

Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper:
Housing in Walgett

March 2023

By Samantha Rich

Samantha Rich is a Wiradjuri Graduate of Architecture, Adjunct Lecturer and housing researcher dedicated to embedding First Nations worldview into the design of buildings and the broader built environment. Samantha has a focus on addressing systemic housing needs facing many remote and regional communities. Her experience in housing has involved working on Elder's Housing, social and affordable housing including Aboriginal Housing projects, multi-residential and single residential housing. She has worked with the community-led partnership called Yuwaya Ngarra-li for the last eighteen months looking at multiple housing needs in the Walgett community. She is interested in the role that housing can play in supporting reciprocal relationships embedded in Indigenous culture to care for people, communities and Country.

Her practical experience has involved working across diverse typologies of health, housing, urban design, infrastructure, artworks, and Designing for Country. Her diverse experience has developed her design skills into creating culturally sensitive design and engaging authentically with First Nations Communities. Samantha is deeply interested in the intersections of social and cultural factors that can provide breadth and depth to these places to make them uniquely embedded in the characteristics and story of place.

Executive Summary

Housing shortage and quality has been a long-term priority for the Dharriwaa Elders Group and others in Walgett.

In 2022, through its Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership with UNSW and funds from the Paul Ramsay Foundation, DEG was able to work closely with Wiradjuri housing researcher and Masters of Architecture student Samantha Rich to document the housing need amongst the Aboriginal community in Walgett, and develop models of housing that could respond to community priorities and the local context.

This Briefing Paper documents DEG's advocacy on housing issues over the past 20 years. It sets out what is known from available data about unmet need as well as existing housing providers and stock in Walgett. It then details the work undertaken to date on housing for three specific groups or purposes in Walgett: Crisis/emergency housing, Elders housing, and housing for young people in contact with the criminal justice system. DEG has asked YN to focus on these specific areas in order to complement existing work by local social housing providers and develop additional supported accommodation for specific groups in the Walgett community. The Briefing Paper concludes with planned next steps for this work focused on improving the quality and quantity of housing for Aboriginal people in Walgett.

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Context

Data

There has never been a comprehensive survey of the housing experiences and unmet needs of Aboriginal people in Walgett. As the Dharriwaa Elders Group wrote in 2021 to the controller of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC):

Little work has been done to comprehensively survey the different housing needs of the Walgett Aboriginal community. To gain a true picture of housing need in Walgett we would design a comprehensive survey that our local Aboriginal researchers would undertake, informed by the deep local knowledge of Dharriwaa Elders Group and guided by research partners.

The recent 2021 ABS Census data has not been included in this paper as the Dharriwaa Elders Group have raised issues with the quality of the data that was collected. In a letter to the ABS, the Dharriwaa Elders Group outlined the following concerns with the 2021 data;

In the 2021 census there has been a substantial increase in the number of people in Walgett who did not state their Indigenous status (from 195 in 2016 to 608 in 2021) a large decrease in the number of people identified as Aboriginal (reduced from 757 in 2016 to 326 in 2021) and a smaller decrease in the number of people identified as non-Indigenous. The total size of the population counted in Walgett and Gingie has also decreased (Namoi Village was not separately identified in 2016 Census data).

Based on comparison with 2016 census figures, a large proportion of people in Walgett who did not state their Indigenous status in 2021 are likely to be Aboriginal. In many of the data tables, however, the ABS has combined data for persons who did not state their Indigenous status with data for the non-Indigenous population. This is misleading and may result in underestimating the differences between the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous populations.

We believe that the data collection in 2016 was of a higher quality because local Aboriginal people were employed to facilitate the data collection.

Therefore, the Census data from 2016 will be referred to in this Briefing Paper, in documenting some of the underlying needs in relation to housing in Walgett.

The 2021 Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper on Housing in Walgett, 2016: Summary of Census Data by Dr Rebecca Reeve outlines the following discussion points:

- Total weekly household incomes are much higher for non-Aboriginal households compared to Aboriginal households, but Aboriginal households typically have higher rental payments.
- Thirty-five low-income Aboriginal households are in housing payment stress. These households pay more than 30% of their income on housing.
- One in three Aboriginal households (35%) are single parent families, compared to only 7% of non-Aboriginal households.
- Aboriginal households are more likely to comprise of multiple families or group households (10%) than non-Aboriginal households (2%).
- Overcrowding is a significant issue among Aboriginal households in Walgett and Gingie, with approximately one in ten Aboriginal households in Walgett (10.9%), and one in four (26.7%) in Gingie being overcrowded.
- There are insufficient data to demonstrate the number of households who live in an improvised home, tent or sleep out as 25 Aboriginal and 9 non-Aboriginal households did not state their dwelling type.
- One in three Aboriginal households (32%) rent from a state housing authority compared to one in twenty non-Aboriginal households (5%).
- Around one in five Aboriginal households (21%) and one in two other households (48%) in Walgett and Gingie own their home (outright or with a mortgage).
- The next most common tenure type among Aboriginal households is renting from a housing co-operative or church group (14% of Aboriginal households, 0 non-Aboriginal households).

Housing providers

The main community housing providers currently operating in Walgett are:

- Aboriginal Housing Office
- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly
- Barriekneal Housing and Community, and
- Walgett Aboriginal Land Council.

The full extent of housing providers operating in Walgett LGA is currently unknown, as is how many houses are managed by these housing providers.

