



Prospect *US*

Future directions for
Nullagine

Document prepared for the Shire of East Pilbara by Creating Communities Australia, May 2010





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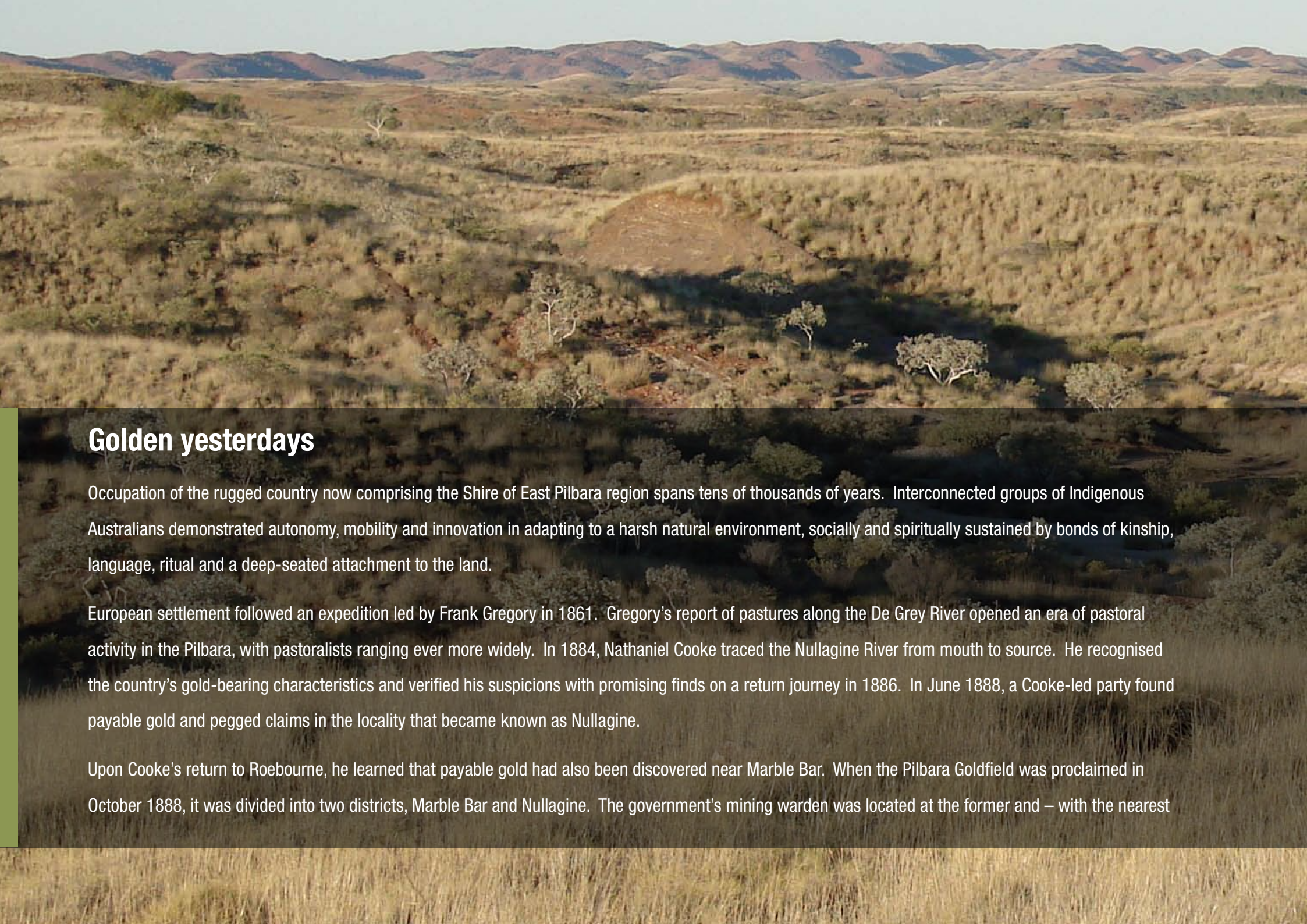
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Golden yesterdays

Occupation of the rugged country now comprising the Shire of East Pilbara region spans tens of thousands of years. Interconnected groups of Indigenous Australians demonstrated autonomy, mobility and innovation in adapting to a harsh natural environment, socially and spiritually sustained by bonds of kinship, language, ritual and a deep-seated attachment to the land.

