

**Mungarlu Ngurraunkaja Rirraunkaja  
(Aboriginal Corporation) RNTBC**

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Mungarlu Ngurraunkaja Rirraunkaja (Aboriginal Corporation) (“MNR”) represents the Birriliburu native title holders who hold the native title to over 6.6 million hectares of country in Western Australia. This pamphlet is designed to give people more information about MNR, the Birriliburu native title holders and Birriliburu country.

## Birriliburu Native Title Determination

In June 2008, the Federal Court of Australia recognised the native title of the Birriliburu native title holders during a ceremony at *Katjarra* (Carnarvon Range). The determination of native title rights was made in recognition of the complex traditional system of law and custom that provides people with rights and interests in land.

The native title rights recognised over most of the claim area are possession, occupation, use and enjoyment to the exclusion of all others – the highest level of native title rights that can currently be recognised by Australian law.



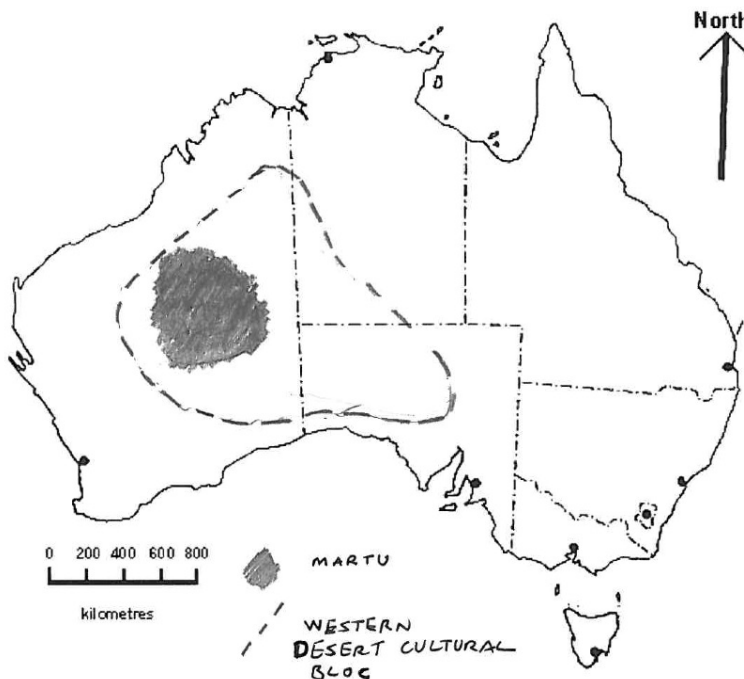


## Who are the Birriliburu native title holders?

Numbering over 1000 people, the Birriliburu native title holders self-identify as Martu people. The Martu people of the Little Sandy and Great Sandy Deserts are made up of a number of dialect groups who share close personal and family relationships. The Martu form part of what has been termed the Western Desert Cultural Bloc in reference to the many land holding groups who have strong cultural similarities and follow the 'one law' across the western desert.

The Birriliburu native title holders were some of the last Indigenous people to 'make contact' with white Australia, in the late 1970s. Since this contact many families who had moved into settlements have had a continuous connection to the Birriliburu native title determined area, often moving back for periods of time to raise their children 'Martu way'.

The Birriliburu native title holders have maintained a culture that is strongly linked to the *tjukurrpa* (dreaming) or that which created 'country' and all that resides within it or is born of it. For the Birriliburu native title holders, country is more than just land; it is the 'law', it is people, language, shelter, food, water, spirituality - it is everything.

