



ISSN 1647-4112 (print) ISSN 2182-2751 (on line)

www.ijhsd.greenlines-institute.org

International Journal of Heritage and Sustainable Development

Vol. 2, No. 1, 2012, pp. 87-96

The second wave: Aboriginal cultural centers in sustainable development

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Over the past 10 years there has been a widespread, localized, uncoordinated effort across Australia to create Aboriginal cultural centers. Generally funded by regional development bodies and/or local government, these centers focus on leveraging culture to drive human development (training, employment) while meeting a range of social and cultural goals. Among their goals are cultural events, engagement with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and education about Aboriginal cultural knowledge. They can be differentiated from the first wave of Aboriginal art centers that began in the 1970s that were controlled by Aboriginal organizations in which the Federal government exercised influence via funding models, had the principle activity of facilitating the production and marketing of art, and tended to be in remote locations. The focus here is on an exemplar of the established, though still developing, second wave of Aboriginal cultural centers. This paper presents a hypothesis on the characteristics of the second wave of Aboriginal cultural centers and their alignment with state-defined priorities for sustainable development through the case study of an Aboriginal culture and heritage centre. Insights are drawn from key informant interviews about the creation and operation of Gwoondwardu Mia, the Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre in Carnarvon, Western Australia.

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Introduction

Aboriginal culture and heritage is responsible for the expansion of cultural policy into a broad range of policy areas. The success of Aboriginal art centers in generating incomes and employment in remote communities, and the entry of Aboriginal symbolism into the national iconography, had a profound and far-reaching effect on how Aboriginal heritage and culture is viewed and understood, including effects on its role in sustainable development. In this paper, we examine the case for a new model using culture and heritage within sustainable development in Australia: an uncoordinated and localized wave of Aboriginal cultural centers established since the mid-1990s.

The cultural policy context in Australia

Cultural policy analyst Jennifer Craik characterizes Australia's cultural policy as a neo-patronage approach towards elite arts, where an arms-length state-funded organization determines funding via peer evaluation that almost always protects the status quo, and an instrumentalist whole of government approach across agencies to non-elite arts and culture that were included in cultural policy from the 1960s (2007). The characteristics of Indigenous cultural policy were heavily influenced by the expansion of cultural policy. Indigenous culture has been the focus of a range of policy areas at the Federal level; the environment (Indigenous heritage), social services (use of arts programs), and languages and a range of arts programs. It has also been a focus of tourism strategies.¹ Indigenous culture's attraction to policy makers

at the Federal level has been replicated at all levels of government, leading to a wide range of policies that aim to satisfy a variety of policy goals.

A second development with implications for Aboriginal cultural centers is the use of culture in regional development programs. The role of culture in urban and regional development, particularly through ideas like the creative classes (Florida, 2002) the creative city (Landry, 2006; Landry & Biancini, 1995) and creative industries (Cunningham, 2002; Hartley, 2005; Venturelli, 2001), has increased the scope for state investment in culture and the arts in urban locations. Regional areas have also sought to take advantage of these trends through their capacity to use consumption, particularly tourism as a driver for jobs and growth (see for instance in Germany, (Drda-Kuhn & Wiegand, 2010), and for a global study across the USA, Australia and Europe, Duxbury (2009)). Gibson (2002) identifies tourism as crucial for understanding regional cultural industries in the Far North Coast of New South Wales due to its ability to fund infrastructure and reinforce regional identity. The expansion of cultural policy, particularly into urban and regional development, provides part of the background to the emergence of a number of publicly funded Aboriginal cultural initiatives in the last decade. In order to understand why Aboriginal culture is now perceived as a potential driver of development we examine Aboriginal art centers.

Aboriginal arts centres and their influence on cultural policy

The Aboriginal art centers set the context for the cultural centers their success by establishing that Indigenous culture was a viable driver of commercial, social and cultural benefits. An analysis of Aboriginal cultural centers needs to both recognize the importance of the history and experiences of the art centers and be distinguishable from them. Prior to the 1970s, Aboriginal cultural objects were only perceived as art when they fit European conventions (such as bark paintings) and only then through a redefinition of art that started in museums (such as painted shields and other tools), so many objects were ignored or were not collectable (Morphy, 1998). In 1971, Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd was established and played a key role in establishing credible outlets for Aboriginal art. This organization controlled the supply of art by buying and holding all of the art, with the purpose of creating a market, albeit one that could only absorb a portion of the art produced. In 1972, self-determination became the central element of Indigenous policy, and the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB) in the Australia Council was established. This all-Aboriginal board was accompanied by a new type of arts bureaucrat, entrepreneurial and focused on supporting and implementing the priorities of Aborigines, including buying much of the art in the 1970s (Myers, 2002). Hence at the time the first art centers emerged, the two key sets of policy priorities around the art centers viewed them as economic enterprises, and as a means for self-determination and Aboriginal expression.

