

8/20/2023

Tim Gilbertson  
Richard Watson  
Koomba Birdal Hut

Anne Hollonds  
Human Rights Commission  
Sydney

**Dear Anne,**

Enclosed is a copy of a submission which we believe can 'close the gap'. This proposal has flowed directly out of the work we do at TAFE and our collaboration with industry.

I know that this will be a late submission for your previous request for proposals, however we have had it read by several people over a broad spectrum of community and industry and they all see merit in it.

I hope a late delivery doesn't exclude it from review.

Both Richard and I have a long history in community service as well gaining a balanced collection of life experiences. This proposal is embedded with practical solutions and common sense.

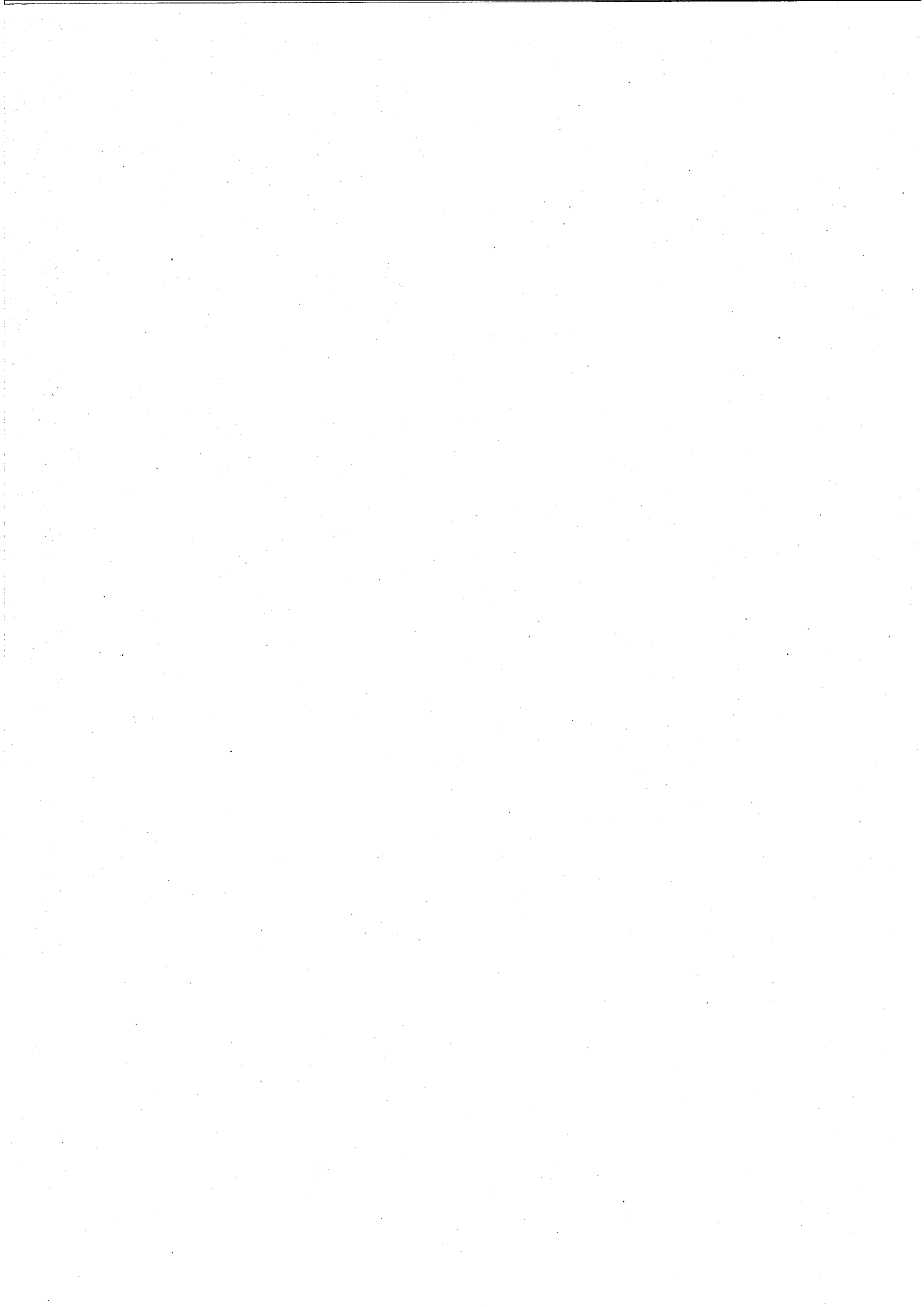
We know it will work because we have already done the activities repeatedly. They just work.

This submission deliberately lacks detail, the reason for this is that we have to have FOREVER access to the land and FOREVER access to funding (sorry for shouting) none of the proponents want to start a successful program only to have doors shut in front of us at the end of the next budget or political cycle.

The funding proposal came from a previous proposal submission sent to the WA minister for Fisheries, Dave Kelly. Dave asked for suggestion on how best to make use of cray fish quota which had become available. Tim Gilbertson wrote a proposal to have a self-funding training vessel based around a reasonable allocation. This was selected as having merit and was put up for review.

Of course industry rejected it but that doesn't diminish its potential. That is why we have included the same concept as a core asset in this proposal.

If we can open up a communication I can send you some more papers which buttress this proposal.



We have asked for access to the land from both the Shire of Carnamah and Dept' Lands, Planning and heritage, both have passed (hand balled) the jurisdiction back to other party.

This suits us, as if neither of these parties want it then it should mean we can take possession. Terra Nullius.

The site has been carefully selected because of its combination of isolation and access to all the features that we need for activities. Also and probably more importantly there are two adjacent rock shelters which would almost certainly have cultural significance.

These need to be protected as over here they have a habit of exploding such things.

We have sent copies of this submission to the Southern Yamitji group who are the traditional owners of the land. We have people from this land group already involved in the discussion process. In fact we are friends.

We are now in the process of sending the proposal to all relevant agencies.

They will have a cover letter which is agency appropriate but the core of the proposal is the same.

In this copy to you I have included the Uluru statement and Keatings Redfern Address, also my Pops letter to the editor. From this I want to emphasize that this proposal is not a thought bubble. We live in a time of 'noise' I find that these three documents cut through the clutter and clearly remind us of our responsibilities to the future.

Kind regards

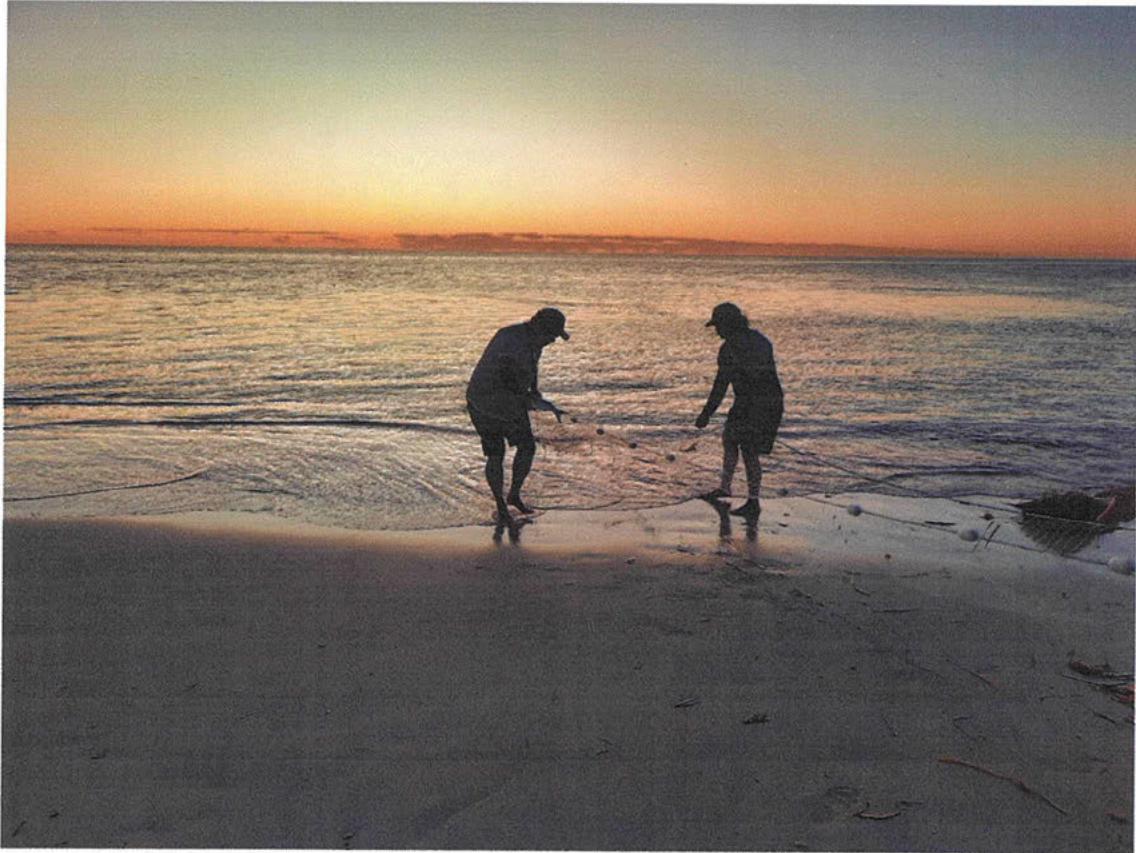
Tim Gilbertson

Richard Watson

[REDACTED]



# Proposal for Koomba Birdal Hut



Authors/Contact:

Tim Gilbertson & Richard Watson

Mobile Tim: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]



# Introduction

Soon after a concept has been conceived all the philosophical questions have to be asked. Why, who, what, when, how. This then immediately shows if the concept has merit. Really good concepts go through this process seamlessly. Concepts that are not quite right can be made to work after all these questions are dealt with and any idea that requires too many alterations should be filed under bin.