Housing stock

Drawing on previous research undertaken by UNSW Engineering students focusing on homes occupied by Aboriginal people in Walgett, there is some documentation of the housing stock being of poor quality and unhealthy. Angela Begg's honours thesis; *Retrofit vs. New Build: Investigating the Thermal Comfort of Aboriginal Housing in North West New South Wales & Opportunities for Improvement* included interviews with Aboriginal community members undertaken with DEG's Vanessa Hickey. The findings revealed the poor thermal comfort and performance of those homes and identified other issues including;

- Thermal comfort impacts
- No insulation and very little thermal mass
- Maintenance of housing
- Large amount of dust in Walgett and how this impacts the way houses are operated
- Issues relating to water access
- Issues related to black soil and issues with the structural integrity of housing
- How well houses accommodate for culture and traditions
- Accommodation of houses to support visiting families and friends

In addition, Aidan Alexander's honours thesis: *Improving Energy Outcomes for Remote Aboriginal Communities: Walgett NSW as a Case Study*, involved observations of approximately twelve homes. Whilst focusing on monitoring the energy use of existing homes, this thesis also found that the poor construction and design of the homes exacerbates problems relating to heating and cooling the home including;

- Poor and inappropriate passive design which increases the energy consumption;
- Poor access to daylight, due to shading windows to try and reduce temperature;
- Air leakage that exacerbates the need for heating and cooling;
- Insufficient insulation;
- Single glazed aluminium windows and skylights without covers for hotter periods of the year;
- Poor quality, poorly installed and ineffective air-conditioning; and
- Hot water units with no insulated piping, which when exposed to the sunlight and heat it results in a high heat loss.

As previously noted, a Yuwaya Ngarra-li community-led community wide scoping exercise is needed to provide a holistic understanding of the quality of housing stock available to the Aboriginal community in Walgett. This will help to understand the number of houses that urgently need to be retrofitted and/or new houses needed in the community to bring the standard of housing to a liveable and healthy level.

What is known about unmet need

While there has not been a comprehensive survey about the unmet need in relation to housing for Aboriginal people in Walgett, through community knowledge, existing research, and informal discussions and formal workshops between the Dharriwaa Elders Group and UNSW researchers we understand the following;

Aboriginal housing stock in Walgett has predominantly come from public and social housing built across the sixties, seventies and eighties with some new building and retrofitting of housing in the 90s. There has been the provision of a few newer houses built however nothing on a larger scale to address the systemic issue of overcrowding and increase and improve Walgett's Aboriginal communities' access to good quality and affordable housing.

As documented by the letter sent to the head of the Walgett LEMC in September 2021 in relation to the problems facing community members needing to isolate during COVID outbreaks locally:

The Walgett Remote Service Delivery Local Implementation Plan (2010) cited that the ABS 2006 census data indicated:

“30.5 percent of Indigenous homes in Walgett are overcrowded - defined here as having two or more usually resident persons more than the number of bedrooms. Indigenous household overcrowding is more prevalent in Walgett than in NSW overall, where the rate of overcrowding is 14.6 percent.”

The fact that Walgett has twice the state average for overcrowded housing would assist experts to estimate the public health emergency housing need in Walgett. There has been no significant investment in social housing since 2006 so more houses in Walgett are clearly needed.

This older housing stock means Aboriginal people in Walgett generally live in poor quality and designed housing which does not respond appropriately to climate and requires extensive energy to heat and cool homes throughout the year - resulting in financial stress on occupants.

Due to the low number of new houses provided there is also a limited amount of affordable housing and rentals available, meaning overcrowding with multigenerational households is common. There is very limited housing for specific groups and purposes including young people, Elders and crisis accommodation resulting in many of these groups being forced to leave Walgett for access to safe, accessible and affordable homes.

This is not a new problem in Walgett. As outlined in the Keynote speech given by DEG's Founding Speaker, George Rose OAM to the 2nd NSW Aboriginal Housing Office Conference in June 2003;

“I'm 77 and I would say that all around NSW, there has been hardly any improvement for Aboriginal people, in housing and in general. I'm the Chairperson of the local community

working party which was setup in 1996 to oversee the building of 19 new houses and the renovation of 48 existing houses in 1964. Back then the family in each house might have had six kids. Now all those kids have their own families and their kids have families. If you just do the arithmetic you'll see that it's not enough. I think we'd be short of at least 40 homes to house our people properly now. We have a high percentage of young people in our community, so when they have families we'll need more again. We see the results of overcrowding in health statistics."

"I want you all to realise the urgent need for more Aboriginal housing in NSW."

Further to this, in the September 2021 letter to the head of the local LEMC, the Dharriwaa Elders Group raises the importance of focusing on homelessness to understand the number of houses needed in Walgett for the Aboriginal community;

I believe that a picture of homelessness in Walgett could be captured by understanding three different types of homeless situations:

1. Those who have been accepted into the men's and women's homeless shelters provided by Mission Australia in Walgett. I have spoken to (Mission Australia's Regional Leader Far West) and she is happy to provide you with information about the numbers of men and women including women with young children who Mission Australia are currently providing accommodation to in Walgett, AND THOSE WHO ARE TURNED AWAY.

2. Those who are couch surfing with extended family and friends. Many of these individuals have complex health needs and would require support. A subset will be returned from corrections. Our frontline workers have estimated this afternoon from their client list that they know of 21 single people in this category

a. Men x 15

b. Women x 6

3. Those families and individuals who are living in overcrowded houses in addition to the individuals who are the official tenants because

a. there are no available houses in private or social housing in Walgett and/or

b. they can't live independently for a range of reasons.

A proper scoping of the housing stock in the community needs to be undertaken in order to understand how many houses are needed to support community to stay and return to Walgett.

Housing typologies

The DEG have noted the need for diverse types of housing in Walgett, in response to a range of users and needs. The following pages begin to outline what these housing types might be.