The AAB's values and financial support were crucial contributions to what Altman called the "arts centre model" (2005, p. 6). This model employed non-Aboriginal arts advisors (also called arts centre managers) who were directly accountable to the artists. Altman's (2005) description concurs with Felicity Wright and Frances Morphy's more focused definition that identified their "principal activity [as] facilitating the production and marketing of art and craft" (Wright & Morphy, 2000, p. ix), although he also notes the existence of a small number of urban centers (2005). (2005, p. 6)(2005, p. 6) To be successful, the art centers have to bridge geographical and cultural divides while satisfying the requirements of artists, policy makers and the market. The relationship between these elements has shifted over time.

The AAB (now the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board—ATSIAB) in the Australia Council focused its resources on specific projects, arts promotion and professional development for individual artists. During the boom years of 1981 to 1989 (Myers 2002) economic rationalization came to dominate the administration of art centers. Exhibition and retail successes led to the entry of Aboriginal art into public collections and international exhibitions, and an association of Aboriginal symbolism with Australian cultural nationalism. The state's policy emphasis became increasingly on the arts and crafts industry, rather than on arts as an activity of cultural preservation. Myers characterizes the third period, from 1989-2000 as a "privatization period" (2002, p. 124), shaped by the establishment of a calibrated market for Aboriginal fine art. The changes of 1989 ultimately resulted in less control for art centers and continued issues of quality for dealers as the market suffered from an "entrepreneurial free for all" (Myers, 2002, p. 315), including a growth in highly questionable business practices that divided artists from their communities and took advantage of their immediate need. According to the 2007 Senate Standing Committee report, there were 110 art centers in Australia, supporting the greater part of the 5000 arts producers whose work sells for between \$400-500 million (Standing Committee on Environment Communications Information Technology and the Arts, 2007), although this is lower now due to a downturn following the start of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.ⁱⁱ

This provides an outline of the policy context and developments in the governance of art centers, but does not communicate art centers' range of tasks and goals. In the Standing Committee report (Standing Committee on Environment Communications Information Technology and the Arts, 2007), Desart presented the most complete list of art centers' roles: cultural and identity maintenance; places where culture and law is respected and renewed; a place of work and earning income; distributor to a range of markets; strengthening the community through youth, health and social activities; places of learning where artists teach, and artists and staff learn artistic and administrative skills; and places of respite, care and informal support particularly for older people and women (2007, p. 31). Other submissions added conservation of art work, educating the broader community, and contributing to

Aboriginal control and self management. The Standing Committee report (2007) and Wright and Morphy (2000) draw attention to issues of governance, staff training, staff retention and infrastructure funding. For the art centre executives (largely composed of senior artists and custodians), Wright and Morphy found that less importance was attached to income and the centers were seen primarily as cultural institutions, emphasizing cultural maintenance, facilitating artists, and the production of art (2000).

The attractiveness of art centers to governments, like Aboriginal cultural enterprises more generally, are their capacity to satisfy a range of policy goals, including regional development, reconciliation, supporting regional and national symbolism, and Indigenous development. While these goals are broad and encompassing, some shared characteristics can be identified. First, they are Aboriginal controlled and directed. Initially and even in 2000 when *The Art and Craft Centre Story* was published, the definition of an Aboriginal art centre included Aboriginal ownership (Wright, 2000). Given the creation of most of the art centres before 2000, the majority are still Aboriginal owned. While this is accurate, it is not a strict limitation. As documented in *The Art and Craft Centre Story Volume 3: Good Stories from Out Bush* (Wright, 2000), the larger art centres also ran museums, tourism ventures and undertook sophisticated marketing and training projects often with public and private sector partners and funding.