European settlement followed an expedition led by Frank Gregory in 1861. Gregory's report of pastures along the De Grey River opened an era of pastoral activity in the Pilbara, with pastoralists ranging ever more widely. In 1884, Nathaniel Cooke traced the Nullagine River from mouth to source. He recognised the country's gold-bearing characteristics and verified his suspicions with promising finds on a return journey in 1886. In June 1888, a Cooke-led party found payable gold and pegged claims in the locality that became known as Nullagine.

Upon Cooke's return to Roebourne, he learned that payable gold had also been discovered near Marble Bar. When the Pilbara Goldfield was proclaimed in October 1888, it was divided into two districts, Marble Bar and Nullagine. The government's mining warden was located at the former and – with the nearest



Government Resident at Roebourne – Nullagine was very much a ‘frontier’ centre, with gold smuggling and other illegal activity rife.

In 1893, Nullagine was still the principal alluvial centre of the north. Boosted by the abandonment of the Kimberley Goldfield by many small-timers, the township was founded in 1895. The telegraph reached Nullagine in 1896, and the boundaries of the Nullagine Road Board were set down in 1897.

Although reef mining made progress as returns from alluvial gold dwindled, high transportation costs meant that only high yielding ore was worth crushing, and the failure of requests for a railway line linking Nullagine to the coast reduced activity and heralded a decline for the town after 1905. In spite of this, Nullagine remained a seat of local government until merging with the neighbouring shire of Marble Bar to form the Shire of East Pilbara in 1972.

In the early years of the 21st century, world demand for iron ore catapulted the East Pilbara into a period of rapid growth and development which, due to long-term export contracts and increasing recognition of the region’s diverse attractions and opportunities, is certain to have even more lasting impact than the gold boom of the 1890s.

Our vision



1 OUR VISION

The Shire of East Pilbara is a place of **intersecting paths and destinies**. For millennia Indigenous people traversed this land, nurturing culture and language, and regenerating the country. In the 21st Century, the **communities** of our Shire represent vibrant intersections connecting **people, environment, economy and culture**, and are a testament to our **common heritage**.

*“The Shire of East Pilbara is the **heart of the Pilbara**. Productivity within the Shire powers regional development, keeps ports busy and drives growth in the economies of our state and nation. Our local government is both **conscious and proud** of its responsibility to **serve the communities** that enable this activity to continue.”*

Cr Lynne Craigie

Shire President, Shire of East Pilbara

*“**Communities are homes** to our most valuable resource: people. The Shire is committed to **building partnerships** and **developing opportunities** to resource its communities.”*

Allen Cooper

Chief Executive Officer, Shire of East Pilbara

Our little gems



2 OUR LITTLE GEMS

The smaller towns of the Shire of East Pilbara are seen by some as little more than places to refuel, recharge and replenish. They break journeys to isolated workplaces, encampments, and such regional centres as Newman, Hedland and Karratha. They also punctuate tens of thousands of road-trips annually, with tourists drawn by the region's plentiful sources of fascination – from extraordinary wildflowers and protected wilderness areas to a rich Indigenous culture, tales of rugged explorers and pastoral pioneering, gold prospecting and a spectacular mining history.

Yet the smaller towns of the world's largest local government area are also places where hundreds of people choose to reside. They are the little gems of the Shire of East Pilbara – proud and significant communities. Indeed, it is salutary to note that around one third of the Shire's people reside outside its seat of local government, Newman. They have survived fluctuations of

fortune for more than a century, and the resilience of these towns is likely to hold them in good stead throughout the 21st Century. In recent memory, moreover, their prospects have rarely looked brighter.