Disaster Relief housing

Emergency housing for health reasons was demonstrated as needed during the COVID pandemic and the 2022 floods, as well as future possible disasters including flooding, dust storms, drought, fires etc.

Supported accommodation

Short-term to longer-term accommodation to support people who require specialist support, transitioning back into the community from hospital or custody, people struggling with drug and alcohol dependencies, and people who are not able to live with their families for various reasons. The DEG previously coordinated a group of Walgett Aboriginal organisations to apply for funds in 2017 to operate an On Country supported accommodation wellbeing service for women and their children recovering from addictions, however this was not successful.

Community Housing

Long-term, permanent housing for families, young people and Elders that are currently sharing housing with other family members and need more space for health and well-being.

Visitor / staff housing

Housing for visitors coming into the community for employment, research, health care provision or other purposes. The DEG has been consistently raising this as it has affected its ability to attract skilled workers to move to Walgett for new and important roles to build local capacity. Currently, there is limited available housing for workers to move to Walgett as there are limited rental properties available in Walgett or specific remote worker housing. Based on a recent incentive by the federal government to attract health workers to work in regional and remote areas, this area of housing could become increasingly essential. The DEG have also identified the need for temporary housing for 'On Country' camps for young people.

Housing needs are not clear cut and have many complexities within and between these identified typologies.

Potential housing overlaps

Each housing type presents different complex requirements however there are some initial overlaps which could be an opportunity to provide a range of housing for a diversity of users. This could allow for some housing to be provided that can be used for a range of users whilst more housing is provided.



Timeline of DEG/YN work on housing

- June 2003: George Rose OAM gives a Keynote speech at the 2nd NSW Aboriginal Housing Office Conference about the housing need in Walgett.
- February 2004: DEG wrote to NSW Premier Bob Carr requesting services for youth in Walgett, citing the need for supported youth accommodation, a children's safe house and other services. The DEG wrote of its intention to co-ordinate a whole-of-community submission to government and undertook years of work to convene a subcommittee of the Walgett Interagency to advocate for these services and facilities: "Walgett Youth Priorities – a whole of community plan"
<https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/youthplan.doc>
- February 2011: DEG undertook "Walgett's Aboriginal Women's Workshops", and report that outlines need for safe housing for women and children, frequent and honest services from local housing providers and strategies to reduce overcrowding in houses in particular more flats for young people and families to reduce conflicts at home. In addition, they identified the urgent need for more affordable housing across the community including a community dormitory, or hostel for children to live away from overcrowded family homes during the school week with support services such as workshops to help with living skills, health services and structured routines. A shelter for teenagers (10-18 years old) was also suggested as there are no safe places for kids and young people who are experiencing homelessness.
- May 2016: Moving Forward to Healthy Communities - a long term Framework to address Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Walgett and surrounding north west NSW Aboriginal Communities. This document outlines multiple housing needs to support social and emotional wellbeing including; children's accommodation / safehouse, supported accommodation for youth 16-20 years old including those exiting from the cultural workfarm, Community Welcome Back to Country Cultural Workfarms outside Walgett for women, men and young men returning from jail and detox, and supported accommodation services and halfway houses for adults.
- 2018: Walgett Action Plan for Children and Young People developed and launched.
- 2018: Dharriwaa Elders Group brains trust housing yarn. This yarn outlines important requirements and components of culturally appropriate housing needed in Walgett.
- 2019: Elders' perspectives and priorities for ageing well in a remote Aboriginal community that included identification of need for housing designed in context of local context, culture and Country.
- 2020: Engineering honours thesis on thermal comfort. Analysis undertaken with DEG's Vanessa Hickey and student Angela Begg to investigate the existing Aboriginal housing in Walgett and thermal performance.
- June 2020: *Supporting Aboriginal People to Age Well. Findings of interviews and focus groups with Elders in Walgett*, Community Report shared.
- July/August 2021: A request by DEG for a scoping exercise of emergency and temporary accommodation for people to isolate safely outside of their homes during the COVID pandemic. This research looked at temporary accommodation that could be quickly

assembled in Walgett to address overcrowding issues and need for people to safely isolate from families to prevent the spread of COVID.

- August 2021: Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper: *Housing in Walgett Town and Gingie Reserve, 2016; Summary of Census data* published.
- August 2021: Yuwaya Ngarra-li brief on Walgett Community housing options prepared for philanthropic supporters in response to their offers to help Walgett during first COVID wave in Walgett, detailing short-, medium- and long-term options. DEG led extensive advocacy to bring together UNSW and other experts to advise and assist. Funding for housing wasn't forthcoming at this time, but important planning was done to inform longer-term efforts.
- September 2021: A statement was issued by DEG to LEMC Commander Trent Swinton outlining the current homelessness and overcrowding issues.
- November 2021: Housing research by UNSW's Samantha Rich began to look at the unmet housing need across the entire community based on the systemic lack of affordable, culturally appropriate, safe and good quality housing for the Walgett Aboriginal Community. This focus was in part a response to the research and scoping exercise which revealed that any 'temporary' accommodation in Walgett would ultimately become permanent housing and therefore a more thoughtful, holistic and detailed understanding of housing need across the entire community would be a better response.
- January 2022: Housing research by Samantha Rich begins to focus on the question of how housing can reduce Aboriginal young people's contact with the criminal justice system.
- February 2022: Samantha Rich's UNSW Built Environment Masters research studio commences; the work focuses on Elder's housing using previous research done through the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership.
- April 2022: first housing workshop with the DEG Youth team for young people's housing and presented initial ideas for the Elders Housing, site options and massing/density.
- August 2022: Presentation of Elder's Housing concept design by Samantha Rich to the DEG.
- September 2022: second Young People's housing workshop. Conversation with DEG around what young people's housing should look like.
- October 2022: third Young People's housing workshop. Continued conversation about models and details of housing that could support young people in crisis and reduce contact with the criminal justice system.
- November 2022: Several discussions conducted by DEG with residents from Namoi and Gingie Village including DEG and staff about current issues around emergency accommodation options in response to Walgett floods.
- November 2022: Young people's housing discussion with DEG staff including showing some initial precedents for young people's housing.