Third, they produce a range of benefits for their employees, artists and communities, not just financial returns. Four, their intercultural role as mediators between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and priorities shapes their characteristics as institutions and creates a deal of tension in the position of the arts advisor or centre manager. Five, they are for the vast majority reliant on government support in order to operate, which comes from Federal sources in particular Federal funding through Department of the Arts (DOFTA) and a work for government subsidy¹¹ scheme. However, art centers will also seek funding from other sources. Now we turn to the case study to see the degree to which an Aboriginal cultural centre differs from an Aboriginal arts centre.

The case study: Gwoonwardu Mia Gascoyne aboriginal heritage and culture centre

Methods

The objective we pursue here is to determine the characteristics of an Aboriginal Cultural Centre's (ACC) establishment and activities, before determining if that centre can be distinguished from the Aboriginal Art centers, and if there are grounds for further study of ACCs. The cultural centre used as the case study is the Gwoonwardu Mia Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Culture Centre, located in Carnarvon in the Northwest of Western Australia. We came to an agreement with Gwoonwardu Mia's board and Indigenous Reference Group to assess its operations and social and cultural impacts in Carnarvon.

We began by examining existing documentation on Gwoonwardu Mia, including meeting minutes and planning documents. Second, we undertook 21 interviews with 23 respondents, people who were involved in Gwoonwardu Mia's activities. This covered people with a range of engagement including: board members, Indigenous Reference Group members, past and present employees, key people who were involved at the beginning of establishing Gwoonwardu Mia artists, employees of the key funding body, and people involved with the training programs. This included 15 Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal people, all of who were or are involved in Gwoonwardu Mia. Respondents received a fact sheet, gave written consent to participate, had the goals of the research clearly explained to them, and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. All respondents received copies of the transcript of their interview to verify its accuracy. One respondent chose to withdraw her interview on reviewing the transcript.

The interviews were semi-structured and based around an interview schedule. The interview schedule included two categories of questions: questions about the establishment of Gwoonwardu Mia; and questions on its social and cultural impacts including its current, planned and potential roles and activities. Interviews were recorded, and ranged in length from 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

Background

The history of Gwoonwardu Mia is the history of the Aboriginal people who live in the Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia (Tindale, 1974).¹⁴ The five language groups whose cultures are now presented in Gwoonwardu Mia are the Inggarda, Baiyungu, Talanji, Thudgarri and Mulgana. The Inggarda language group is widely accepted as the custodians for the land that includes Carnarvon, which has ongoing implications for Gwoonwardu Mia and language group politics in Carnarvon.

Carnarvon is located 904 kilometres north of Perth, the capital of the state of Western Australia, on the river mouth of the subterranean (except in times of flood) Gascoyne River. Carnarvon has suffered from the declining returns from primary industries since the 1970s, with many in the town still employed in agriculture (primarily horticulture) and fishing. The largest economic shift has been the increasing importance of the tourism industry. For the year ending September 2008, there were 179 352 tourists to the shires of Carnarvon and Exmouth with an estimated expenditure of \$141 million (Jones et al., 2011), making tourism the dominant economic activity. The primary attractions of the region as a whole are related to the Ningaloo reef, beautiful coastline and beaches, attracting a high proportion (25.3%) of

international visitors (Jones, Hughes, Wood, Lewis, & Chandler, 2009). The town of Carnarvon does not have easy access to either Ningaloo Reef or an iconic beach. However, all visitors driving from Perth to the region and beyond must travel through Carnarvon as it is located on the only major coastal highway, and it sits between the Shark Bay and Ningaloo Coast world heritage areas.

Regional development initiatives have been important for both Carnarvon and Gwoonwardu Mia. The Liberal-National conservative government introduced a development commissions initiative in 1993 as a response to effects from the deregulation of parts of the Australian economy in the 1980s, and due to the influence of the National Party leader Hendy Cowan, who was also the Minister for Commerce and Trade and Deputy Premier (Glasson, Jennings, & Wood, 1997). The purpose of the RDCs can be broadly summarized as stimulating regional employment, investment, coordination and development (Glasson, et al., 1997). The Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC) is one of nine RDCs in Western Australia. The introduction of the Royalties for Regions funding scheme following the 2008 elections also strengthened the position of the GDC as it administrated the scheme in the region.^v The *Gascoyne Regional Development Plan 2010-2020* (Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC), 2010), developed by the GDC and the region's four Shires, underlines the GDC's role in coordinating and stimulating economic development. "Positive outcomes for Indigenous people" is one of 19 priorities for the region. Gwoonwardu Mia is mentioned specifically as an organization that connects Aboriginal residents with tourism and training.