Classroom Koomba Birdal came about because of a desire to 'leave no one behind'. Outdoor Koomba Birdal flowed out of the initial. It was clear from the classroom that these students needed more than a job and a life of toil. They, like all humans, need a healthy work life balance to remain useful and productive members of the community.

Getting back into nature is an essential element in human health. Koomba Birdal by pure chance (or as we suspect NOT by pure chance) just happened to have a happy collision of staff, experience and location to be able to offer this extra service.

Koomba Birdal is one of those rare concepts that just work. It clearly fits into a caring empathetic society. It solves many of the difficulties and inconsistent elements that plague modern communities.

The next philosophical question we all need to ask now is, will Koomba Birdal be allowed to flourish? There are only two possible answers, and one of those is incredibly sad.





## Only offering a solution

When the reader goes through the following documents it is clear that there are omissions, this is deliberate.

We have no detailed financial plan, no costings, no time line, no support agencies, no communication with indigenous groups, (the site is on Yamitji country). And many other omissions that would be in a standard submission.

These haven't been included because they are the easy bits. Class room Koomba Birdal has most of that under control.

The two most important factors we must have before we can deal with the detail is, forever funding and forever tenure of the land that we need for the building.

So many successful programs are defunded, dismantled or modified to move away from the original purpose. We want to avoid that from the start.

The contributors to this submission are not naïve, they are in fact deeply committed to improving the lives of those less fortunate. Koomba Birdal is specifically developed to provide an educational opportunity with a wrap around service which makes it easier for participants to complete a qualification.

Almost every person, company, organization and institution that we have presented the Koomba Birdal Hut concept too (mostly verbally) has seen the merit and need to expand the Koomba Birdal program.

These above groups are some of the largest commercial enterprises in the state. Clearly these groups will want to know the fine details. Before we can ask them for formal support, we have to have a solid foundation which will guarantee longevity.

In another section of this submission I've suggested 100 tonne of lobster quota, in this section I will suggest that 0.5% of the TAC (total allowable catch) maybe a more appropriate number for the betterment of indigenous youth advancement.

I will not give a number as to what this will generate in dollars because, as in every primary industry the annual variation can be huge. A number now, will be meaningless next year.

Koomba Birdal intends to offer a free service, this is one major impediment removed.

Something that is very important to understand in the submission is that we are not suggesting a revolutionary program. EVERYTHING that we are proposing has already been done before. We will only following a proven formula, which has worked for thousands of years and will continue to work forever.



## List of assets for KB hut

KB hut will be a place for activities, there are many options depending on the season, weather and a groups preference. We already have boats and 4wd's and a selection of water sports toys.

The boats and 4wd's will take us to the islands, caves, lakes, waterholes etc.

We have a mobile kitchen and a recent donation gave us enough chairs and tables to provide for a group of 12.

We have a temporary shelter for the start-up phase and for larger groups. The reader should be mindful that this is beach camping. Bed rolls/ swags will be the only bedding. Many clients will want to sleep out in the open, but enough covered shelter will be available to keep everyone dry during rain.

The boats we have at the moment are unsinkable but not built to survey. The author owns a set of moulds for a tri-hull work boat which can be built to the very highest of commercial standards. These are suitable for passengers and any near shore activities such as fishing, pulling craypots, diving etc.

If the project progresses, then several will be built to service the hut.

Because the boats are of a commercial standard any sea time counts towards commercial qualifications. Training people in small boat and inshore operations will be a regular part of the activities.

Boots and hats will be necessary as we intend to do a lot of walking.

The boats and visitors will be used to collect plastic waste off the beaches. We will be able to range over a large part of the coastline between Cervantes and Dongara.

This activity has two benefits, it cleans up the beaches and the participants will get to see the coastline from the ocean which normally is difficult for the average person.

A primary unstated focus will be to get participants exhausted at the end of every day. Fill their bellies full of good food, sit around a campfire until about 2100, put them to bed and repeat the next day.

The formular is very simple. Physical activities, new experiences, new skills, real contribution to the environment, good food, good company and a campfire at the end of every day will do the magic.

We don't want to over think any of this.



## **Possible financial plan for *Koomba Birdal Hut***

If this plan is accepted in whole or part it will have to have some financial security. Grants may get it operational but there will need to be ongoing revenue to give it a forever life time.

A suggestion is to have access to crayfish quota. This is a common property resource, to which the professional fishery and recreational fishers have access. If a suitable amount could be allocated for the benefit of indigenous youth then the proposal could proceed knowing that a regular source of funding would always be available.

The west coast lobster fishery endured a collapse during early 2000's. from this the fishery was restructured into a quota fishery, with half the long-term average catch allocated to the operating fishermen.

In 2018 the then minister for fisheries Dave Kelly called for proposals on how best to allocate extra quota which had become available because of the recovery in stocks.

The author wrote a proposal for a self-funding training vessel using a reasonable quota. This proposal was deemed to have merit and was put on the list for review.

The basic concept was to have a common property resource used to benefit the wider community, based around a not-for-profit structure. The same concept is being presented again. If for example 100 tonne of lobster quota was allocated then this would provide the 'base load' funding for KB hut and all its activities.

Why 100 tonne? As is common with all primary production, there can be great variation in production and value annually. The WCL fishery being a single product and reliant on a single market has experienced significant variability in recent times. A NFP enterprise will have to have some 'wiggle room' in order to maintain consistent service provision annually.

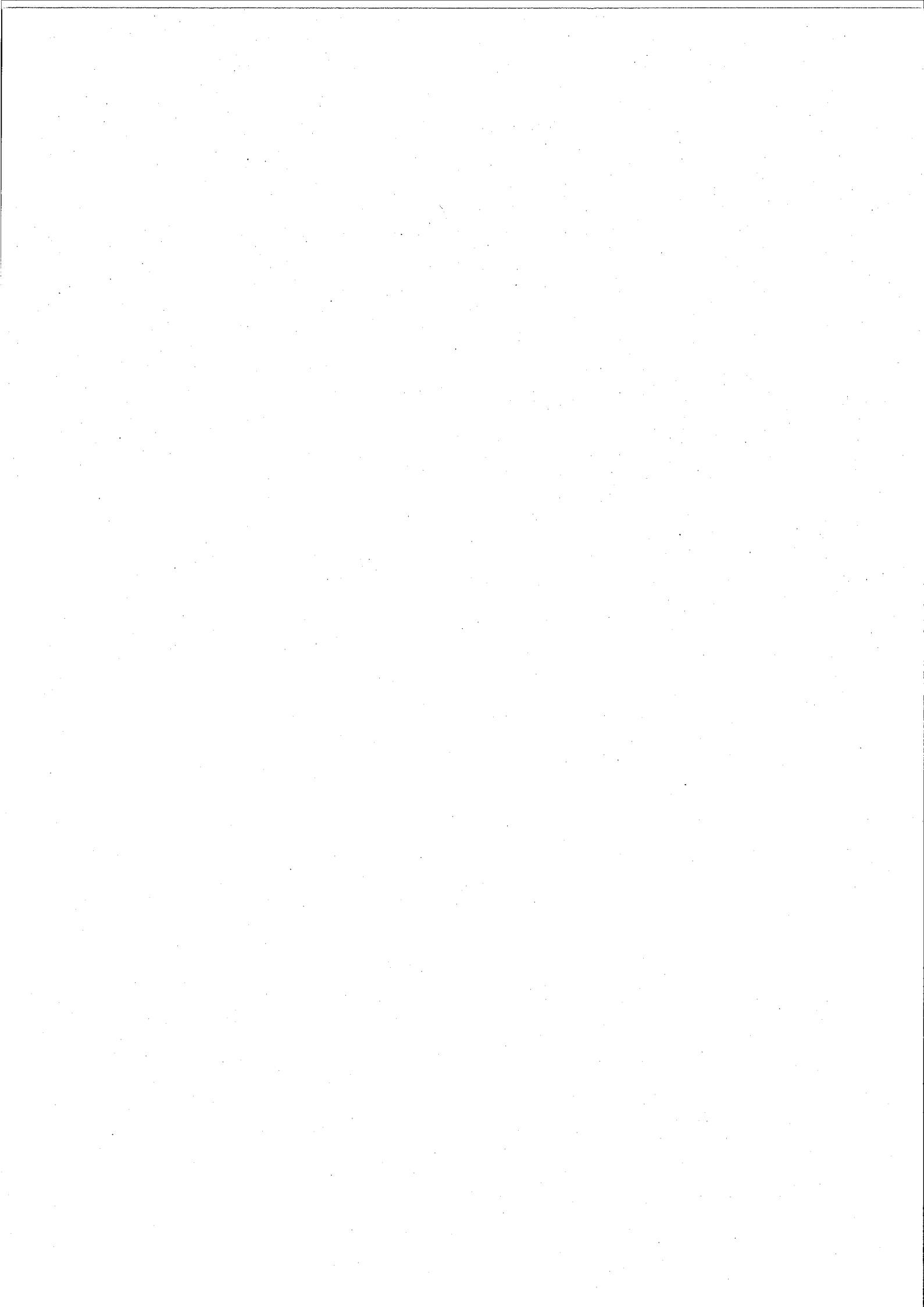
This proposal would suggest that any allocated quota would go to smaller scale fishers who are located in regional towns. They would pay a reduced fee under the proviso that they take on trainee mariners/fishers with a livable wage.

Many benefits could flow from this funding model, however push back from the established industry would be expected.

But why not. Mining pays royalties to the common fund. It is now mostly compulsory for those seeking extractive licenses and government contracts to have an indigenous component in their application. The question to ask is why can't a tiny percentage of a common property resource be allocated for the betterment of the indigenous community.

There can only be 2 funding models for KB hut. Run it on the barest of budgets and users pay for service or give it enough forever funding so that it can provide an essentially free service.

If the proposal is accepted to have merit and gets functioning, then it is easy to envisage significant demand for its services.