The Shire of East Pilbara's strong commitment to the future of Nullagine is reflected in this document, which is companion to a similar document on Marble Bar. Outlined within are strategies, proposed actions and intended outcomes clustered around five broad focus areas applying to both towns.

In charting directions for its smaller towns, the Shire is paying due attention to the needs and aspirations of residents, paving the way for dialogues and partnerships with State and Commonwealth governments, industry, not-for-profit and non-government organisations.



Our priorities



3 OUR PRIORITIES

In working to develop the amenity and sustainability of its towns, the Shire of East Pilbara embraces five core aspirations. The Shire's objective is to develop and implement strategies that support:

1. PEOPLE of vitality.

Focus: *The diversity and quality of education and skills development options; employment options; health services; and access to recreational, leisure and creative activities.*

2. COMMUNITIES of substance.

Focus: *The fostering of harmonious communities acknowledging a shared heritage; strong community groups, networks and governance; relevant and affordable community services; and the provision of equitable and well-managed community infrastructure.*

3. ECONOMIES of strength.

Focus: *Infrastructure supporting economic development, partnerships with industry and tourism.*

4. ENVIRONMENTS of balance.

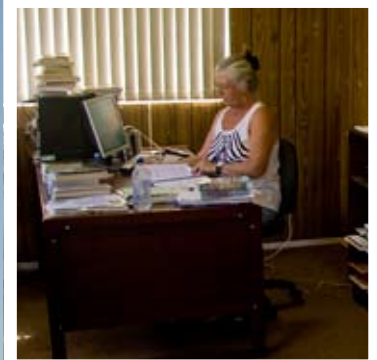
Focus: *The maintenance and environmental management of iconic Pilbara landscapes for generations to come; reduced ecological footprints; and the development of clean, green towns.*

5. PLACES of connection.

Focus: *Shire-wide planning and a quality regional road network; the quality and supply of housing and land for industry and commerce; the provision of safe places and spaces; and accessible, amenable towns.*



Our shared challenge



4 OUR SHARED CHALLENGE

Communities in the Shire of East Pilbara have more in common than their occupancy of a region that fuels the Australian economy and plays a significant role in global trade.

Most people who call the north-west of Western Australia home have a love of the open air, an appreciation of the environment, a sense of pride in their heritage, and a willingness to roll up their sleeves to accomplish goals. Certainly, community groups in our smaller towns do an admirable job in undertaking projects and organising events. The Shire recognises this work and will continue to extend its support to these groups whenever possible.

The Shire also recognises that Nullagine and Marble Bar have a number of common problems and shared sources of vexation. Major concerns include:

- Land availability and affordability
- Indigenous development
- Economic development
- The positive engagement of youth
- The effective coordination of government services.

ProspectUs is founded on an understanding that to address issues within one town, community or population group ultimately serves the interests of all residents in the Shire. Many of the issues faced by Pilbara towns are interrelated, and require the commitment and collaboration of a broad range of stakeholders.

It is clear, for example, that a lack of land availability within towns has a highly deleterious effect on economic development. It decreases land affordability, increases cost of living, and encourages resource companies to opt for fly-in, fly out employment contracts – in effect, artificially capping growth by immobilising economic triggers. In turn, lower resident populations decrease incentives for small business ventures, while tourism is constrained through a lack of accommodation. Land shortages can also mean that government employees in such areas as education and health care cannot be housed appropriately or retained, and there are also adverse consequences for Indigenous development.

Clearly, therefore, planning for individual towns must also be reflected in broad strategies for development. The Shire of East Pilbara maintains an open door and seeks to play a leading role in the identification of partners and cultivation of partnerships for the benefit of the community.