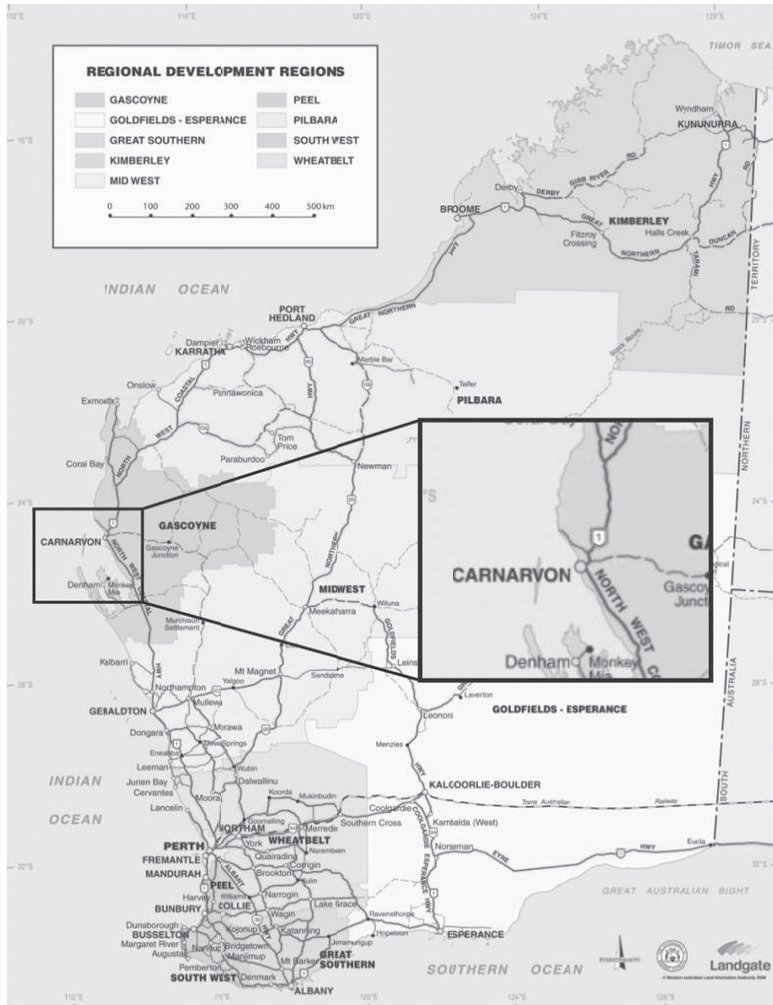


Figure 1. The regional development regions of Western Australia with Carnarvon inset.

Gwoonwardu Mia

The idea for Gwoonwardu Mia began in the early 1990s with a group of Aboriginal elders who later formed the Gnulli Group of native title claimants, and discussions with the Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC) who were charged with assisting Aboriginal economic development. Kieran Kinsella, the first CEO of the GDC, had previously worked in acquisition of pastoral lands for Indigenous groups. In his interview, he described a meeting where the elders met with Minister for Commerce and Trade, Hendy Cowan:

[We] had Hendy Cowan coming to town for another matter, but we had that meeting. [...] We had lunch around the board table. Hendy was there and he just sat and listened to them. One by one they got confidence. They ended up going on the white board and one guy started by drawing his country, then they all followed suit. At the end of it, maybe it was an hour and a half after lunch they all had fun. Hendy treated them with great respect, and they all left, and Hendy turned to me and said you can have whatever money you need to get this going. So we got \$50 000 out of Hendy, and we employed some consultants to work with us and the steering committee to develop a brief for what should be in the centre, what's all happened. (Interview P22, 7 November 2011)

Through native title negotiations over a new estate in Carnarvon, a Land Use Agreement was put in place that provided the land for an Aboriginal cultural centre, \$4.7 million in funding for building and running costs for 3 years, and an Aboriginal Economic Development Officer who was employed through the GDC beginning in 1997. These developments indicate the importance of both shifts in regional development, and the influence of native title in providing access and funding to Aboriginal custodians for cultural projects. The officer, Rowena Mitchell, and a group of people through steering committees and then an Aboriginal Corporation called Piyarli Yardi created in 2001, spoke to numerous groups, designed the building, and saw it constructed. However, two sets of conflicts prevented Piyarli Yardi from opening the building in 2005 when it was completed and ultimately delayed its opening until 2009.