This proposal as presented will only touch on the obvious cliental and activities, but the author knows from experience that many more potential clients and activities would be attracted to the facility

Grants and sponsorship are always welcome, especially in the start-up phase or for capital investments but to ensure longevity continuous forever revenue to cover the core activities would be best.





# ***Koomba Birdal* Hut proposal**

## **Background**

Disengaged Aboriginal young people face challenges as a result of Australia's history of colonisation and its aftermath, including racism and disconnection from culture and identity. They are at a higher risk of social exclusion, crime and mental health issues than other sectors of the community, often intertwined with entrenched poverty, substandard housing and other such stressors (Headspace, 2020). Many young Aboriginal people also struggle with the effects of intergenerational trauma, including the forced removal of children from their families and their subsequent marginalisation and loss of culture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the destructive impact of this on the wellbeing and resilience of young people can result in increased rates of psychological distress as well as at-risk behaviours in response to sometimes desperate situations (Hunter, 2007).

To begin to address some of these issues, there is a need to create safe spaces where Aboriginal young people can connect with their cultural heritage, gain skills, and engage with their community. This preliminary discussion paper proposes the building of a hut on the foreshore north of Leeman, in the Shire of Carnamah for this purpose.

The proposal has evolved as a result of working with groups of indigenous students completing qualifications in the TAFE system. It was found that many of these students have little or no connection with their culture and background, lacking resilience and struggling in the traditional educational system, resulting in poor levels of qualification and difficulties in entering the work force. The proposal aligns closely with the WA Government's Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation's current strategic plan, which states that its current focus is to 'support a continued focus on Aboriginal empowerment and opportunity'.

*Koomba Birdal*, Noongar for 'Big Spark', reflects the primary role of the proposed facility - to provide the 'spark' or opportunity for disadvantaged indigenous youth to spend time on country as part of an education and healing process. This would enable them to reconnect with the land and achieve relevant qualifications within a supportive learning environment, to prepare them for a more hopeful and optimistic future. Positive effects would include building confidence and a sense of pride in their indigenous heritage, leading to increased self-efficacy.

The 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration's vision is 'for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they face' (page 2). The Declaration renewed the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported to imagine, discover and unlock their potential. We believe that the *Koomba Birdal* hut proposal does exactly this.

## **Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage**

This proposal is being submitted to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) in their capacity as the Department which plans and manages land and heritage for all



Western Australians. The Department's Strategic Plan (2019 – 2024) refers to its purpose which includes 'responding to ... demands on the land as well as proactively planning to ensure our communities can continue to prosper in future generations'. With a vision that includes respecting the past, creating opportunities today and planning for the future, as well as the stated key focus area of Aboriginal heritage and lands management, the DPLH is clearly the appropriate government body to consider this proposal.

### **Proposed Staffing**

The shelter would be staffed by trained professionals who are experienced in working with Aboriginal youth.

Tim Gilbertson is a local fisherman and mariner – an indigenous Noongar man with a long history in environmental management and an intimate knowledge of the adjoining local landscape.

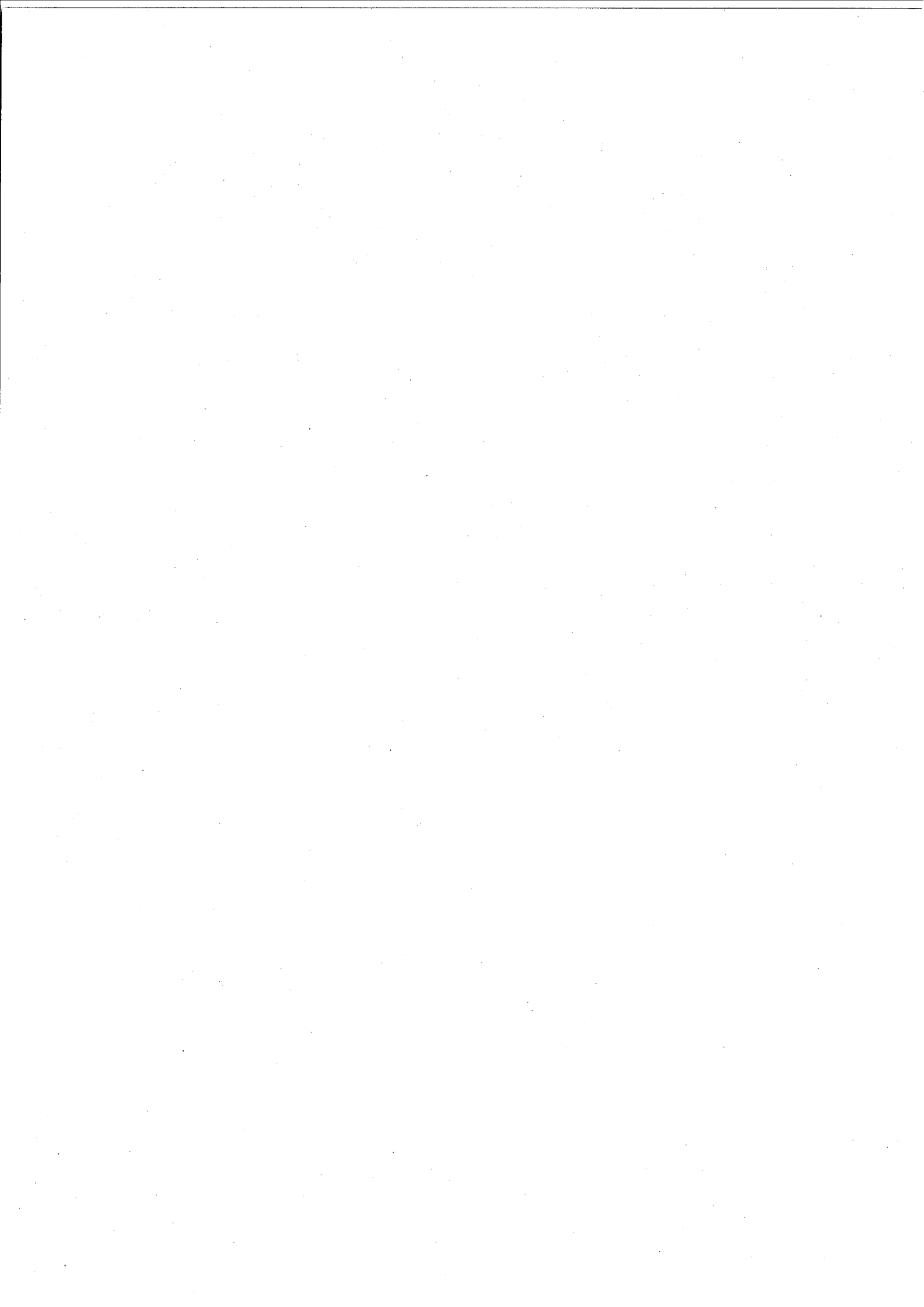
Richard Watson is a coded welder with a long history in successful youth intervention programs. He currently works at TAFE, focusing on improving indigenous involvement in trades and business.

### **Experiential, outdoor learning**

The merits of engaging students in practical and active learning experiences in natural environments have been well-documented for some time and include benefits for both physical and mental health and well-being. Indeed, version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum explains how 'The development of positive relationships with others and with the environment through interaction with the natural world can be facilitated through outdoor learning' and purports that 'these relationships are essential for the wellbeing and sustainability of individuals, society and our environment'. It continues by describing the laying of 'vital foundations for sustainability and stewardship into the future' and stating that guided reflection on involvement in 'challenging and adventurous activities' for individuals and groups can enhance wellbeing.

Educational programs such as Indi Kindi, focusing on providing learning opportunities for indigenous children in the outdoors, have achieved success over some years. Run initially in the Northern Territory and now spreading to other areas including Tennant Creek, the Barhava report (Barhava-Monteith and Tong, 2020) summarises the impressive results of the program. The report reflects its strengths-based nature and details the way it works by putting indigenous people at its centre. This, it claims, is 'more likely to close the gap and deliver tangible and transformative impact on communities as a whole' (p.4). Similarly, Yunkaporta's (2012) eight ways of learning are based on the concept that 'Aboriginal perspectives are not found in Aboriginal content, but Aboriginal processes' and expressed as eight interconnected pedagogies including land links, community links, story sharing and symbols and images.

The proposal for the *Koomba Birdal* hut involves applying these principles to older indigenous boys – learning outdoors, using experiential aboriginal pedagogies to motivate and engage. The socio-emotional, academic and wellbeing benefits of such a program, incorporated into a local context could be significant for this group of young indigenous Australians.



## **Pilot study**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people view Country as a significant, symbolic and spiritual place, not just a physical environment (Dudgeon et al, 2014). ATSI people's identity and sense of belonging are reinforced by their connection with the land, which is considered to be a deep-seated, primary need.

The proposal to build a shelter would provide the opportunity for ATSI youth, many of whom have not previously travelled outside Perth city, to spend time on country. It will provide them with that essential connection to the land and enable them to reconnect with their indigenous culture and roots. It is proposed that a standard visit by a group will involve eight people staying for four days (longer or semi-permanent stays will not be permitted).

The idea has been validated by a pilot study involving visits to the area with disadvantaged indigenous youth and the results have already demonstrated a number of tangible benefits. Nine boys disengaged with the education system were brought to a stage where they successfully achieved qualifications and were subsequently placed into apprenticeships or employment. From these students, we learnt that as well as learning necessary skills, they also needed to learn how to be more resilient and determined in their chosen pathway.

As well as spending time on country with at risk youth, visits to the area have been carried out with a diverse range of people ranging from academic scientists to citizen scientists. All have agreed that the selected site and surrounds are powerful healing country.

## **Site consideration**

A suitable site must be situated within a reasonable driving distance of Perth and must be relatively accessible by non-4WD vehicles. It must be private and provide access to true wilderness. The proposed site (location: 29.48 23 S 114.57 55 E) is 16km north of Leeman and 1km off Indian Ocean Drive, allowing for swift and safe evacuation in the event of a medical or other emergency.