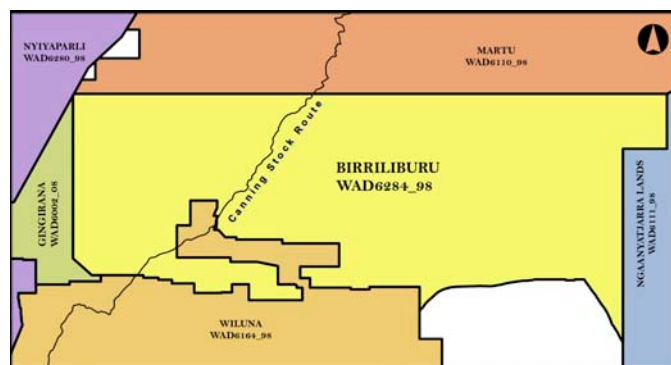


## Birriliburu country

The determination area extends from *Katjarra* in the west to the edge of the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve in the east and south of Lake Disappointment (*Walla*) in the north to level with Well 5 of the Canning Stock Route (“CSR”) in the south.

To the north, Birriliburu country adjoins the Martu determination. In the south, Birriliburu country borders the Wiluna native title claim, and in the east lies the Ngaanyatjarra Lands determination area.

The Birriliburu determined area covers pristine and ancient desert country; a unique bio-region containing not only rare flora and fauna but records of thousands of years of continuous occupation by the native title holders. At places such as *Katjarra* and the Martu wells along the CSR and waterholes scattered throughout the area, Birriliburu native title holders have lived, looked after and left evidence of their occupation.



## Birriliburu Prescribed Body Corporate

Groups who have their native title successfully recognised by the courts have to set up a ‘Prescribed Body Corporate’ (“PBC”) to hold their native title. In January 2010, the Birriliburu native title holders set up MNR as their PBC.

MNR holds and manages Birriliburu land on behalf of the Birriliburu native title holders and is set up to represent the native title holders in all matters relating to the ownership, use, occupation of and access to these lands. MNR is also set up to provide economic, social and cultural benefits to Aboriginal people, and in particular the Birriliburu native title holders.

All people recognised by the native title determination as having native title can apply for membership of MNR. It is the members of MNR who have the responsibility of making decisions about native title. When there is a native title decision to be made, a special general meeting is called so that the traditional owners who are affected by the decision are consulted and, in accordance with traditional laws and custom, agree to the decision. The directors of MNR are chosen by the members at the annual general meeting. The directors have to follow strict rules and act in the best interests of MNR at all times.

## **PBC Directors**

The members of MNR necessarily speak as one for the whole of the determined area yet reserve the right to make comment more specifically in respect of their family's country. From the membership base, 12 directors are selected during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of MNR.

**Darren Farmer** was a vital contributor of information and strategies in support of the Birriliburu native title claim. Darren has held a variety of positions in community-based organisations and was the ATSIC Commissioner for Western Australia South-East from 2002 to 2004. Darren currently sits on the Birriliburu Indigenous Protected Area ("IPA") steering committee.

**Jorna Farmer** has had a long association with the native title process since the mid 1990s and has been relied upon heavily for her clear advice and direction. Jorna, with her late husband, has been instrumental in the development and continuing support of the ANROJ sandalwood enterprise at Mungilli outstation.

**Kaye Bingham** has been a very active member of the Birriliburu native title claim group over the years. When not running after grandchildren, Kaye has been a constant attendee at meetings, has participated as a member of many native title focused working groups and has attended several 'on country' research and working trips in the Birriliburu area.

**Ted Richards** is a senior Martu man whose family are closely linked with the old Mungilli outstation area. Ted has been a great supporter of the Birriliburu native title holder group and is relied upon for his knowledge of country in the determination area.

**Bruce Richards** is brother to Ted Richards above. He has lived at various communities throughout the western desert and has an extensive knowledge of community development and governance. Bruce was chairman of Wanarn community on the Ngaanyatjarra lands for several years before returning to Wiluna. He has recently provided considerable leadership for the land management projects currently operating in the Birriliburu area. Bruce currently sits on the Birriliburu IPA steering committee.