Relationship-building within smaller towns and communities of the Shire of East Pilbara will also pay dividends. In a local government area increasingly dominated by a major regional centre, the Shire is committed to the facilitation of effective channels of communication and development of a stronger Shire profile in its smaller towns, providing local opportunities for needs to be articulated, grievances aired and strategic alliances formed.

Our indigenous communities



5 OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

While Indigenous development does not fall directly within the sphere of local government operations, it is another major challenge. At the time of the 2006 national census, the total population of the Shire of East Pilbara was 6,544 persons, of which 21.8% indentified as Indigenous.

Both Nullagine and Marble Bar are home to significant aboriginal communities on non-rateable properties on Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) land – Irrungadji and Goodabinya respectively. Among the issues faced by these communities are an insufficiency of housing; poor housing quality; a lack of capacity to execute or access maintenance services; poor environmental health and waste management; unreliable water and power supplies; deficient roads maintenance; and low-level access to health and social services.

The Shire of East Pilbara is actively working toward closer relationships between Indigenous communities and local government. The Shire is a long-time advocate of legislative change to allow for the rating of ALT

property, and its aboriginal affairs policy backs initiatives which enable the delivery of services to non-rateable Aboriginal communities. It is also Shire policy to recognise ‘the benefits of cooperation with all levels of Government, regional councils and Aboriginal community organisations in the planning and delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’.

In line with these policies, the Shire argues that it is increasingly important that the apportionment of responsibility for Indigenous communities is addressed by all tiers of government. The Shire is positioned to play a key role in interagency coordination in a wide range of matters, but is unable to lead the way until appropriate funding arrangements are put into place. The Shire of East Pilbara stands ready to assist communities on ALT land to attract funding to support local government in meeting service requirements, and is keen to support the Department of Indigenous Affairs and other organisations and stakeholders to achieve desired outcomes.



Our shining example



6 OUR SHINING EXAMPLE

The Shire of East Pilbara believes that Nullagine and Marble Bar have the capacity to take their place among Australia's most outstanding remote towns. In at least one sphere, they are already well on the way to setting the rest of the nation a shining example.

Both towns experience intense sunlight during most of the year, and this is set to be used to full advantage. Horizon Power has announced plans to establish new state-of-the-art solar power stations in both Nullagine and Marble Bar, producing clean, green power using proven technology on a scale unprecedented in Australia. The plans include the installation of 900 solar modules in Nullagine and 1008 solar modules in Marble Bar. A single-axis, horizontal solar tracking system will follow the path of the sun in each town throughout the day.

The power stations are expected to set new benchmarks for hybrid diesel islanded systems, with extremely high renewable energy generation. More than 60% of daytime load for the towns will be produced from sunlight. This equates to a saving of 35-40% of diesel and 1,100 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually. The new stations will also be significantly quieter than existing power stations which have been operating since 1973.

Nullagine and Marble Bar may be small towns, but they are leading the way in this field and harnessing a powerful resource often overlooked in Australia – sunshine. In so doing, they are likely to receive nationwide – if not worldwide – attention.



Our Nullagine



7 OUR NULLAGINE: THE EXISTING CONTEXT

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Nullagine has a small local economy. Seasonal tourism and government services exert some economic impact, but local businesses experience difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, primarily due to a lack of housing and the lure of better wages within resources industries.

The Shire of East Pilbara is Nullagine's largest single employer, with other employers in the area including:

- The Commonwealth Government via job providers Ashburton CDEP, Job Futures, Skilled and IT;
- Western Australian Government through the Department of Education and Training (Nullagine School); the WA Police Service; the Department of Health (full-time community health nurse);
- Local businesses such as the Nullagine Roadhouse, the Conglomerate Hotel, and the caravan park (a Shire of East Pilbara asset);
- Resource companies including Rio Tinto, which runs local trainee programs; and such others as BCI, Millennium, Auvex and Hazelwood, which do not maintain a presence in town;
- Pastoralists.