Areas of housing priority

The urgent need for housing for the Aboriginal community in Walgett means the housing types needed across the community are broad and far reaching. However, based on previous research which has been undertaken by the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership and the specific priorities of the DEG in response to community need and circumstances, the focus of the housing research featured in this Briefing Paper is on Crisis/emergency housing; Elders housing; and housing for young people in contact with the criminal justice system.

Work to date

Crisis/emergency housing

The urgent need for crisis and emergency housing in Walgett became pertinent in July 2021 during an extensive state-wide lockdown where the long-term housing shortage was exacerbated by the need for individuals to isolate safely from family. Yuwaya-Ngarra-li created an initial brief for a housing scoping exercise to respond to the immediate Community needs for isolation housing for individuals and families in Walgett. In the first instance the proposal was to scope 10 expedited housing units for immediate use that could also potentially respond to longer-term housing shortages currently faced by the community. The housing was to be a range of 1–4 bedroom houses with predominantly 1-bedroom units needed.

These accommodation units were identified as needing to:

- be secure and sealed (the mice plague is still an issue!)
- be well insulated, both walls and ceiling
- allow for air flow and natural light
- have no carpet due to dust and asthma risk
- have air conditioning
- solar powered
- be suitable for installation on the highly reactive black soil in Walgett that requires flexible foundation poles of 2 metres dept

In the initial scoping exercise, the existing provisions for crisis or emergency accommodation were identified as; 100 hotel rooms across the LGA and a possible 20 motor homes provided by the government. DEG identified that in the past during floods people had stayed in local halls or the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service spare accommodation, camped with family and/or travelled by boat from nearby villages into and out of town.

The initial scoping exercise looked at various standardised options available in the market which could be delivered quickly. The search requirements focused on suitability for the climate and community, costs – labour, materials and transportation, delivery timeframes, and distance of the warehouses. The opportunities focused on homes that had quick on-site assembly, sustainability, adaptability for orientation and client needs whereas constraints focused on long-term flexibility and maintenance for local trades and builders.

Resources needed to urgently act on these options at the time weren't forthcoming. The exercise also revealed that most pre-designed homes would still need to be adapted to suit the climatic conditions of Walgett and to be culturally appropriate, be expensive and have long lead times due to current market demand. It was decided that a more thoughtful and place-based response to housing would be more beneficial to ensure that new housing not become a burden to the community in the future. Also, after scoping prices for these options, it was shown that the cost and

delivery of housing would be similar if the housing were designed to be culturally appropriate and designed to the local climatic conditions.

In the recent floods in November 2022, Dharriwaa Elders Group issued a statement outlining some further information gathered:

DEG's Community Troubleshooters Vanessa Hickey and Kim Sullivan contacted 22 households at Namoi Village and the 11 households of Gingie Village over the period 28/10 – 31/10/22 and this is what we heard:

In Namoi Village:

- *19 adults and 15 children have moved out of their homes into town with relatives and friends*
- *50 adults and 47 children are choosing to stay in their homes*
- *4 adults and 3 children told us they wanted to move into town but have nowhere to move to.*

In Gingie Village, of the 11 households:

- *11 adults and 5 children have moved into town with relatives and friends.*
- *18 adults and 17 children are choosing to stay in their homes*
- *At least two very elderly people currently choosing to stay in their homes may find they need to evacuate – but don't have any suitable accommodation to evacuate to.*

Other issues identified are that:

- *Some residents of the villages need places for their pets to reside.*
- *Residents are reluctant to leave their homes for fear of looting / robberies.*
- *Residents are encountering hazards such as leeches, snakes, floating debris and polluted water*
- *Some residents staying with family and friends in town are finding the stressors of staying in crowded conditions difficult. Some are staying in different places different nights – moving from house to house.*

In the recent floods the following support was provided by the SES supported by volunteers provided by Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service:

- Lifts into and out of town by boat - this was provided with limited timings and often with lack of communication and consistency with times which often resulted in families being left waiting in the hot weather with perishable food.
- Motel rooms; some rooms were provided but most were occupied by SES crew who had been brought in to assist with the emergency.

Unfortunately, it became evident that there was:

- Lack of clear and accessible communication about the plan, processes or changes to emergency responses and support.

- Poor collaboration with Aboriginal community controlled organisations and people living in nearby villages to provide culturally appropriate solutions and support
- No scoping done of available land and vacant housing in town which could be utilised in emergencies to meet the need of temporary housing for families needing to evacuate from Namoi and Gingie Villages during floods.

During the floods, DEG conducted several discussions amongst its own staff and evacuees from Namoi and Gingie Villages to better understand and document what support is needed in an emergency and what housing provisions are required. In summary:

- Available housing for Namoi and Gingie residents in town which support larger families, different needs, and pets;
- More motel rooms and/or more houses needed to accommodate the actual need of community impacted by the floods. Many families relied on family and friends to house them in town in already overcrowded homes and/or some families/individuals were forced to stay in homes inundated by floodwaters;
- Access to a shared kitchen to cook meals for family and community, shared laundry, toilets and showers in the case of temporary accommodation not immediately available and residents need to stay in tents;
- Provision of space in a large hall / RSL would not be an appropriate or safe response for families for various reasons including lack of privacy, safety, and security.