**Tracey Latu Kulli Kefu** has worked tirelessly for the community in roles for the Ngangganawili Health Service and more recently as one of the coordinators for the Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement. Tracey currently sits on the Birriliburu IPA steering committee.

**Alicia Stewart** has spent many years as a care worker at Karalundi. Alicia has lived at various places within the Martu determined area including Parngurr and Jigalong. Many Birriliburu native title holders reside in these communities.

**Miriam Atkins** resides in Newman and travels to Wiluna for MNR meetings. Many of the Birriliburu native title holders live in Newman and the community of Jigalong close by.

**Richard (Ricky) Atkins** is a brother of Miriam above. Richard resides in Newman and has recently become more actively involved in the developing organisation that is MNR. Richard sits on the Kuju Wangka steering committee.

**Lena Long** was born at Well 7 on the CSR and has spent most of her life in and around Wiluna raising children and grandchildren. Lena has been a participant and advisor in the development of many 'on country' projects for MNR and has been an extremely important

contributor at native title meetings over the years. Lena currently sits on the Birriliburu IPA steering committee.

**Slim Williams** resides in Parngurr and has worked as a liaison officer for Central Desert Native Title Services in the past. Slim was a critical informant during the native title claims process and speaks for the area around the Carnarvon Ranges in the west. Slim currently sits on the Kuju Wangka steering committee.

## **Current Projects**

### *Western Desert Bio-diversity Project*

MNR has been contracted to undertake a work program aimed at gathering data about the biodiversity of the Birriliburu determined area. The Birriliburu determined area is located within the under-represented Little Sandy Desert bio-region; an important part of the national bio-diversity catalogue.

Birriliburu native title holders are employed to monitor the presence/absence of fauna using field data recording technology, performing water quality assessments and carrying out fire management services. In 2011 it is expected that the on country work will extend to developing a baiting program for introduced predators at the Carnarvon Range.



*Members of the Birriliburu land management group*

### *Australia Research Council (ARC) Project Canning Stock Route Rock Art and Tjukurrpa Project*

This is a landmark research project which is managed by the Australian National University (ANU) in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Western Desert Land and Culture (WDLAC), the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) and Landgate. It is primarily concerned with recording *tjukurrpa* (creation) stories and rock art places along the CSR.

MNR were more heavily involved in the project in 2010 as the research trip was conducted in the Birriliburu section of the CSR between Wells 1-15. During the trip Birriliburu native title holders spoke with the research committee about issues and made recommendations in regard to the management of the information coming out of the project. This information will significantly aid the native title holders develop a plan of management for the CSR.



### *Kuju Wangka Canning Stock Route*

The Kuju Wangka (one voice) project is about uniting the interests of the native title holders along the length of the CSR towards the development of a plan of management. The CSR runs through four exclusive possession native title areas (Tjurabalan, Ngurrura, Martu, Birriliburu) and one native title claim area (Wiluna). For the determined areas, the public have the right to 'access and enjoy' the CSR, but cannot access adjacent areas without the consent of the native title holders.

In recent years the CSR and adjacent areas have begun to show signs of environmental impact as a result of increased tourist traffic.

The Kuju Wangka committee, made up of representatives from the different native title holding groups, has sought funding for the drafting of a plan to guide management of the important values of the CSR. Management strategies will include development of a single permit system, the provision of culturally appropriate information in an array of forms, the construction of permanent and low impact campsites and the potential employment of indigenous rangers.



*Kuju Wangka meeting held at Kaditj Café in late 2010*

### *Indigenous Protected Area Consultation Project*

This project has been funded by the Australian Government under the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Program. The primary objective of the project is to consult with the Birriliburu native title holders about whether they want to declare their country an IPA and, if so, develop a plan to guide management into the future.

It is expected that the project will take 2- 3 years to complete before any formal declaration is made and agreements put in place with the Australian Government for longer term financial support to look after country for its significant natural and cultural values.



*IPA Steering committee members at Uluru 2010*



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