In terms of Aboriginal language groups, the proposed site is on Yamatji country, just north of the newly-established song line which forms the Coorow/Carnamah boundary and Yuat Noongar and Yamatji country. Strong family connections between the two language groups already exist and would be leveraged if the proposal goes ahead.

## **Learning Objectives**

The site must clearly provide significant opportunities for learning. Cultural immersion necessitates being close to indigenous sites of importance as well as providing the opportunity to learn about cultural heritage through participation in camps, language classes and community events. Fostering positive relationships amongst indigenous boys, their families and their communities would strengthen social bonds, help develop teamwork skills and build a sense of community. For youths who have become disengaged from mainstream education, life skills training is also essential and skills such as cooking and budgeting would be incorporated.



We have identified another source of funding which will see the facility being completely self-reliant with a forever source of funds. As soon as we are able to confirm access to the land on which we propose to build the hut, then we can present the proposal to the potential source of funding.

### **Next steps**

Our request is that the proposal be given consideration by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. We are able to provide any further information on request and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the concept.

**Tim Gilbertson**  
**Richard Watson**

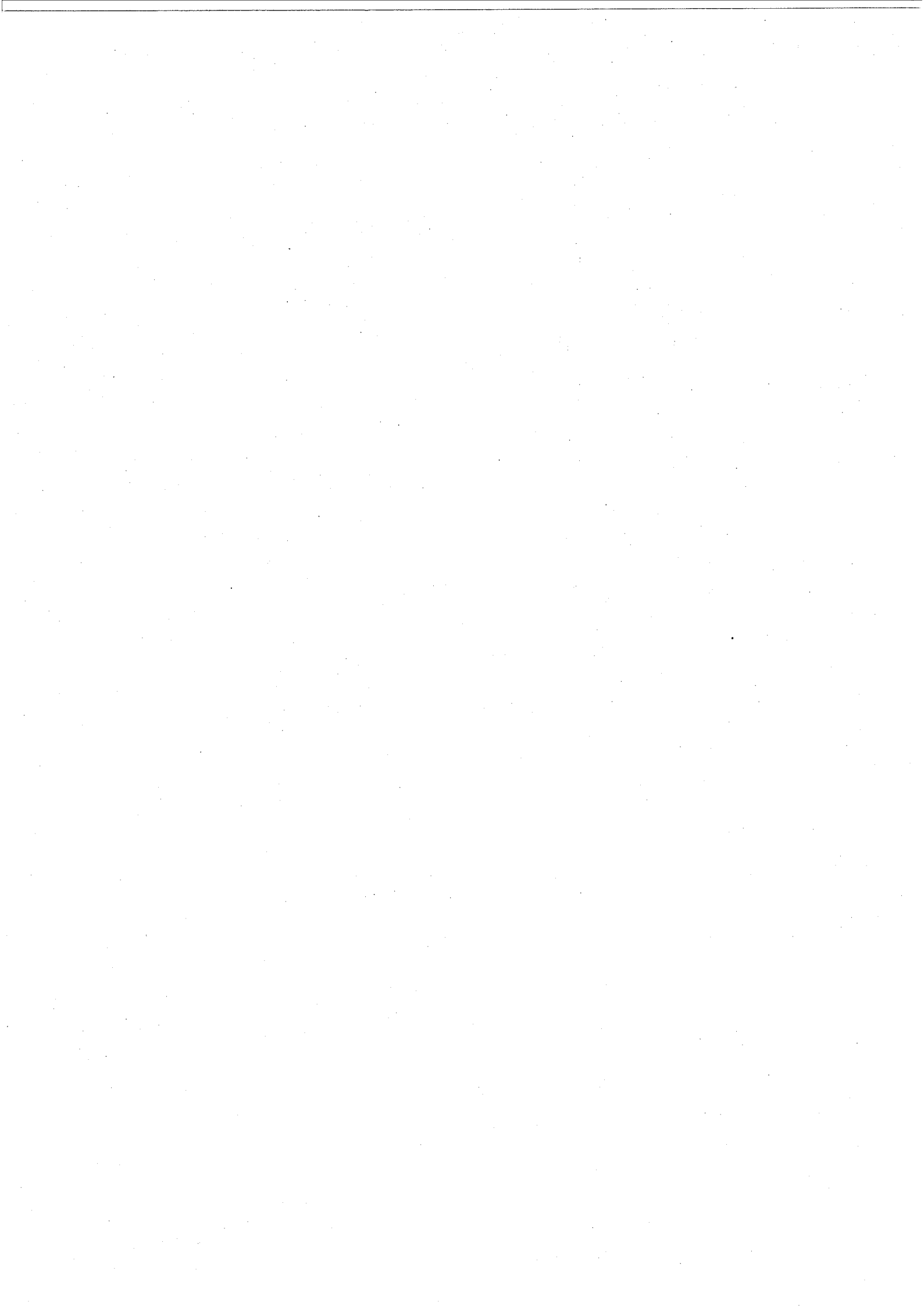
April, 2023





## References

- Atkinson, J., Hayes, M. & Atkinson, C (2020). *Working and walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and young people: A practical guide for non-Indigenous workers*. Emerging minds. <https://emergingminds.com.au/> [Accessed 15/4/23].
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016, 4714.0 - *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15*, Survey Data Report 4714.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, ACT.
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. (2014). Foundation to Year 10 curriculum: *Curriculum connections: Outdoor learning*. <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/curriculum-connections/portfolios/outdoor-learning/>
- Barhava-Monteith and Tong (2020), *Barhava Report – Indi Kindi Impact Report*. Moriarty Foundation. [https://moriartyfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Barhava-Report\\_Indi-Kindi-Impact-2020.pdf](https://moriartyfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Barhava-Report_Indi-Kindi-Impact-2020.pdf) [accessed 15/4/23].
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2019). *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. <https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>
- Department of Environment and Conservation (2009). *Resource Condition Report for a Significant Western Australian Wetland: Lake Logue*. DEC, Perth.
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2017). *National strategic framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's mental health and social and emotional wellbeing 2017 – 2023*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (2021) *Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024*. Government of Western Australia [accessed 15/4/23]. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/department-of-planning-lands-and-heritage-strategic-plan>
- Dudgeon, P. Milroy & H. Walker, R. (Ed.). (2014). *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Headspace (2020), *Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid*, retrieved from <https://headspace.org.au/headspacecentres/maitland/aboriginal-mental-health-firstaid/#:~:text=Aboriginal%20Mental%20Health%20First%20Aid%2008%2F01%2F2018%20Mental%20health,first%20aid%20strategies%20to%20members%20of%20the%20public>
- Hunter, E. (2007). *Disadvantage and Discontent: A Review of Issues Relevant to the Mental Health of Rural and Remote Indigenous Australians*; in *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 15 (No. 2): 88–93.
- Jackson-Barrett, E.M. & Lee-Hammond, L. (2018). *Strengthening Identities and Involvement of Aboriginal Children through Learning on Country*. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43 (6).
- Lee-Hammond, L. & Jackson-Barrett, E. (2020). *Indigenous perspectives on outdoor learning environments*. In: Little, H., Elliott, S. and Wyer, S., (eds.) *Outdoor Learning Environments*. Routledge as part of the Taylor and Francis Group, pp. 203-219.



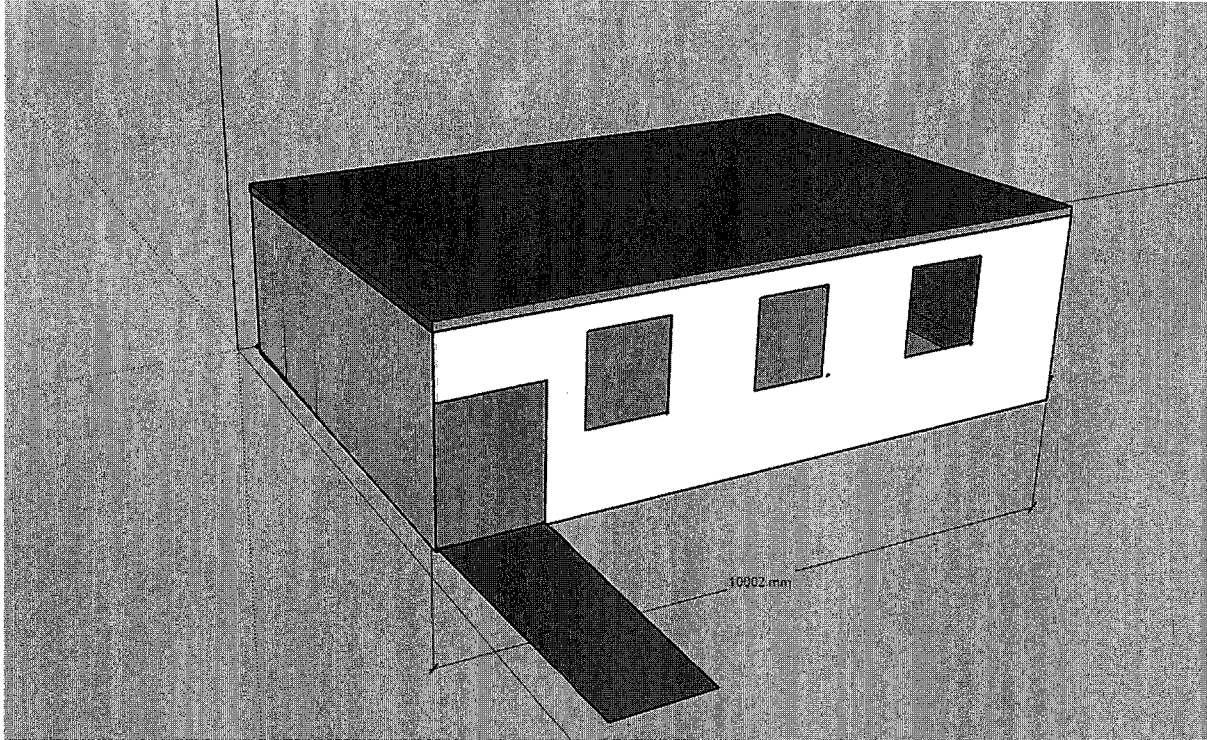
Mann, J. et al (2022) *Getting out of the Classroom and Into Nature: A Systematic Review of Nature-Specific Outdoor Learning on School Children's Learning and Development*. Frontiers in Public Health, Volume 10.