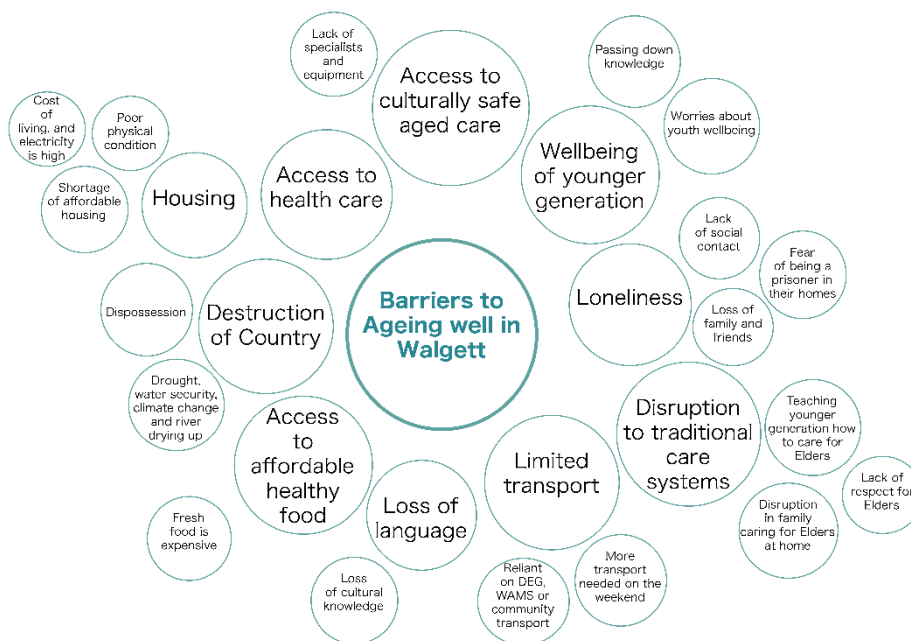
The community also identified that due to the prevalent and systemic need of housing in the community, the crisis accommodation provided for floods could be utilised at other times for the following needs;

- Children and young people in need of crisis accommodation;
- People experiencing homelessness;
- People visiting for funerals; and
- Future COVID or pandemic isolated housing.

Any housing that could be provided for crisis or disaster relief situations could be utilised for other purposes and therefore would be a beneficial and much needed addition to the community.

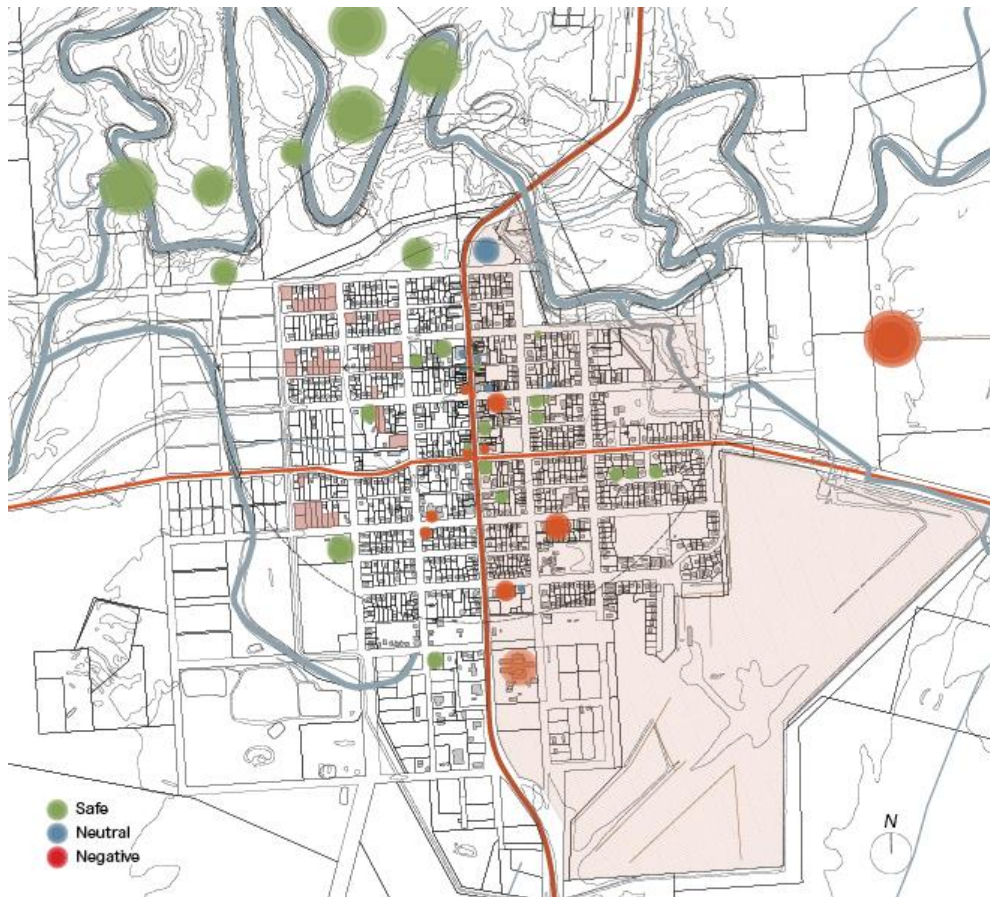
Elders housing

A recent research design project, named *Gamil dhuningarraay baa (place of older person)* by Aunty Virginia Robinson, utilised the existing research and work undertaken as part of the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership to understand what is needed in Walgett to enable older Aboriginal people in Walgett to age well. This report of this research discusses the need for Elders to be supported to age well on Country in Walgett and what this needs to look like across emotional, social, cultural and physical parameters.





