

## **WILMAN DRYANDRA PEOPLE CORPORATION LTD ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

This Annual Report for the Wilman (Dryandra) People Corporation Ltd (the Corporation) will give an account of the work undertaken during the period October 2022 to October 2023. The Corporation was established in 2022 and has a volunteer Board of Directors. Its purpose is to advance the culture and heritage of the Wilman Nyungar people who belong to the Dryandra Booja. The work by Wilman Elders and Curtin University with UWA must be acknowledged.

The journey to establish the Corporation began in 2020 with the approval of a research project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and administered by Curtin University, named as the Healing Land Healing People project. Three Universities signed a partnership agreement to research aspects of culture, history and biodiversity as they relate to the Dryandra Woodlands, with a view to investigating biodiversity sustainability and how Nyungar cultural ideas can support this. Our Wilman Dryandra Elders began in 2020 to work with Curtin University, the University of Western Australia and Deakin University and on the project. The Dryandra Woodlands was recently designated as a National Park in January 2022.

The Elders working with personnel from the universities (Professors Hopper and Haebich) documented the stories of the Elders that related to Dryandra Booja and identified important cultural and historical sites. To enable the protection of these sites the Elders agreed in late 2021 to set up a new corporation to implement its Constitutional purpose and objects relating to culture and heritage. The Elders also agreed to develop a Healthy Country Plan with Consultant Paula Deegan through funding provided by the ARC. A youth program is also envisaged with Millenium Kids.

The new Corporation was a vital structure to help implement the new Healthy Country Plan and to enable Elders to have a key role in the 'joint management framework' involving Gnaala Karla Booja Regional Corporation (GKB) and the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

The four stated cultural heritage priorities named by the DBCA Wheatbelt Strategic Plan (page33) help identify the scope of work under the joint management framework as:

- Protecting sites of significance
- Supporting Aboriginal people's connection to country
- Improving working relationships, partnerships
- Fostering an awareness and valuing of Aboriginal heritage by all visitors to the parks and reserves.

Wilman Dryandra Elders understood the opportunities resulting from the DBCA Plan and the Native Title Settlement. To position the Wilman people to engage in joint management of Dryandra National Park, three plans were completed and endorsed by the Wilman Elders during the 2023 year including a:

- Wilman Healthy Country Plan with 500 copies printed and circulated.
- Wilman Business Plan and Strategic Plan charting course for 5-10 years.

The Healthy Country Plan enables families to have time on country, care for people, teach their culture and record stories; and positively lift the spiritual wellbeing of the Wilman people. The Business Plan outlines five elements that together gives structure to the Corporation business: Governance; Staffing; Financial needs; Operations of programs and services. Commercialisation. Aboriginal cultural tourism focuses on the cultures, traditions, and lifestyles of Indigenous communities. It involves engaging with Indigenous people, learning about their history, customs, spirituality, and participating in activities like traditional ceremonies, storytelling, or craft workshops.

Cultural travel is one of the fastest growing segments in tourism with Aboriginal tourism experiences typically aimed at international visitors and appealing more often to Western Hemisphere markets.

Wilman cultural authority and community support as custodians of Dryandra Country gives the Corporation a strong position, therefore there is minimal competition enabling business and market advantages. Since 2013 there has been a steady increase in tourists seeking and experiencing an Indigenous tourism activity.

In summary the Business Plan identifies the key targets for the Corporation to pursue:

- Tourism, including partnerships with tour operators, Elder's engagement eg WTC,
- Land management, Youth programs, Cultural Heritage surveys
- A Keeping Place to hold knowledge and build respect for history and language.

This cultural aspect will also underpin potential partnerships with WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council, GKB, DBCA, Government/Shires and Peel Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC), Noongar organisations.

A key risk identified in the Business Plan is that strong governance is needed for the Corporation to succeed, and the Directors' governance skills need continual upgrading and training. It is time soon to enable Wilman people to apply to the Board for Corporation membership and to become new Directors. A cultural sub-committee is to be set up to drive cultural policy for the Corporation. The timing for these steps to happen needs to be considered as staffing is increased and the Corporation is better able to cope with its added responsibilities.

The Corporation is now in need of funding for a rental office, staffed by a manager, a project officer and an administration officer to enable governance accountability and business development beginning with funding applications.

Since October 2022, meetings involving some Wilman Elders and Board Directors were held to promote business and partnerships or working relationships. These meetings are ongoing:

- Healthy Country Plan with Paula Deegan Consultant
- Working relationship with Peel Harvey Catchment Council, DBCA, KEEDAC and Mining Companies South 32 and Newmont
- Business Plan development with IPS Consultant Colette McEntee
- Working relationship with GKB Regional Council Chair, CEO and Land Manager.

A very positive meeting was held with the GKB Chair and CEO on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at their Bunbury Office regarding joint management of Dryandra National Park. It is hoped that a working relationship with the Regional Council can be developed with membership applications sent in from some Wilman Corporation Directors and Elder Travis Abraham for positions on the GKB committees.

I thank our Wilman Elders and families along with our Board for their important input to above developments. I am very grateful for the help we got from workers at Universities (Curtin and UWA Albany), DBCA Narrogin, PHCC Boddington and KEEDAC.

We also acknowledge the family members who have passed too and how the old ones have shaped our lives.

Chairman  
Horace Brett Hill