URL=<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.877058>

WA Government's Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation's strategic plan 2021 – 2025.

Yunkaporta, T. (2012). *8 ways Aboriginal Pedagogy from Western NSW*. WNSW Department of Education and Training. <https://www.8ways.online/>





## **Leeman is 263 kms North of Perth.**

The proposed location of the Koomba Hut is 16kms north of Leeman.

I have checked these measurements (we know what Tim's measurements can be like).

The below is an image showing turn of 16 kms north of Leeman and then short drive to the site..



## Koomba Birdal Hut Leeman

### Accommodation

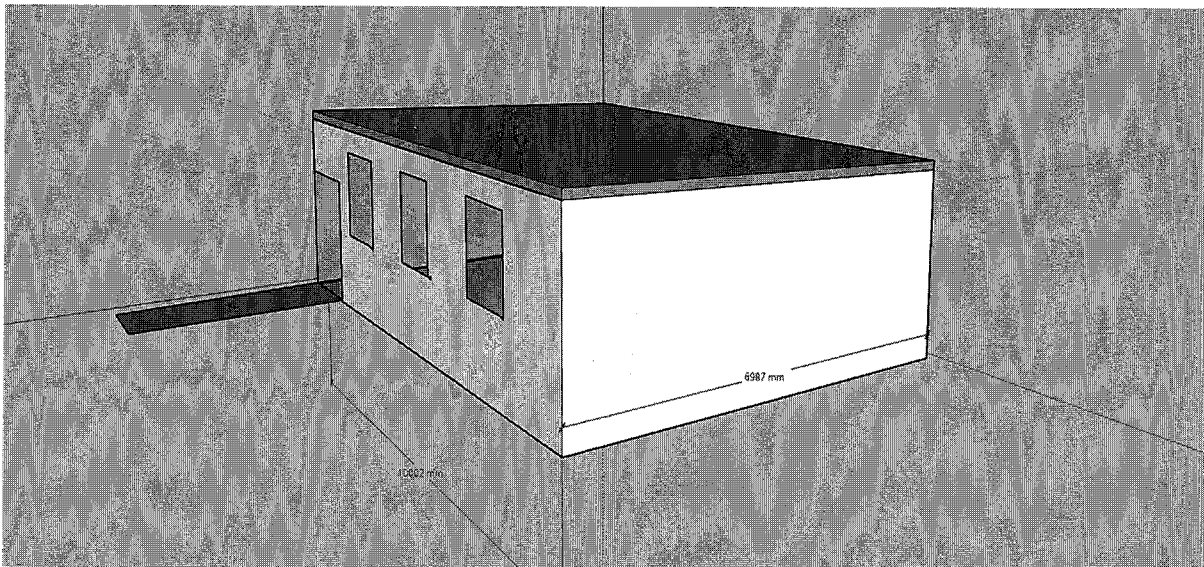
This will be built on a concrete slab.

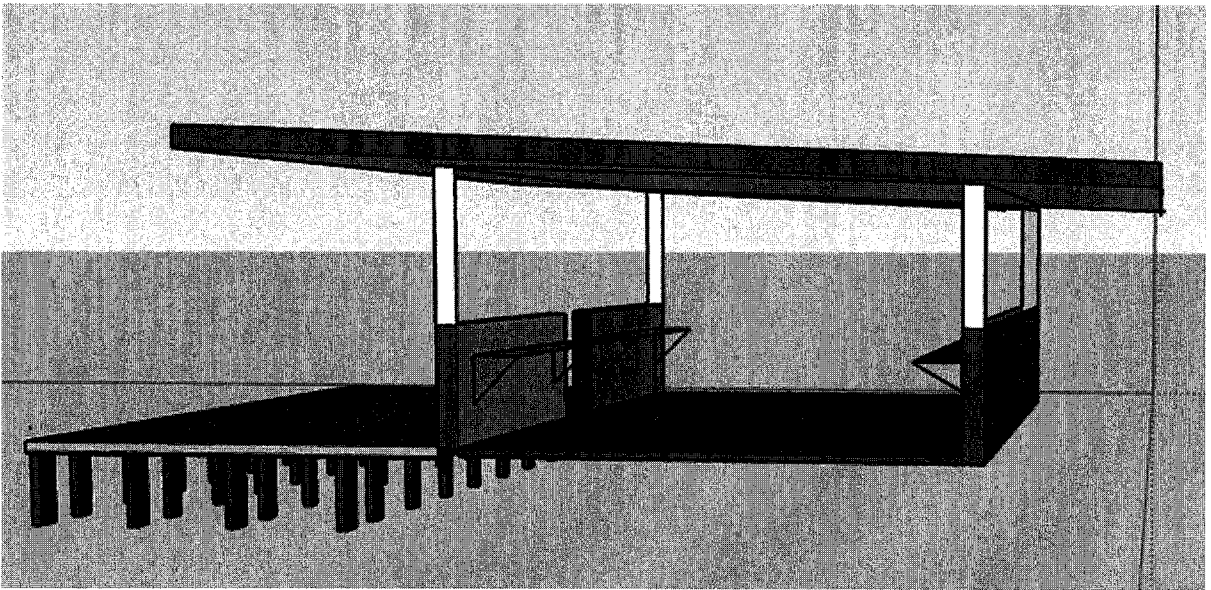
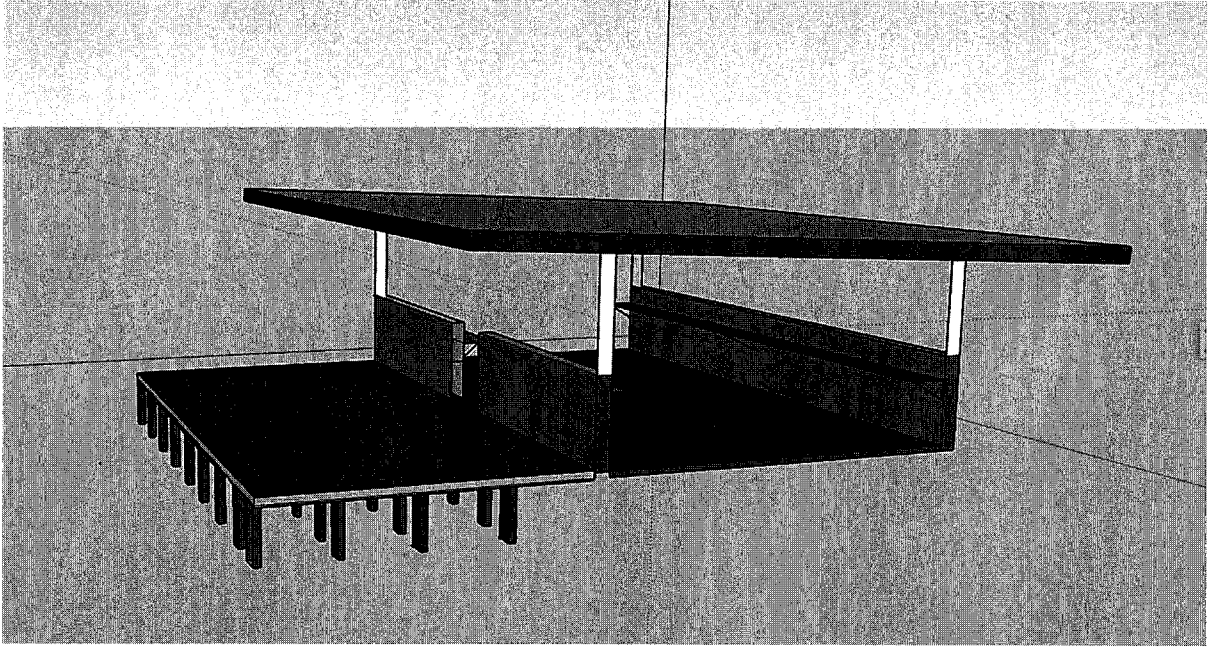
Besser brick walls back filled with concrete.

10mtr x 7 mtrs

Front 3 metres high slopping to back wall 2.8 metres tall.

Internal Waterless Composting Toilet and a shower.