There is an elevated cost of living in Nullagine, with transport and grocery costs a major disincentive for residence. The chief causes of pressure on costs are the lack regular freight deliveries from Hedland or elsewhere in the region.

THE COMMUNITY

Most people living in Nullagine fall into one of three broad categories. A small percentage is made up of long term residents of European descent; there is a group of transient people employed in the town, primarily government workers; and there are the local Indigenous people from Irrungadgi. In a population of 180-200, approximately 50% are Indigenous, and there is minimal interaction between the two population halves.

There are many young mothers at Irrungadgi and, overall, the Nullagine community is very young, reflected in the fact that around one-fifth of the population comprises school-age children. The Australian Early Development Index (2007) identifies a high degree of developmental vulnerability among Nullagine children in the language and cognitive domain (52.2%); communication skills (38.1%); social competence (34.8%); and emotional maturity (33.3%).

With a largely transient non-Indigenous community, the town is prone to experiencing periods in which a lack of leadership in civic affairs is



evident. Many government employees (i.e. school teachers, health workers, police) work in Nullagine for only a few years and then move on. At times, community projects/activities have been commenced, only to cease when those ‘driving’ them leave town. The Shire has little or no influence on these comings and goings, but will assist the community in succession planning and continuity measures.

Centrelink and East Pilbara Independent Support (EPIS) care services operate within the town, and there is a Parents and Citizens group at Nullagine School. Blue Light Discos are held within the town at various times of the year.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Aside from State Government health and education facilities, a community the size of Nullagine warrants only a basic level of community facility provision. This would normally consist of a multipurpose hall for a range of community and social activities; a sports oval; outdoor sports courts; a passive park with playground equipment; and access to library and telecentre services.

Nullagine has many of these facilities. However, many are in substandard condition, while others are housed in transportable buildings. Principal community facilities are:

- *Public Library*, located within a transportable building;

- *Telecentre*, also operating within a purpose built transportable building – which additionally accommodates Nullagine’s Centrelink branch – and managed by an incorporated community group;
- *Gallop Hall*, an aging facility adjacent to the library and telecentre with a recently refurbished kitchen and an office currently leased to the EPIS service;
- *Nullagine Primary School*, with a current enrolment of 36 students (4 preprimary, 15 primary and 17 secondary), 95% of whom are indigenous;
- *The Blue House*, leased by the Shire has been used for youth activities and is in need of repair.
- *The recreation area*, adjacent to the Blue House and lacking grass and shade amenity;
- *Gymnasium*, a Shire facility with a range of cardiovascular and weight training equipment;
- *Tennis/basketball courts in reasonable condition*, but without floodlights are underutilised due to the hot daytime climate;
- *Town park/playground*, a small passive recreation area in the town centre, equipped with basic playground equipment.