The first was within the Indigenous community, where Inggarda elders and other groups felt disenfranchised from the process of creating a cultural centre. A number of interviews indicated Carnarvon has been the location of other organizations that have been captured by family interests. The second conflict was between Piyarli Yardi and the GDC, particularly after the appointment of a new CEO who had little experience in Aboriginal issues. This led to the resignation of Rowena Mitchell (Interview C19, 2 August 2011) and PYAC writing to the responsible Minister, Tom Stephens, stating their intention to end all business relations with the GDC. Attempts were made in 2004 and 2005 to reconcile the groups.^{vi} In 2005 the new Minister for the Gascoyne, Jon Ford, assumed responsibility for the cultural centre and introduced a new management structure that is still in place. The Board consists of three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal members, and a Reference group of 15 Aboriginal representatives, three from each language group, advises the board. Kieran Kinsella was appointed by the Minister as the Chair, along with three Aboriginal elders, the Shire's CEO and a well-respected local non-Aboriginal businessman. While the Board has been very engaged, the reference group has a small number of committed members. The Board and Reference Group changed the name to Gwoonwardu Mia, which means Carnarvon, or the place where two waters meet (Interview C7, 28 July 2011).

The objects of association, largely taken from Piyarli Yardi, are very broad, but still provide the basis of the vision of the centre:

To establish "a common meeting place for the people of the Gascoyne Region where lives are enriched, Aboriginal culture is recognized and practiced, quality employment and business enterprises operate and where youth are actively engaged in creating their own future." (Gwoonwardu Mia Gascoyne Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2009)^{vii}

The more focused "Core Activities" (see Table 1) from the 2009-2010 strategic plan indicate the priority areas for the centre, and provide a means of assessing what has been achieved since its opening. The goal of being a "meeting place" is achieved through the success of the other functions and its place in the Carnarvon community.

Table 1. Table 1: Core activities from Gwoonwardu Mia Strategic Plan 2009-2010

1	Meeting Place
2	Conference / Function facility
3	Outdoor Performance area
4	Café
5	Business Incubators
6	Retail/Gallery Shop
7	Artist in Residence Space and Display area
8	Major Gallery – permanent Interpretive exhibition
9	3D audio visual Gallery
10	Ethnobotanical Gardens

Conference/function facility (1) and outdoor performance area (2) have been functioning since 2009. The first Centre Manager, Lorraine Hayden, oversaw a high-quality fit out with the most advanced

meeting facilities in Carnarvon. The outdoor space consists of a large grass area, surrounded by small gardens and a high thatch fence, and has a stage. The outdoor space is free for Aboriginal groups out of hours, and the conference facilities has hire rates due to the costs incurred in cleaning and maintenance. Gwoonwardu Mia is not open when there are large events out of hours due to the staffing levels required and costs incurred. However, this works well in that the interior space is not suited to large numbers, and the outdoor space is robust. Events and meetings are essential for attracting people to Gwoonwardu Mia, but in different ways. Events were often commented on for the variety of people they attracted:

The outdoor space seems to be essential as well. That's another space where you get this interaction between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people (Interview C21, 2 August 2011)

Meetings raise Gwoonwardu Mia's profile and are a revenue stream:

It's beginning to be a focal point for the whole of Carnarvon. People now tend to use the CC because of the state of the art meeting rooms. Sometimes they have a couple of hundred people at a meeting. Not just Aboriginal people, government, pastoral, Ministers often visit there and have their meetings. (Interview C17, 2 August 2011)

Hence the building design, staffing issues and quality of the fit out have combined to shape the use of the space. Staff have also assisted in generating Aboriginal activities, particularly events. An Aboriginal lady who coordinated an event stated:

I will say they opened that whole centre up to NAIDOC and they allowed me to do NAIDOC two years in a row without paying one cent. And when I did get funding, Justine [the Centre Manager] was there to acquit the money for me. It went straight into the CC account and Justine did that. (Interview C11, 30/7/11).

An important element to remember is that the assessment took place in 2011, less than three years after Gwoonwardu Mia opened and before all of its infrastructure and staff training had been completed. Hence these facilities, and the other elements assessed below, were not at their full capacity.