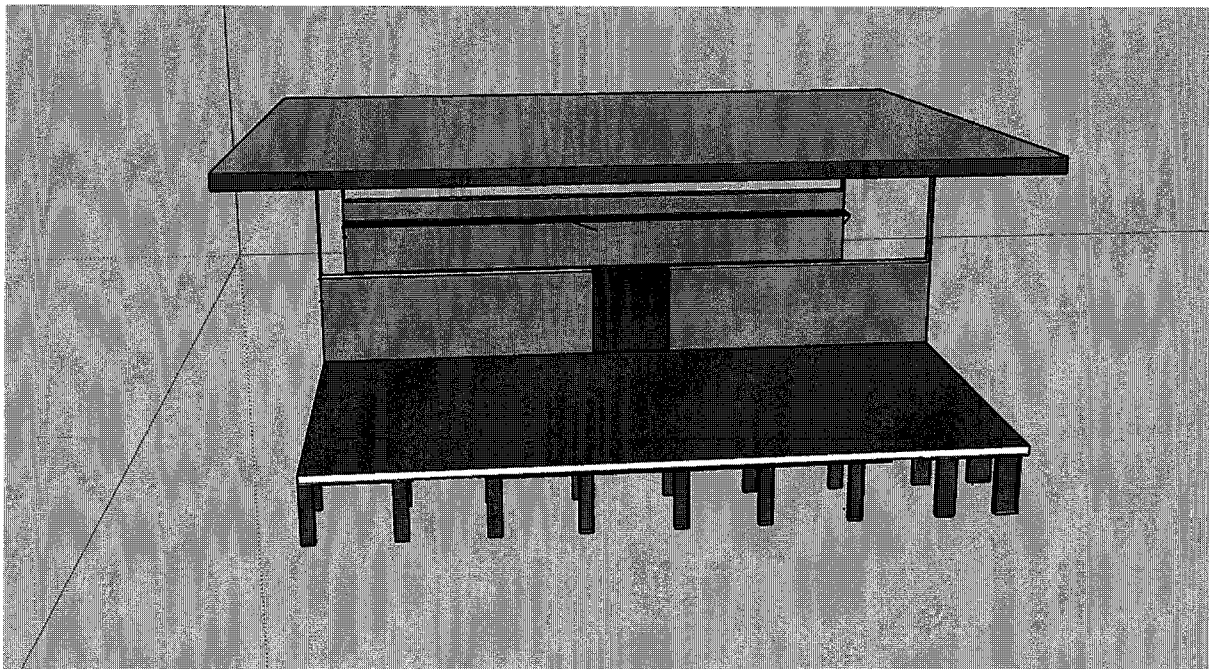
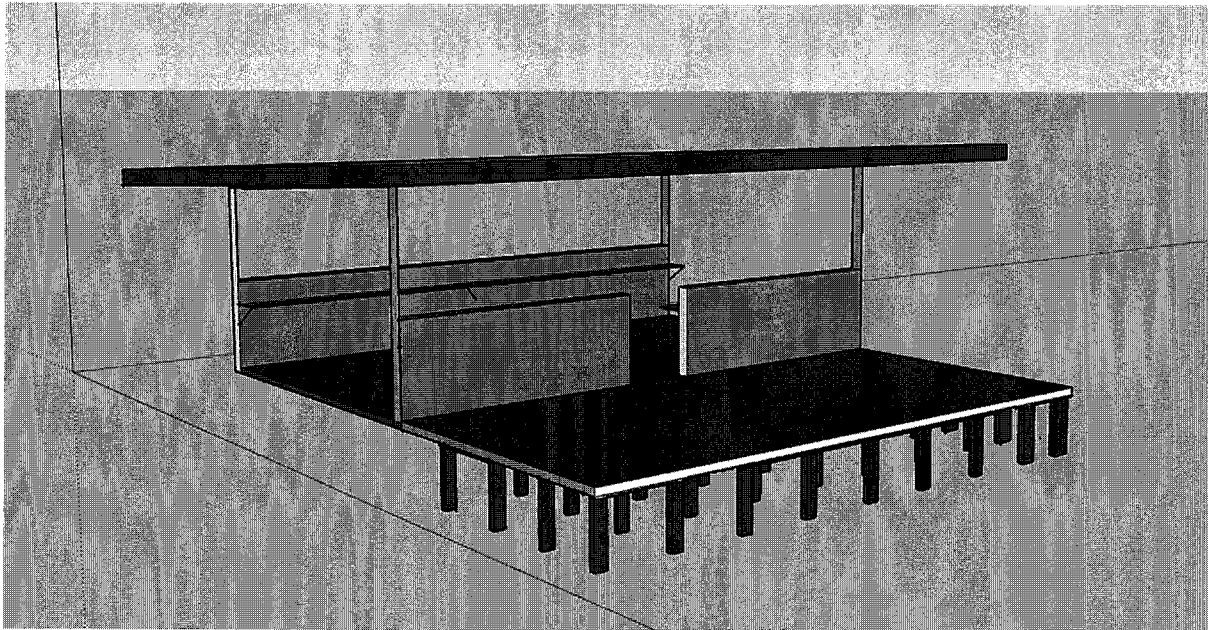
## **Koomba Birdal Hut Leeman**

### **Beach Front shelter – Food prep area.**

Roof - 1.5mtr over hange each side sun & weather protection

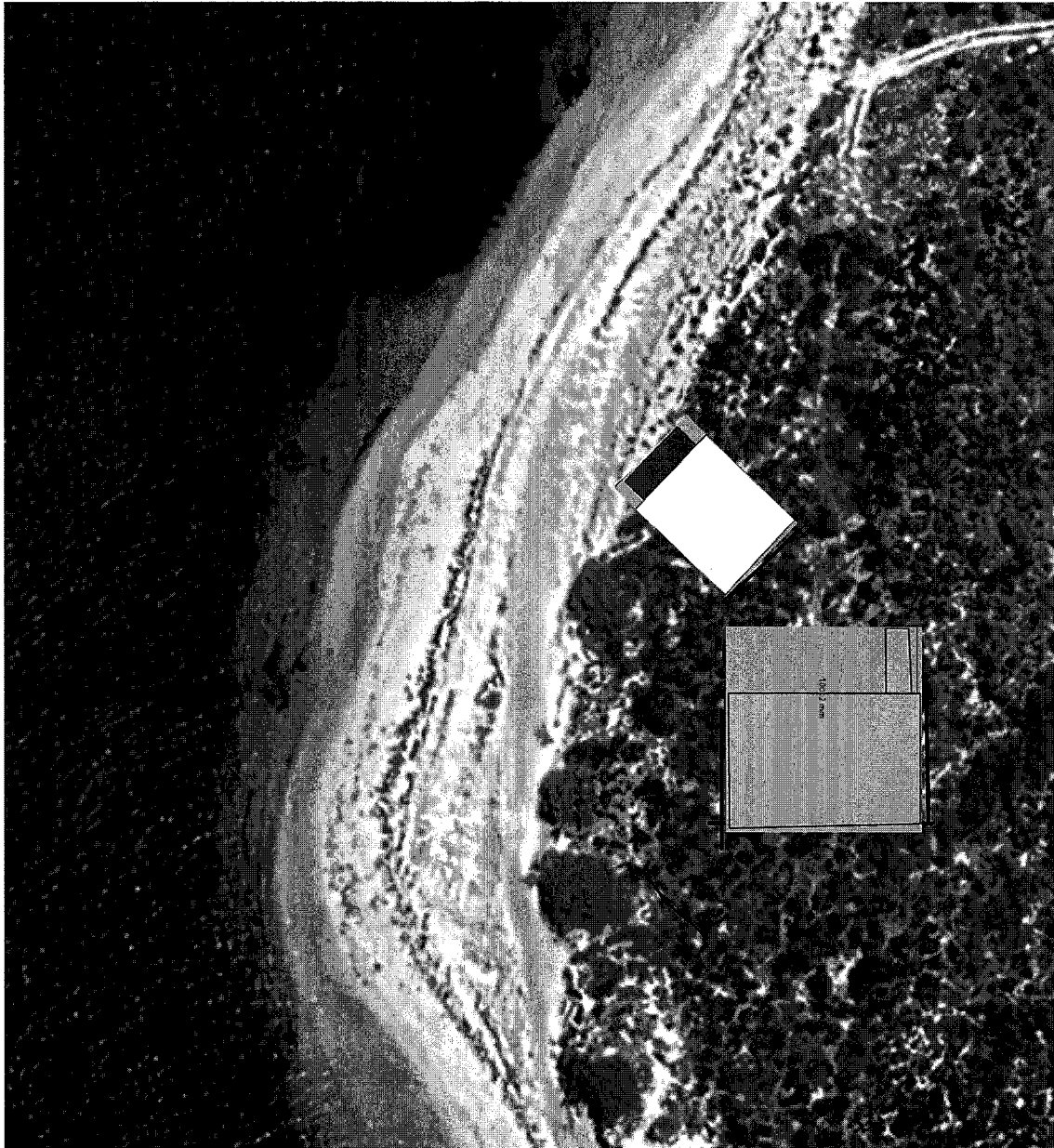
- 2mtr over hange at rear, sun & rain protection
- 3 mtr over hang beach side, gives shade for deck/seating until after 3pm and weather protection for internal area.

Concrete floor in main area and beach side area to be decking.





The next image a closer look taken at the end of the short drive of main road.





## Is a dibbler worth a dollar?

This title like all titles is designed to get to readers attention and get them to read on, but in this case, it is also an entrapment.

Environmental issues can be contentious, they tend to polarize debate. But what do people really think and how do they really behave.

The actual line of logic for this debate is fairly simple, if a fox eats on average 3/5 critters a night and each of those critters is given a value of \$1 then in a fox's lifetime, they will eat approximately 5000 critters. Do the math yourself I've left a bit of leeway so that debaters can be a bit nit-picky.

The next line of logic to present is to say 'well is it worth spending \$100 to kill a fox' as a business proposal this would be a no brainer. A \$100 investment for a guaranteed return of \$4900 would set the stock market into a frenzy.

It is normal to average 10 fox's a night on a shoot, the most I have heard of is 34 which came from a very reliable source. The most that I have been involved with was 23 for a night.

The reader can see that with these numbers it would be very easy to encourage young men to get out there and eliminate these ferals. So why don't we do it. Who is going to pay the money? Do we really value our native animals?

So, if a Dibbler isn't worth a dollar what is it worth? Do we really give a true value to our native animals and the habitat that supports them?

Is it possible for us to eliminate feral animals from Australia? History would say yes.

Just look at American Bison, it only took some 50 years to take them from a population of 30 million to a few hundred. What was the driver?