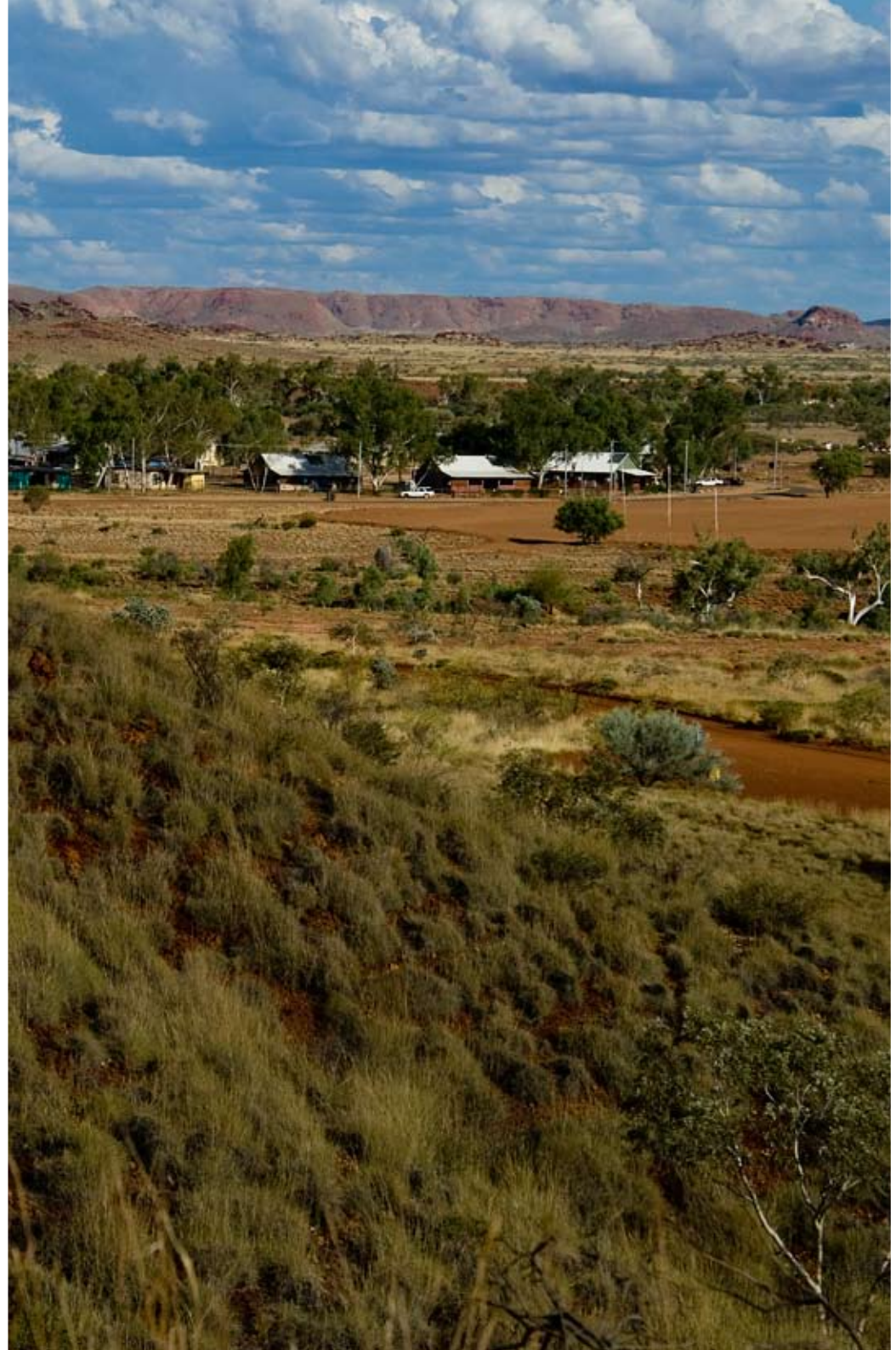
Nullagine also has a health clinic/nursing post, and a caravan park (owned by the Shire of East Pilbara).

Ideally, a multipurpose community centre for Nullagine would incorporate a hall, kitchen, office, children's activity room, library and telecentre, all under the one roof and management structure. This could be achieved either through extending and/or refurbishing Gallop Hall, or by building a new facility. A feasibility study is required to determine the most viable development option. Interim priorities will include:

1. The upgrading of the Nullagine sports oval through re-grassing, reticulation and the provision of a shade structure; and
2. Refurbishment or replacement of the Blue House.

While a number of part-time employees are doing well to deliver limited services, there is a need for Nullagine's community facilities to be further activated. This will require the planning of a broad range of community and recreation activities. The Shire seeks to increase its role in these areas but requires support and partnerships with the community's other stakeholders.

The Shire bus provides a valued public transport service to both Port Hedland and Newman. This service is the only transport option for many Nullagine residents, particularly Indigenous and aged residents without private vehicles who need access to specialised health services. The Shire is committed to regularly reviewing the effectiveness of this service so that it meets the community needs.