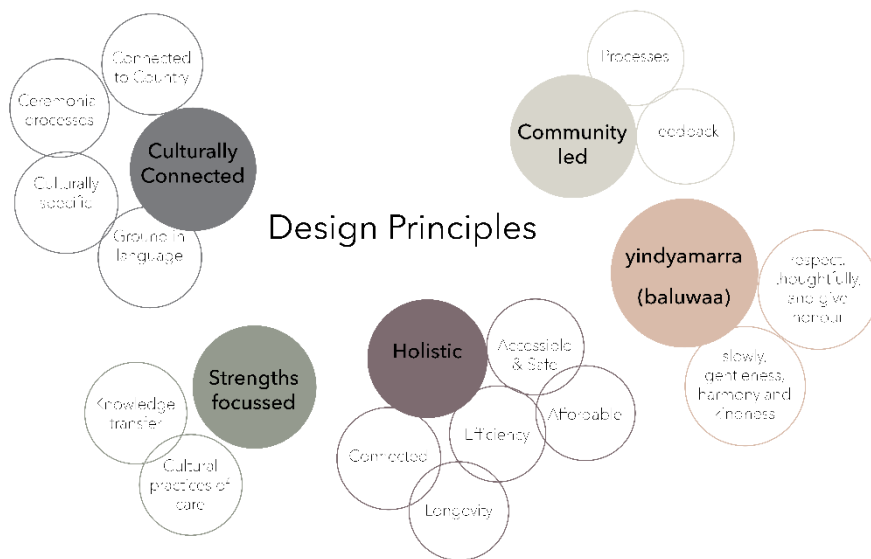
This research created strong foundations and a clear understanding of what was needed by the Elders and became integral to the concept design of a single site Elders housing precinct. The design aimed to provide culturally appropriate, affordable, safe, community connected and Country-centric homes. In the initial research an understanding of the history of Walgett in relation to the treatment of Aboriginal peoples, the socio-spatial tensions now and in the past which are still prevalent in town was important to research. This helped to identify appropriate locations that would be suitable for Elders. Spaces or sites that feel safe, welcoming and a sense of belonging are the beginnings of how projects should be started, along with an understanding that spaces or places of belonging and safety are varied and complex across the Aboriginal community and not all spaces will feel the same to everyone.



Socio-spatial dynamics

How do spaces feel to people in the community? This is a static, one dimensional illustration of some of the complexities that exist in the town. The spatial dynamics of spaces change over time and depend on the person, age, and personal experience. However, conversations with various people reveal the older generation will most likely not feel comfortable living on the 'white' side of town and it would be better to locate housing on the 'black' or side of town that feels safer to more of the community.

In parallel, the design project began to create resilient design principles based on the existing guiding principles of the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership to ensure the project was grounded in culture and led by community values. These principles of holistic, strengths focused, culturally connected, do no harm, and community-led were the main principles which came to inform the design from high level, macro design decisions to smaller, micro details. Second to these guiding principles was the principle of yindyamarra (or baluwaa in Gamilaraay) which was brought in by the designers Wiradjuri cultural ways of thinking, being and doing. The word translates to many meanings but means to go or act with respect, go slowly and with intention, thoughtfulness, and gentleness. Further to this principle, clear supporting design principles of Connected to Country, Cultural practices of care, healing Country and knowledge sharing were identified as important principles to this specific project.



The Elders housing research begins to ask how can housing (re)create, support and heal Indigenous ways of caring for Elders on Country?

The concept draws upon the Yuwaya Ngarra-li core principles and draws upon Indigenous relationships of reciprocity and care. Reciprocal relationships are fundamental in Indigenous culture between people, communities and Country. It is a duty of care to carry out these reciprocal relationships, it ensures that we undertake the roles and responsibilities required by us to have a healthy community and Country.

It became incredibly evident in discussions with the DEG that it is fundamental for knowledge transfer between the Elders and younger people, to teach the younger generations the knowledge that has been gifted to them by their Elders and Ancestors over thousands of generations. In turn, the care younger generations show to our Elders teaches us to respect them, respect their knowledge and understand patience that this knowledge will be shared with us when we are ready.

When these reciprocal relationships are broken it creates gaps in the knowledge, lost culture, Elders that feel burdened and unable to pass on their knowledge and unhealthy people, culture and Country. This project aimed to provide spaces to facilitate these reciprocal relationships to be healed by providing safe and affordable housing that supports ageing in place, family carers and telehealth support. In addition, the provision of communities and communal spaces that support other reciprocal relationships to occur such as gathering and sharing stories, knowledge of Country, bringing back more than human communities in the town (to the 'site') and supporting cultural practices to continue. The design is still a work in progress however it allows for multiple

houses on one site to create connected communities specifically for Elders. Each house has two bedrooms, and the second bedroom allows for a live-in carer, the opportunity for it to be shared with another Elder or a spare room for visiting family and friends.

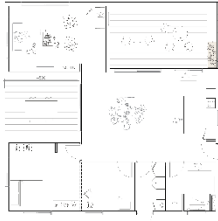
Case studies

Home is deeply personal and due to a long history of poor-quality housing provided to Aboriginal people in Walgett, it was important to depersonalize the housing requirements by understanding the varying needs of Elders in the community through the creation of multiple case studies.

The case studies were created to reflect current health, social and housing needs and barriers faced by different Elders across the community to age well in Walgett. The project sought to respond to one of the case studies to adapt the home design to fit with specific needs. The project adapted one of the designs to respond to Michael's needs.