Gwoonwardu Mia incorporates a café (4), which is open from 10.30am to 3.30pm (the same opening hours as the shop). The cafe opened in the first year and two chefs were contracted to run it and provide training to Aboriginal employees. The quality of the food was very high and it immediately attracted a following and made Gwoonwardu Mia the location of the Durack Institute of Technology's hospitality training for young Aboriginal people. While the original couple left Carnarvon after attempting to open a training restaurant, an ongoing relationship has been formed with Durack to continue the training and Gwoonwardu Mia have taken over operation of the cafe. Training is now provided by the company of celebrity chef Don Hansie, with Durack providing the training certification. The cafe is also the first restaurant in Carnarvon to attract large numbers of Aboriginals, and one of the only venues where Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals eat together.

I love going down there and seeing the cafe with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in there. There's local Aboriginal people having lunch, there's the tourists, there might be a table of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people having lunch together. That always gladdens my heart. You don't see that in very many places to be honest, even places that have large Aboriginal populations. That's what the cultural centre should be about. (Interview C21, 2 August 2011)

Aboriginal trainees have gone on to work in other food venues in Carnarvon.

Gwoonwardu Mia has also led to an Aboriginal art revival in Carnarvon. While the Artist in Residence program is the relevant activity (7), the facilities that relate to artists include sourcing work and assisting with pricing, running a gallery shop (6), and assisting with artists' administration. The influence of Gwoonwardu Mia is perhaps best captured by their role with the Jillinbirri Weavers, a group of three Aboriginal women who weave a variety of different objects. The Weavers began working in a community house first with Karen Collins, then with an Arts Development Officer, Sarah Trant. When Sarah left Carnarvon, the Weavers became the first artists in residence at Gwoonwardu Mia, and one of the Weavers, Toni Roe, received funding from Gwoonwardu Mia and the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA) to work full-time in Gwoonwardu Mia facilitating the Weavers' activities. This now includes entering numerous competitions, trips to New Zealand and Alice Springs for conferences, an artist in residence program in Albany and running a weaving workshop in Geraldton. The administration for the weavers was managed through Gwoonwardu Mia. Gwoonwardu Mia was also the location of the Carnarvon Arts Show in 2010, which had a large Aboriginal contingent, and the top prize was won by Gwoonwardu Mia affiliated Aboriginal artist Ruby MacIntosh. Three artists were located through Gwoonwardu Mia and invited to exhibit and participate in the Revealed Exhibition held in conjunction with CHOGM in Perth, 2011. Aboriginal artists have benefitted from the encouragement and the presence of an outlet for their work. Two artists stated that previously the art had been 'stacked up' in their bedrooms and that Gwoonwardu Mia was an appropriate place for their work. The venue itself caters primarily for tourist art, and that is what sells. It generates supplementary income for artists:

You don't make that much but if you're thinking OK my rates are coming up soon, it's going to cost me \$600. If I make half a dozen sets of beads, then that money I can put aside, and when the rates do come up, I have money set aside without having to go into my pension. (Interview C6 27 July 2011).

This success has occurred without any formal training programs for artists, or even a dedicated space for them to practice. The Artist in Residency program has been limited by the absence of artists studios. While the weavers were quite flexible in their practice, another artist in residence found the space difficult to use:

It's a nice atmosphere but it's too professional here. It's a workplace you know. I go home and everything is on the floor. You know what I mean? If I could just chuck my paint on the floor and sit down, I'd be right, but it's too professional here. I feel like I can't make a mess, and I always want to just run amok. (Interview C8, 29 July 2011)

The Board and management have responded to this situation by sourcing the designs for men and women's artist studios and are in the process of applying for funding. This would include a position that operates more like an Arts Adviser in an Arts Centre.

Plans for the two galleries (8 and 9) are underway and the permanent Aboriginal Heritage display in the main gallery should be open by June 2012. Funded by Lotteries WA, heritage research has been undertaken by Maryanne Albrook and Malcolm Jebb, and has been described by one elder as "a history in our words" (Interview C7, 28 July 2011). Members of the Board and Reference Group are very excited about the display, and anticipate that it will address the wishes of one of the original men who spoke to Hendy Cowan, to have a place where his children and grandchildren could learn about "where they fit in the universe and the Aboriginal global universe" (Interview C21, 2 August 2011). The ethnobotanical gardens (10) are being developed in conjunction with well-known gardening expert and commentator Sabrina Hahn. The Business Incubators (5) consist of two computers and carrels located in the Gallery Shop. While there have been close calls, they have not been taken up for use by an Aboriginal start-up. The Board has rejected other offers for use from existing organizations.