Our opportunities



8 OUR OPPORTUNITIES

Isolation is Nullagine's constant, rough-edged friend – those who live in the town embrace it, and those who visit seek its company. The Shire of East Pilbara recognises that Nullagine's challenge is to cultivate opportunities within the confines of that relationship. Opportunities for Nullagine exist in the development of strategies in the following areas:

TOURISM

In general, those who move to Nullagine are fond of its stillness, silence and scenery. Visitors equally value these attributes and include many fossickers, but more can be done to capitalise on tourism opportunities. Priorities are an upgrade to the road to Nullagine and the development of a Shire-wide tourism strategy, which may include the development of a distinctive annual event. A consideration of opportunities associated with the town's cutting-edge renewable power generation will also be worthwhile.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

With increasing activity in the resources sector, particular attention must be given to land release and enterprise initiatives. In both of these areas the Shire of East Pilbara actively seeks strategic partnerships.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Despite the proximity of Irungadji, its residents have little interaction with the rest of the Nullagine community beyond the grounds of the local school.

Local Government planning for Nullagine prioritises the establishment of interface and infrastructure utilisation between the town's two sub-groups.

COORDINATED SERVICE DELIVERY

Remote servicing by State Government agencies results in inefficiencies at the local level. The Shire of East Pilbara is favourably positioned to facilitate a higher level of dialogue and more coordinated service delivery.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The population of Nullagine is relatively young and a significant challenge for Nullagine exists in the area of children and youth. Community development planning by the Shire of East Pilbara will increasingly focus on developmentally vulnerable children, as well as the disengagement of teenagers and some of the young adult population.

INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE PROVISION

The Shire of East Pilbara is conscious that approximately half of the people of Nullagine identify as Indigenous. This fact alone provides powerful cause for a commitment by the Shire to Indigenous development but current funding arrangements limit its capacity to exert significant influence. Change is required in this area and the Shire is engaged in dialogues on the future of service provision to Indigenous communities.



Strategies
and actions



9 STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

GOAL 1.

PEOPLE OF VITALITY: The diversity and quality of education and skills development options; employment options; health services; and access to recreational, leisure and creative activities.

Priority key for strategies and actions:

Short term

Medium term

Long term

Encourage high quality education and diverse skills development options

- Support EPIS's plans to train Indigenous women to be carers **S**
- Encourage the Telecentre to deliver a variety of adult education programs **S**
- Support the Nullagine School in its efforts to upgrade infrastructure **S**
- Support the continuation of Rio Tinto's 'work ready' scheme and identify other employment opportunities for the indigenous community **S**
- Encourage an inter-agency 'Education Excellence' working group with a view to improving access to education and training **M**
- Support the development of indigenous language programs **M**

Promote variety and choice in local employment

- Prepare an Economic Development Plan to identify ways of generating local employment and key partners **S**
- Support the development of a variety of Indigenous work placement projects **S**



Support individual and community health

- Advocate for improved health services **S**
- Continue to support 'early years' programs to support parents of young children **S**
- Support Irrungadgi's efforts to apply to become a 'dry' community **S**
- Continue to support a transport service for the community in conjunction with the Department of Transport to assist the community to access specialist health services in Newman and Hedland **S**
- Support Healthy Youth projects **M**
- Support the provision of first aid training courses to the community **M**

Foster artistic and creative expression

- Provide assistance with the provision of a broad range of activities to foster artistic and creative endeavours **M**

Provide a range of well resourced recreation and leisure options

- Refurbish or replace and equip the Blue House - **S**
- Develop an annual calendar of sport and recreation activities with a focus on children & youth **S**
- Investigate the possibility to upgrade the Nullagine recreation area – include new grass, reticulation and a shade shelter **S**
- Investigate the possibility to provide lighting and shade for the multi-use courts **S**

GOAL 2.

COMMUNITIES OF SUBSTANCE: The fostering of harmonious communities acknowledging a shared heritage; strong community groups, networks and governance; relevant and affordable community services; and the provision of equitable and well-managed community infrastructure.