Elder - Michael

Michael currently lives in Orange and would like to move back to Walgett to be closer to friends and family. Unfortunately, there are not many houses available or cheap enough to rent in town, which makes it difficult to move back. He does not mind living with family but there isn't enough room in his children's home to stay with them on a permanent basis and is concerned he will need a quieter home. He would love space for his grandkids to stay with him sometimes and places for the family to come together for a feed. Michael has health needs that involve going to the hospital for dialysis treatment once a week. Dialysis treatment is not safely possible at home - maybe in the future but a professional carer is required and a good quality home with wifi and tv screen for telehealth appointments. Michael needs assistance with cleaning, travelling to medical appointments, and help to get his weekly groceries.



Adapting N/W courtyard option to suit Michael's needs



Case study Floor Plan

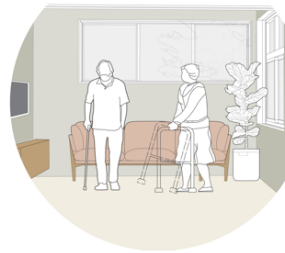
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Samantha Rich

22.08.22



Bedroom is generous in size with plenty of room for a wheelchair or walker without obstruction from furniture. Bedrooms are also equipped with a fan to cool down the room at night.



Lounge room is set up with screen, wifi and AV to allow for telehealth appointments. The lounge room is also set up generous size, access to daylight, unobscured pathway and with views to outdoors.

Case study testing

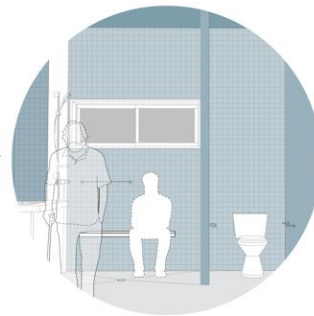
Gamil dhuningarraay baa

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The second bedroom is adapted to be used as a home dialysis room. Polished concrete (or waterproof flooring) continued into the room with a floor drain. Joinery along the wall to support storage of supplies and another sink and tap. The bedroom can be converted back to a bedroom easily and still has the ability to support a single bed or an armchair.



Bathroom is equipped with shower seat, hand held shower head, and grab rails in toilet and shower to allow Elder to shower and go to the bathroom independently.

Rachel and Jessica

Rachel owns a house in Walgett, she is a single older woman who lives independently in a smaller one-bedroom home. The home isn't well insulated, so Rachel often feels hot on summer nights and cold in winter, affecting her day-to-day activities and her sleep. The home has stairs leading up to the front door which sometimes makes it difficult for Rachel to walk easily up to her door and will be difficult with a walker in the future when Rachel cannot move around as easily. The front yard also doesn't have an accessible pathway from the street, which can be difficult when Rachel uses her electric scooter. It also causes black dirt to come through the house when they have to walk through it. Parking on the front yard makes this worse with grass not growing very well. Jessica, a friend of Rachel's, currently has no place to stay and is sleeping on Jessica's couch because there are no houses in town that are cheap enough for her to rent and there is also limited available rentals in town. Both Rachel and Jessica have no children and minimal family commitments. They have some home assistance from cleaners and transport for errands and appointments. They sometimes like living together but need more space for privacy and to avoid issues.

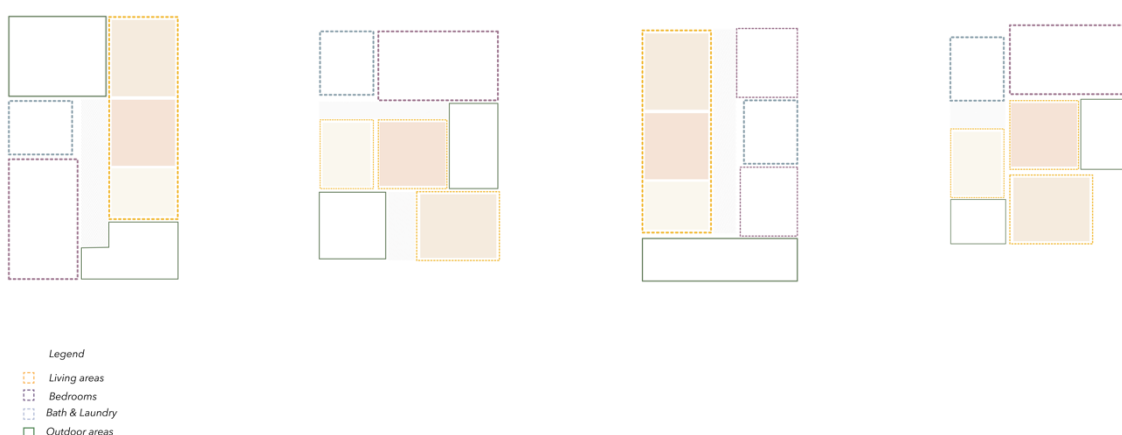
David

David recently had a stroke which means that he cannot live independently anymore in Walgett. He needs some help from a carer with daily household chores, cooking meals, some help bathing, and transport to take him to doctor's appointments, and to see friends and family. David doesn't want a stranger to be his carer and would like his grandson Tim to care for him. Unfortunately, because of lack of available housing, both David and Tim do not have access to housing that could

support Tim and David to live together. If they are unable to find an appropriate home to support Tim to be David's carer, David may be forced to go into an Aged Care Facility. Tim also does not have much work and helping David would allow him to be paid as a carer, financially supporting him to look after his Pop / Grandparent.

Modularity / adaptability

The modular and adaptable design of these homes was important to allow the houses to be adjusted depending on their orientation, site, and future occupants needs. The modularity of the design creates a kit of parts to allow them to be adjusted and arranged to suit varying needs of the Elders but also to be utilised for other housing needs in the future. The modularity allows for more standardization of the design to reduce the cost and buildability.