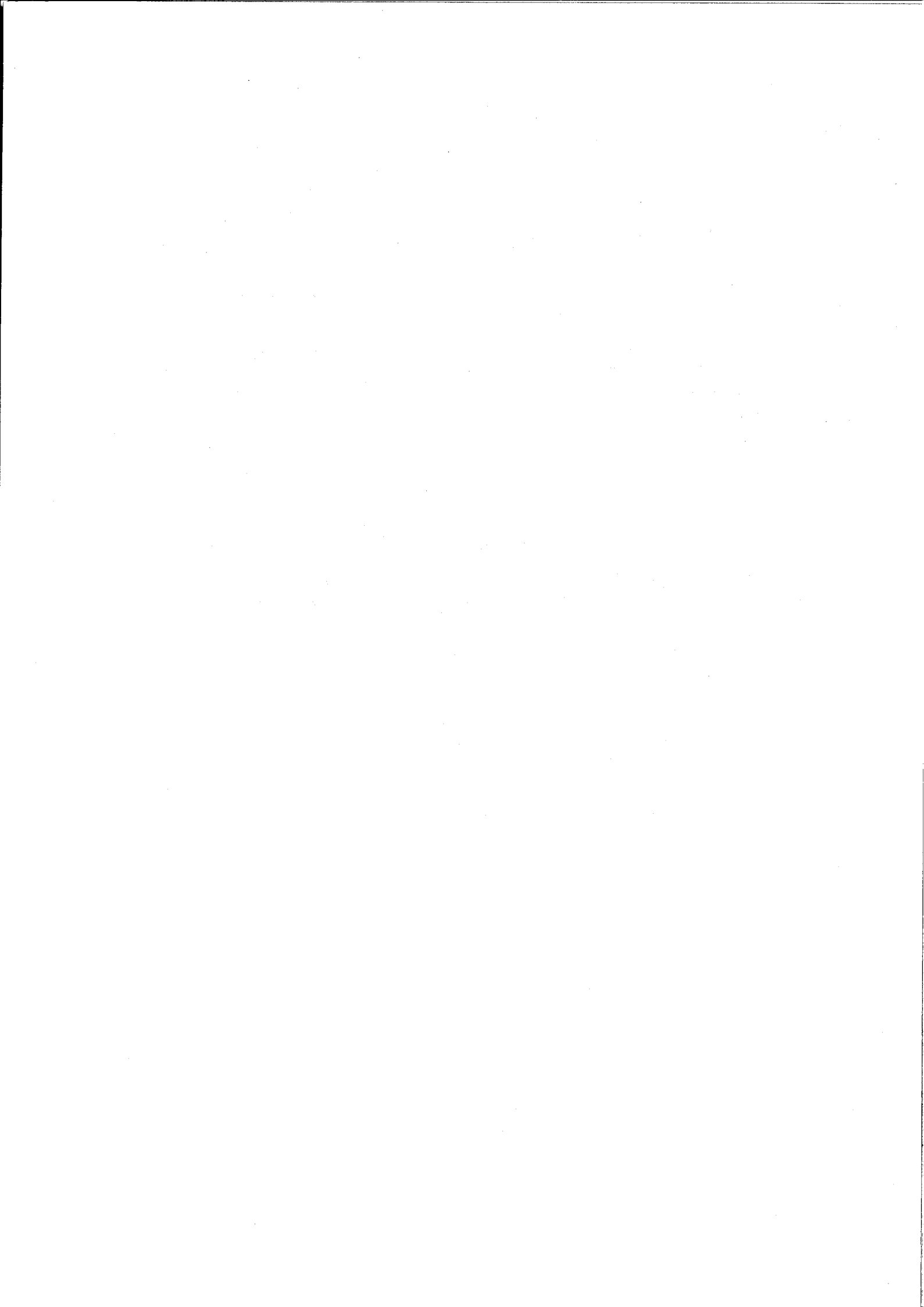
The usual culprit, money. So, if money can drive vast herds into near extinction, then why can't money eliminate a pest that is driving another extinction, and the fox is relatively easy to deal with.

We are only doing sums on fox's here, what about cats, pigs, cane toads etc.

People will agree that there is not enough money in the world, the return argument is what about Ukraine at the moment. How much money is getting tipped at that little dispute?

And so on and so on.

The whole point of the title is to draw people into a debate into which they have to reveal their true priorities. Even sitting silent still shows exactly what they are about.



## His letter to the Editor Geraldton Guardian re "native problem" in Geraldton

Geraldton Guardian (WA 1948 – 1950) Thursday 3 February 1949

Letters to the Editor - NATIVES MAKING GOOD

Sir, — In reply to your contributor, disguised under the nom de plume of 'T.M.S.,' who queries why the natives are allowed to wander about the streets of Geraldton during the day especially on Fridays. I would like to ask why shouldn't they? It is their country, and we have only a thief's title to it. The afore-said writer says some of these natives look revolting, and are ill-mannered. I have lived in Geraldton for the past fifteen years and have not noticed anything revolting about these people. All I can say is that they would have to degenerate, a lot before they could match 'T.M.S.' in the matter of ill-manners. I say this because I know of nothing more offending and ill-mannered than the remarks written by 'T.M.S.' The offending writer should bear in mind that these people are passing through a state or stage of transition from one way of life to another. To my mind lots of them are making wonderful progress in the direction of becoming first class citizens in the near future. If our boasted civilization is worth anything, why not allow these people to join in more of our social life and sporting activities, so that they may be better equipped to emulate our ways. My advice is give them every possible encouragement to make the desired change quickly and completely. If 'T.M.S.' has nothing better to do, may I suggest' that he turn his attention to the pigeon and dog menace in Geraldton. It is common knowledge that there are hundreds of pigeons in the town roosting on our buildings and polluting the drinking water in our tanks. Then there are the dogs. One would have to be blind or totally devoid of all sense of hygiene not to take offence at the way the dogs are allowed to roam the town, depositing their excretions on private lawns and public places. On one occasion I noticed the trade mark of a notable hound on the Post-Office floor. So I say to 'T.M.S.' turn your mind to some thing useful and constructive to the town, instead of throwing insults at these unfortunates who are making good in spite of you and your type. The idea of setting up a store out of town for the exclusive use of the natives seems to me about the surest means of adding insult to injury. Perhaps 'T.M.S.' has visions of being the storekeeper and enjoying the complete monopoly of the trade with the natives. The Australian natives have played a very important part in the development of Australia and they are destined to play a far more important one in the future. If it is not in your soul to help them in their most difficult task at least stop insulting them. In conclusion, I want to ask 'T.M.S.' to sign his name to anything he deems fit to send in, in reply to this.

Yours, etc., W. E. GILBERTSON Geraldton, 2/2/49.


Geraldton Guardian (WA 1948 – 1950)


Saturday 5 February 1949 page 4

Trader's Disclaimer - ANONYMITY RESENTED

Sir — In reply to a letter signed by W. E. Gilbertson and published in the issue of the 'Geraldton Guardian' of Thursday last, I desire to state in fairness to some readers and myself that I am not 'T.M.S.' and also that I always sign my name to letters. I really think a Bill should be introduced in our Parliament making it imperative for all contributors of letters to newspapers to give their full names and addresses for publication. This would probably stop a lot of unnecessary correspondence appearing in newspapers and would no doubt also save you a lot of trouble and time. — Yours, etc., R. JOSEPH. Geraldton, 5/2/49. [Names and addresses must be supplied before any letters are accepted for publication in the columns of the 'Geraldton Guardian.' However, there are often quite acceptable reasons why correspondents do not want their names to appear. Ed.]

 **Date:** February 1949

 **Place:** Geraldton Western Australia

 **Description:** Dick's letter to the Editor Geraldton Guardian re "native problem" in Geraldton

O

O

## ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a *spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

O

O





## PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE HON PRIME MINISTER, P J KEATING MP

AUSTRALIAN LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE  
WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE  
REDFERN, 10 DECEMBER 1992

Ladies and gentlemen

I am very pleased to be here today at the launch of Australia's celebration of the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

It will be a year of great significance for Australia

It comes at a time when we have committed ourselves to succeeding in the test which so far we have always failed.

Because, in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the indigenous people of Australia - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be - truly the land of the fair go and the better chance.

There is no more basic test of how seriously we mean these things.

It is a test of our self-knowledge.

Of how well we know the land we live in. How well we know our history.

How well we recognise the fact that, complex as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia.

How well we know what Aboriginal Australians know about Australia.

Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things.

O

O

Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure.

More I think than most Australians recognise, the plight of Aboriginal Australians affects us all.

In Redfern it might be tempting to think that the reality Aboriginal Australians face is somehow contained here, and that the rest of us are insulated from it.

But of course, while all the dilemmas may exist here, they are far from contained.

We know the same dilemmas and more are faced all over Australia.

That is perhaps the point of this Year of the World's Indigenous People: to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognise that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous Australians up without giving up many of our own most deeply held values, much of our own identity - and our own humanity.

Nowhere in the world, I would venture, is the message more stark than it is in Australia.

We simply cannot sweep injustice aside. Even if our own conscience allowed us to, I am sure, that in due course, the world and the people of our region would not.

There should be no mistake about this - our success in resolving these issues will have a significant bearing on our standing in the world.

However intractable the problems seem, we cannot resign ourselves to failure - any more than we can hide behind the contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that to reach back for the poor and dispossessed is to risk being dragged down.

That seems to me not only morally indefensible, but bad history.

We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us.

Didn't Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? The poor of Britain? The refugees from war and famine and persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia?

O

O

Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians - the people to whom the most injustice has been done.

And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians.

It begins, I think, with that act of recognition

Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing.

We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life.

We brought the diseases. The alcohol.

We committed the murders.

We took the children from their mothers.

We practised discrimination and exclusion.

It was our ignorance and our prejudice.

And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.

With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds.

We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?

As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.

If we needed a reminder of this, we received it this year.

The Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody showed with devastating clarity that the past lives on in inequality, racism and injustice.

In the prejudice and ignorance of non-Aboriginal Australians, and in the demoralisation and desperation, the fractured identity, of so many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

For all this, I do not believe that the Report should fill us with guilt.

Down the years, there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need.

O

O

Guilt is not a very constructive emotion.

I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit.

All of us.

Perhaps when we recognise what we have in common we will see the things which must be done - the practical things.