Employment and training in the Centre has been facilitated by funding from the Indigenous Coordination Centre (ICC) to train Aboriginal staff. This has enabled Gwoonwardu Mia to employ six people on a part time basis for four years, facilitating the creation of individual training plans for staff. Gwoonwardu Mia has been quite successful compared to other training providers in retaining staff, and staff have gone on to full time work with other businesses. However, working with people who have not generally previously had long-term employment creates staffing difficulties for the Centre Manager. There is flexibility for staff when managing family issues and an emphasis on communication. The Centre Manager position is also quite stressful and demands high levels of cross cultural understanding and communication, and high-level administrative skills. Staff also commented on the opportunities that working at Gwoonwardu Mia provides for cultural learning.

Funding for Gwoonwardu Mia has been from a variety of sources, many of them coordinated through the GDC. The original \$4.7 million was insufficient due to cost increases caused by delays in the project, and the original model was predicated on the existence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the peak Indigenous body that was disbanded in 2005. The Chair of the Board stated:

[As] it came down it got more expensive. Rather than get more money, they started to chop stuff off it. It was chop the landscaping, chop the fit out. So here you were, the most vulnerable group, you were setting them up to fail. We proved that it was \$1.8 million dollars. The first thing that I sat down was to say to get the place to work will be to get the centre open. Let's say it was \$2 million short, and if not for Royalties for Region, we would be a long way short of where we are. (Interview P22, 7 November 2011)

Money has been sourced for the fit out (Regional Development Scheme), business incubation pods and office and IT equipment (Lotteries West), the landscaping (Department for Local Government and Regional Development) and establishing the permanent heritage display (Lotteries West and Royalties for Regions). The ICC funding for staffing is also substantial. The Centre Manager is employed through the GDC, which provides a sufficient guarantee to attract quality applicants. Income streams are derived from the core activities, and will increase over time, particularly once the permanent exhibition is established. There was broad agreement amongst respondents that it was unrealistic to expect a Cultural Centre like Gwoonwardu Mia to cover its costs. The business case for Gwoonwardu Mia relies on tourism to generate revenue and broader regional returns, which also links with the place of Gwoonwardu Mia in GDC plans to connect Aboriginals to tourism and training in services (Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC), 2010).

The presence of Gwoonwardu Mia has influenced the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Carnarvon in four key ways. First, it is a "cultural place" where Aboriginal culture, heritage and traditions are respected. One of the Aboriginal board members stated:

The involvement of the local traditional people on the ground has to be a very integral part of its whole functionality. Lose that, I think you start to lose site of the cultural aspects of the centre, of a building like that. You would never want to lose that and forget about those sort of people. It's the authority, it's the heartbeat, it's the bloodline of information that people want to know about. Whilst these other things can be part of it, that I think is crucial to its whole being. (Interview C17, 2 August 2011)

Gwoonwardu Mia is a place where cultural knowledge was discussed, imparted to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents, and where tourists felt able to ask about Aboriginal connections and perspectives. Hence it is not a place in its current configuration where transfer of cultural knowledge

between Aboriginal generations is programmed, but it functions to encourage such transfers by continuing a value shift towards culture within Aboriginal communities. Second, its establishment caused friction within the Aboriginal community. There is much talk of reconciling the different groups so that the community could be united in support of the centre, particularly amongst Board members, and some of those people are now using Gwoonwardu Mia for meetings and events. Third, it has been a place where non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people form relationships, particularly around events, meetings and the cafe. Perspectives from the non-Aboriginal community were initially negative due to the length of time the building was not used. However, opinions turned around quickly following the opening and the "big first year" (Interview C13, 1 August 2011), including a number of people dropping artifacts they had at home into Gwoonwardu Mia. Finally, it has created two new positions in Carnarvon linking Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people for positive local outcomes. It has linked creative and capable Centre Managers with Aboriginal people who are undertaking cultural and other initiatives. It has also created an informal cultural interpreter and custodian position within Gwoonwardu Mia for an Inggarda person. This person, who recently passed away, became a facilitator for Aboriginal people through her invitation to use the Centre, and a range of non-Aboriginal people. The current Centre Manager said of her:

She is a remarkable individual, no question. She does that with people across the board, so absolutely with other language groups in that comfort in being welcomed to the centre. She does it with tourists, she does it with government. (Interview C13, 1 August 2011)

The picture that emerges from this description is a functioning cultural centre in its establishment phase that is dealing with politics within the Aboriginal community it serves.

