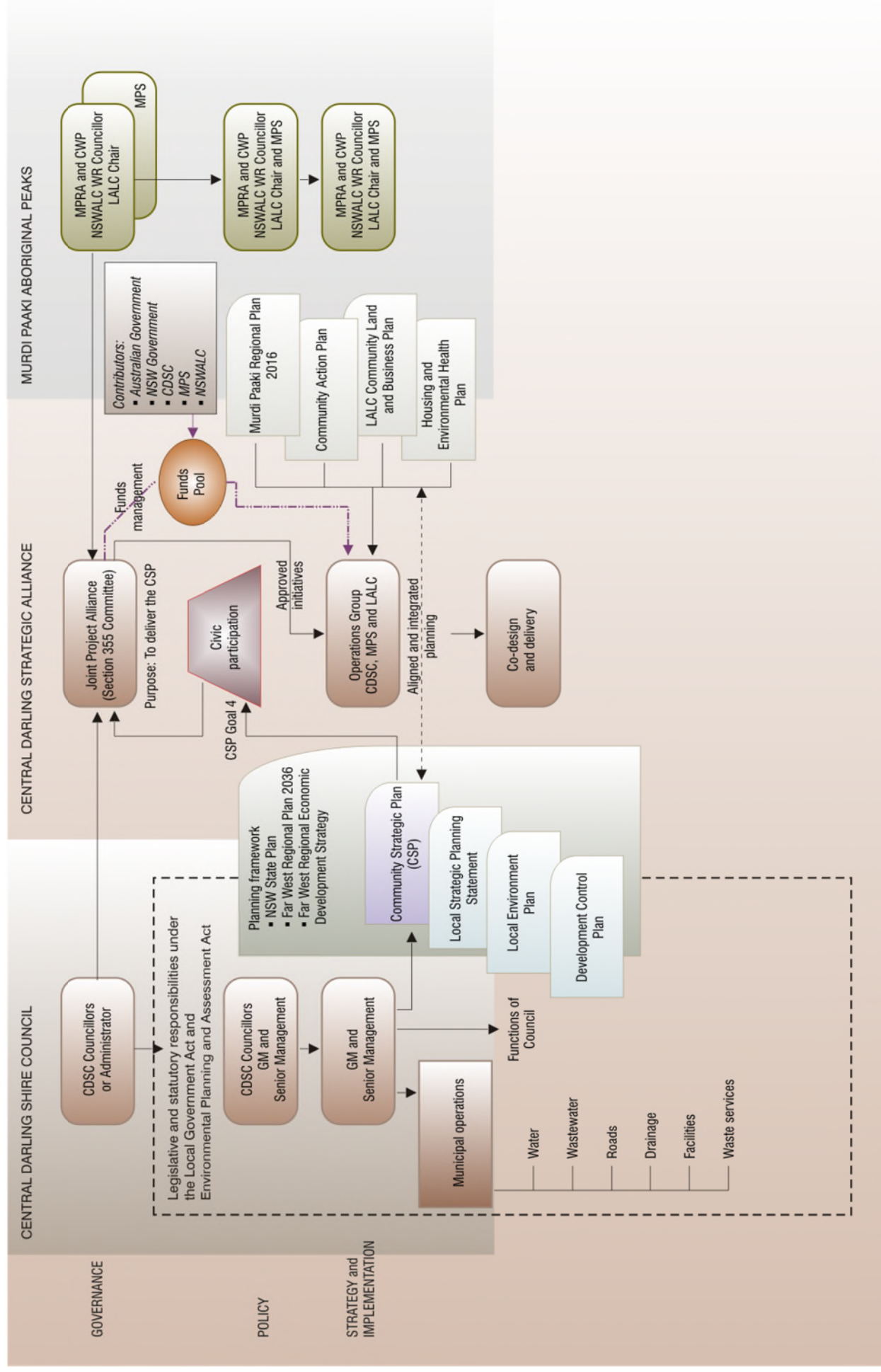
For a community such as Wilcannia, integrating training initiatives with building activity should not be problematic in that works, because of scale, can be programmed to be of longer duration. Given the scale of development outlined in Table 11.8, and documented community aspirations for integrated employment and training outcomes, a substantial employment and training programme is not only possible but essential. Such initiatives have been successfully implemented in the Region in the past at scale in conjunction with TAFE providers. For example, under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy project at Namatjira Avenue in Dareton, the Mildura and District

Educational Council (Australia) and Sunraysia Institute of TAFE were contracted to coordinate and deliver accredited competency-based on-the-job training in specified trades and other areas of endeavour to nominated apprentices, trainees and others within a training framework centred on building and infrastructure projects. Murdi Paaki Services Ltd has the capacity to work with the CWP and providers to develop a suitable employment and training framework and negotiate its implementation.



FIGURE 1.1.1: PROPOSED CWP/CDSC S355 STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FRAMEWORK

Murdi Paaki Regional Housing and Business Consortium Project  
Central Darling Communities Post-Covid-19 Strategic Renewal  
Governance and Operations





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