There is something of this in the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

The Council's mission is to forge a new partnership built on justice and equity and an appreciation of the heritage of Australia's indigenous people.

In the abstract those terms are meaningless.

We have to give meaning to "justice" and "equity" - and, as I have said several times this year, we will only give them meaning when we commit ourselves to achieving concrete results.

If we improve the living conditions in one town, they will improve in another. And another.

If we raise the standard of health by twenty per cent one year, it will be raised more the next.

If we open one door others will follow.

When we see improvement, when we see more dignity, more confidence, more happiness - we will know we are going to win.

We need these practical building blocks of change.

The Mabo Judgement should be seen as one of these.

By doing away with the bizarre conceit that this continent had no owners prior to the settlement of Europeans, Mabo establishes a fundamental truth and lays the basis for justice.

It will be much easier to work from that basis than has ever been the case in the past.

For that reason alone we should ignore the isolated outbreaks of hysteria and hostility of the past few months.

Mabo is an historic decision - we can make it an historic turning point, the basis of a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians.

O

O



The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth, or the extension of social justice, or the deepening of Australian social democracy to include indigenous Australians.

There is everything to gain.

Even the unhappy past speaks for this.

Where Aboriginal Australians have been included in the life of Australia they have made remarkable contributions.

Economic contributions, particularly in the pastoral and agricultural industry.

They are there in the frontier and exploration history of Australia.

They are there in the wars.

In sport to an extraordinary degree.

In literature and art and music.

In all these things they have shaped our knowledge of this continent and of ourselves. They have shaped our identity.

They are there in the Australian legend.

We should never forget - they have helped build this nation.

And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.

As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours.

Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless.

Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight.

Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books.

Imagine if our feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice.

O

O

Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed.

Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it.

It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice we can imagine its opposite.

And we can have justice.

I say that for two reasons:

I say it because I believe that the great things about Australian social democracy reflect a fundamental belief in justice.

And I say it because in so many other areas we have proved our capacity over the years to go on extending the realms of participation, opportunity and care.

Just as Australians living in the relatively narrow and insular Australia of the 1960s imagined a culturally diverse, worldly and open Australia, and in a generation turned the idea into reality, so we can turn the goals of reconciliation into reality.

There are very good signs that the process has begun.

The creation of the Reconciliation Council is evidence itself.

The establishment of the ATSIC - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission - is also evidence.

The Council is the product of imagination and good will.

ATSIC emerges from the vision of indigenous self-determination and self-management.

The vision has already become the reality of almost 800 elected Aboriginal Regional Councillors and Commissioners determining priorities and developing their own programs.

All over Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are taking charge of their own lives.

And assistance with the problems which chronically beset them is at last being made available in ways developed by the communities themselves.

If these things offer hope, so does the fact that this generation of Australians is better informed about Aboriginal culture and achievement, and about the injustice that has been done, than any generation before.

O

O

We are beginning to more generally appreciate the depth and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

From their music and art and dance we are beginning to recognise how much richer our national life and identity will be for the participation of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

We are beginning to learn what the indigenous people have known for many thousands of years - how to live with our physical environment.

Ever so gradually we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom contained in their epic story.

I think we are beginning to see how much we owe the indigenous Australians and how much we have lost by living so apart.

I said we non-indigenous Australians should try to imagine the Aboriginal view.

It can't be too hard. Someone imagined this event today, and it is now a marvellous reality and a great reason for hope.

There is one thing today we cannot imagine.

We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.

We cannot imagine that.

We cannot imagine that we will fail.

And with the spirit that is here today I am confident that we won't.

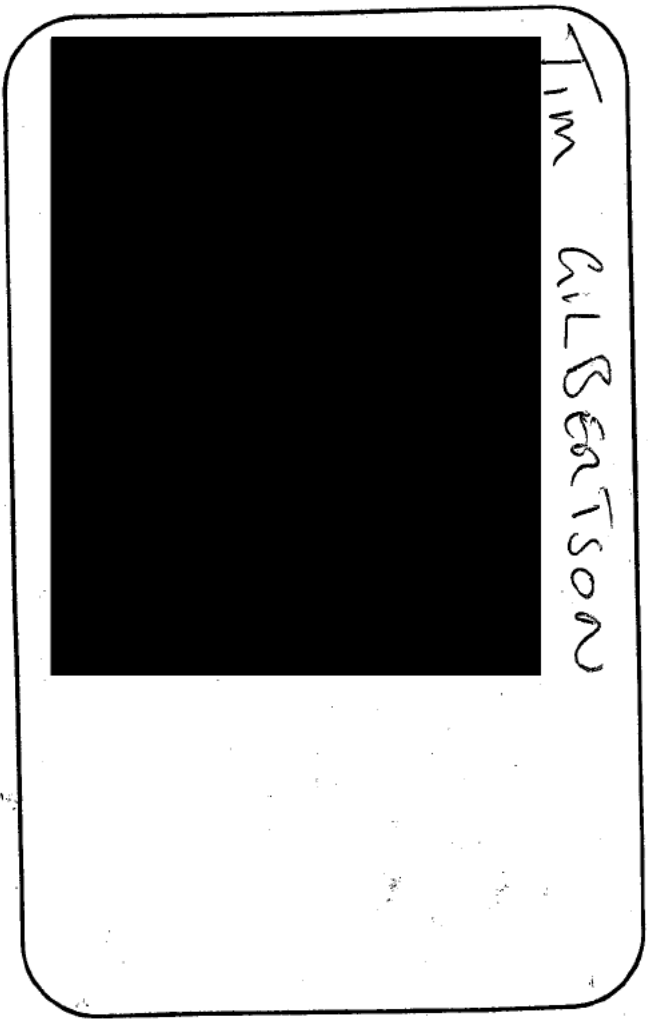
I am confident that we will succeed in this decade.

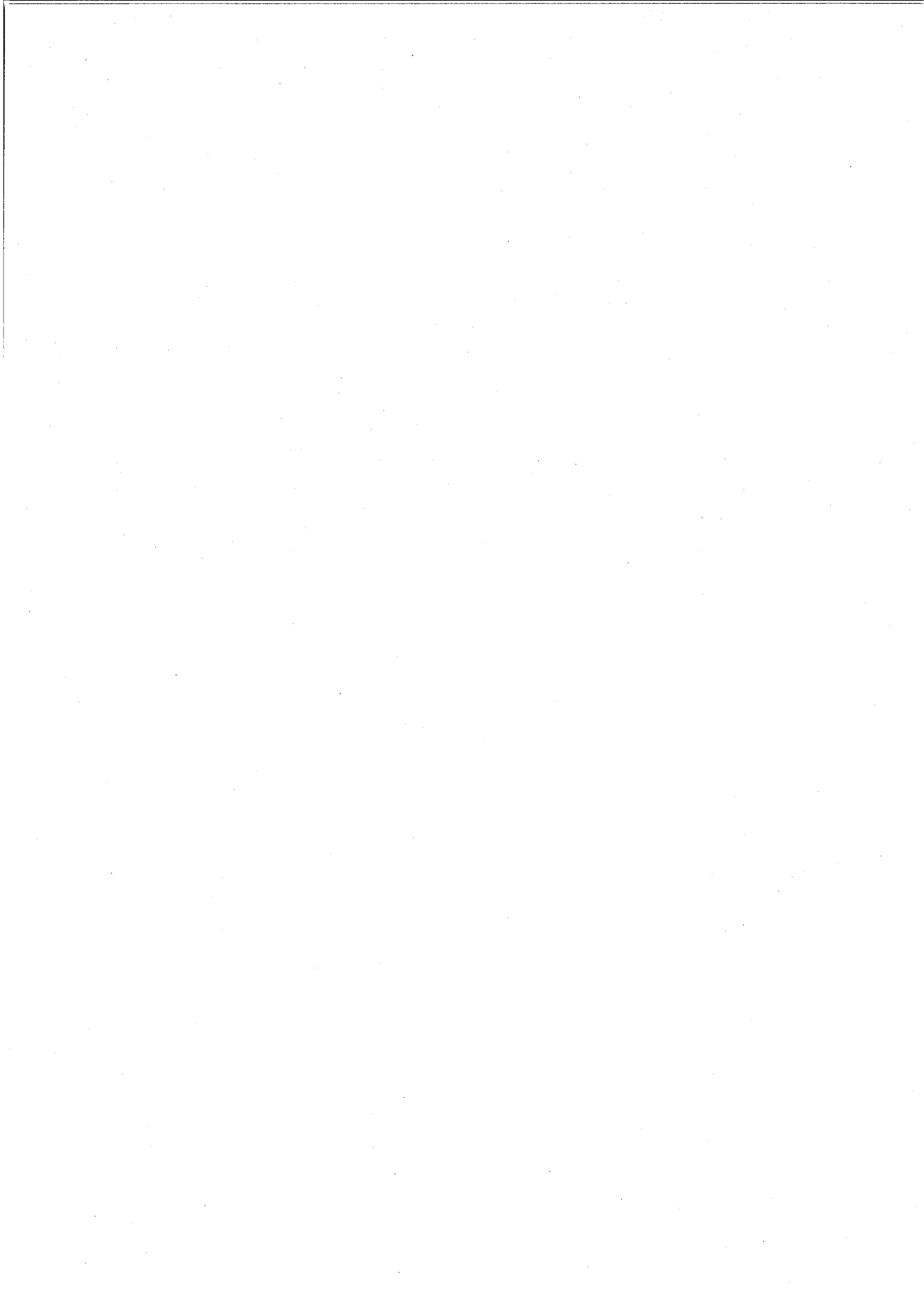
Thank you

O

O

**FROM:**









CARD ISSUED  
29 AUG 2023  
INTS. ....



TO:

ANNE HOLLANDS  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
GPO Box 5218  
SYDNEY  
NSW 2001

SCANNED  
30 AUG 2023  
DECIPHA NSW

5218