Priority key for strategies and actions:

Short term

Medium term

Long term

Promote diverse, harmonious and caring communities

- Support cross cultural activities

L

Build strong community groups, networks and governance

- Provide facilities for community groups and community events
- Initiate quarterly Community Shire Briefing Sessions
- Establish a community management group to implement the Nullagine Strategic Plan
- Continue to hold a Shire council meeting in Nullagine annually
- Support training to increase the capacity of local community groups
- Support the development of a Youth Leadership Program

S

S

S

S

M

M

Encourage high rates of participation in community activities and events

- Provide school holiday programs
- Partner with youth service providers to deliver youth projects throughout the year
- Support the establishment of a Youth Club/ Drop-in Centre

S

S

S

Provide relevant and affordable community services

- Initiate an interagency community services working group to improve access to community services **S**

Ensure well managed and equitable provision of community infrastructure

- Work with Nullagine Primary School and the Irrungadgi community to support the establishment of a hostel for school aged children **S**
- Undertake a feasibility study to provide a multipurpose community facility **S**

Celebrate the shared heritage of Marble Bar

- Investigate opportunities to undertake an oral history project **M**

GOAL 3.**ECONOMIES OF STRENGTH:** Infrastructure supporting economic development, partnerships with industry and tourism.

Priority key for strategies and actions:

Short term**Medium term****Long term****Provide infrastructure to support economic development**

- Support the development of a town website in conjunction with other community groups

M**Build a thriving and diverse economy**

- Develop a Local Economic Development Plan with a focus on the resource industry, tourism and Indigenous tourism

S**Develop strong partnerships with industry**

- Play a leadership role in establishing partnerships with local industry to support local employment and community development

S**Manage the tourism asset**

- Undertake a feasibility study to relocate the Caravan Park out of the flood plain
- Incorporate a local tourism plan in whole of Shire planning
- Upgrade Caravan Park facilities
- Investigate the possibility to establish an iconic annual event (i.e. Dirt and Dust Festival)

S**M****M****M**

GOAL 4.

ENVIRONMENTS OF BALANCE: The maintenance and environmental management of iconic Pilbara landscapes for generations to come; reduced ecological footprints; and the development of clean, green towns.

Priority key for strategies and actions:

Short term

Medium term

Long term

Reduced the town's ecological footprint

- Promote recycling and instigate a community waste recycling program
- Review waste strategy

S

S

Cultivate a clean green town

- Increase dog control measures
- Investigate the feasibility of relocating the rubbish tip away from the river and review waste management practices with a view to minimizing carbon emissions
- Plan and implement a tree planting program

S

S

M

GOAL 5.

PLACES OF CONNECTION: Shire-wide planning and a quality regional road network; the quality and supply of housing and land for industry and commerce; the provision of safe places and spaces; and accessible, amenable towns.

Priority key for strategies and actions:

Short term

Medium term

Long term

Plan well for the future

- Review and update Town Plan **S**
- Council to ensure adequate resources to support the needs of the town **S**

Ensure the release of adequate amounts of housing, industrial and commercial land

- Encourage an interagency working group to address land release and housing supply **S**

Create vibrant civic spaces of intersection and interaction

- Activate the town through an annual calendar of events and activities **S**
- Support resources to maintain the existing Nullagine Heritage Walk Trail **S**
- Continue to enhance the visual amenity of the town centre **M**

Ensure safe spaces and places

- Promote community involvement in Emergency Services **S**
- Improve access to Volunteer Fire Brigade facilities **S**

Strategies and actions



Build connected and accessible towns

- Work with mining companies and the State Government to improve the regional road network and the condition of main roads (i.e. Nullagine Road, Newman Road, Hillside Road, Boreline Road) **S**
- Continue to review the public transport service provided by the Shire **S**
- Encourage Telstra to improve communications **S**
- Improve footpaths and access within the town **S**
- Improve signage around town and update tourist information bay **M**



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