Climatic modelling

In direct response to the poor-quality housing in town which does not properly respond to the current and future climatic conditions, this project sought a sustainability architect and researcher, Anir Upadhyay to undertake proper climatic modelling of the town of Walgett to properly understand the technical requirements of how the housing needs to perform for future climate conditions. This climate data helped to understand appropriate materiality, construction type, technical requirements and will be also used to analyse any future housing designs to ensure the homes are future proofed and reduce stress on future occupants to manually heat and cool their homes. The climate modelling revealed/supported the community experience of feeling cold in winter and hot in summer which was not evident in the BOM climate data. In Anir's recommendations he outlines the following;

Walgett exhibits temperate climate characteristics with two major seasons (i.e. warm and cool) and short intermediate seasons in between. Warm period exists for about 4.5 months and cool period for 4 months.

The design response recommended based on Walgett climate modelling;

Thermal mass: Useful for both passive heating and cooling. Needs to locate thermal mass in the north facing rooms coupled with large windows for solar heat gain and protect the thermal mass from solar exposure in warm period for balancing room temperature.

Natural ventilation: Important for flushing out heat trapped during the day in the warm period. If external wind speed is low, use fans to enhance indoor wind circulation.

Building air tightness: Important to retain heat in the cool period and reduce unwanted heat gain in the warm period.

Sun shading for windows: Very important to exclude solar heat gain from October until mid-April.

Insulation: Very important to insulate roof (or ceiling), floor and walls.

Materiality research

Drawing upon the principles of healing Country and connected to Country the project involved undertaking research about innovative materials which would respond to the climatic conditions appropriately in terms of thermal properties, impact on Country in its manufacturing and at the end of life and durable for the context.

Models of housing to support young people in contact with the criminal justice system

The focus on youth housing has been informed by many years of work and research as part of the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership. In June 2018, the Walgett Action Plan for Children and Young People was developed which outlines what is needed to support the needs of Aboriginal young people in the community and help them thrive.

The housing research around young people has focused on the connection between housing provision and its role in reducing young people's contact with the criminal justice system. This research has also been supported by extensive work in the community, existing Yuwaya Ngarra-li research and youth diversionary work by the Dharriwaa Elders Group. In the course of this work, numerous housing needs have been identified for Aboriginal children and young people and their families in the Walgett community.

Integral to this process of understanding how housing can reduce Aboriginal young people's contact with the criminal justice system was to understand cultural differences in how we conceive

the idea of home. Aboriginal concepts of home are more than just the physical structure of a dwelling but are deeply embedded in place, community and family. The exploration of what home means to the Aboriginal people helps to inform what any housing needs to have and how it needs to be embedded in place and Country.

Workshops in Walgett

Multiple workshops have been undertaken to understand the housing need for Aboriginal young people in Walgett - tangible and intangible elements including;

- What are the restrictions of the housing;
- What does the housing need to have;
- Experience of hostels and young people's accommodation by DEG staff and youth team;
- Discussion around what Walgett young people need - from social, emotional and cultural support / factors to physical factors; and
- Social programs to support the housing.

As outlined in previous community resources, there is an urgent and long-term need for multiple forms of housing to support young people. There are currently no safe housing options for young people experiencing 'homelessness', with crisis accommodation more appropriate and safer for adults. At present, young people are either sent out of the community to neighbouring towns (or further to Dubbo), couch surfing at family or friends and/or put into motel rooms where their safety is not guaranteed.

There are also no current crisis accommodation options in Walgett town due to the previous Mission Australia crisis accommodation closing ahead of a new purpose-built crisis accommodation for women. There is also an urgent need for accommodation for young people 10-18 years old for multiple responses; cool-off space, accommodation for bail conditions to prevent young people kept in detention on remand, and respite accommodation during the school week to help them focus on their study. In the Yuwaya Ngarra-li report of analysis of BOSCAR data 2016-2021 the '*need for suitable short-term respite accommodation for young people in crisis*' for young people on remand was identified, given Walgett young people were apparently being kept in custody on remand because there was no appropriate housing options for them to be released to.

There is currently little or no available housing appropriate for young families and individuals, with many living with family in overcrowded houses which places further pressure on poor quality housing and can lead to conflict because of the lack of space. Therefore, the other clear need is for the provision of small flats for young people and families to help provide independence, and teach everyday life skills.

Learning from existing models

Desktop research through informal interviews were undertaken with many housing providers and architects across NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland to understand the different models of housing available to young people across Australia, the operational requirements of housing to support young people of varying ages to develop everyday life skills, support them into education, employment or alternative pathways and independent living skills. The discussions allowed us to understand what is and is not working across some of these organisations including innovative ways to design the social and physical structures to make any future housing and support effective in supporting the complex needs of young people in Walgett.

These interviews focussed on the following topics:

- Parameters around how to setup and run housing for young people;
- Staffing requirements;
- Culturally appropriate programs for Aboriginal youth engaging in their service;
- Housing design;
- The complexity of the needs of young people; and
- Services, programs or workshops which need to be provided in parallel with housing.

This research has gained a lot of momentum and the next year will involve scoping available land in town which could support a holistic wellbeing precinct for young people.

Next steps

- Land
- Funding for Elders housing
- Youth Diversion – integration with Two River Pathway model and then resourcing of program to design and build supported accommodation options for children and young people in Walgett
- UNSW colleagues and housing organisations/providers with Walgett community advocates develop and build crisis/emergency accommodation in Walgett
- Community data gathering re housing need and priorities – ongoing
- Development of long-term housing project with UNSW collaborators with expertise in housing policy, management, crisis/emergency, and community-led models to enable the design, build, management, evaluation and refining of appropriate models of housing in Walgett.