Comparing Gwoonwardu Mia and the Arts Centres: is this a second wave?

Gwoonwardu Mia differs from Aboriginal Art centers in a number of ways. First, it is not an Aboriginal corporation and the Board is not entirely Aboriginal. Instead, it has a mixed model and incorporates a reference group. This reflects a broader change away from Aboriginal self-determination in policy to self-responsibility. However, the attempt at a structure that was entirely Aboriginal and the history of capture in Carnarvon should be acknowledged, as well as the success of the mixed-model. While these models do entail less control, they can help address problems of partiality when family groups become involved in corporate governance. Second, Gwoonwardu Mia's design and spread of activity indicates that the production of art and craft is not its primary activity. Assisting artists and providing an outlet for local Aboriginal art is one of its activities. Its primary function as a "meeting place" is fulfilled primarily through its provision of high quality spaces and services run by Aboriginal staff for hospitality, events and functions. Gwoonwardu Mia provides a range of benefits for the Indigenous community in the form of training, administrative assistance and resources. It probably does not function as a 'place of respite' to the extent of the Art centers in remote communities, probably because other institutions fulfil this function in Carnarvon. As cultural centres are more likely to be located in larger locations that are tourist destinations or on tourist routes, they are less likely to provide social services and more likely to generate benefits through bridging social divides (bridging social capital). Both are focused on cultural and identity maintenance through their activities. Gwoonwardu Mia does have a strong "intercultural" role through the way it trains Aboriginals in providing high quality services. Like the Art centers, the Centre Manager absorbs much of the tension, in this case between the demands and pressures of Aboriginal life in Carnarvon and work demands. Finally, Gwoonwardu Mia is likely to continue to be reliant on state funding, but through different funding sources (the GDC and the ICC for staffing costs). It points towards a new alliance between regional development, arts and culture funding and Indigenous training services.

These structural and functional differences are linked to differences both within the Aboriginal community in Carnarvon and to the circumstances of its establishment in the 1990s. The elders who initiated the Cultural Centre expressed a desire for cultural and identity maintenance within Gwoonwardu Mia, which is also expressed within the functions of Art centers that are also cultural spaces. However, they also placed greater emphasis on enterprise creation and training. The building design facilitated cultural maintenance through exhibition and events spaces rather than arts practice, and the emphasis now is training Aboriginals to be employed in the services economy and facilitating cultural activities. The GDC is oriented towards regional development. It did introduce some of the elements that assisted the emergence of the art centers, most notably entrepreneurial staff who were able to facilitate a cultural initiative of a group of elders. To place this in a larger shift in regional Australia, the GDC has assisted Gwoonwardu Mia as a cultural organization that links Aboriginals into the post-industrial shift in thriving regional communities towards services, particularly to tourists.

Gwoonwardu Mia is an example of an Aboriginal cultural organization that provides a range of services to visitors, leveraging Aboriginal culture to provide employment and training while also being a place for culture and identity maintenance. The final question we address here is to briefly canvas if there are a number of similar Aboriginal cultural centers in Australia. A report in 2009 reviewed three ACCs in Western Australia and five in the rest of Australia (Centre for Aboriginal Studies, 2009). However, this was not a comprehensive report. A desktop survey completed for this study located 35 cultural centers across Australia who undertook a range of activities encompassing those undertaken by Gwoonwardu Mia and also including tourist accommodation, cultural awareness training, cultural tours, and dance performances, and use a variety of models including working with local government and a private commercial operation.

Across Australia, including in the Torres Strait, alliances between different parts and scales of government and the keepers of culture in Aboriginal communities have built larger Indigenous cultural institutions without coordination or formal communication between the regions. This most likely links to shifts in attitudes in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, native title rulings in 1992 (Mabo) and 1996 (Wik) that provided a resource and negotiation base for Aboriginal custodians across Australia, and shifting planning and funding priorities and approaches as the regional level. The creation of these institutions has largely gone unnoticed in Australia where research has focussed at the industry level (such as fine arts (Altman, 2007) or music (C. Gibson & Connell, 2004)) or on policies (such as the upcoming national cultural policy). However, the regional level is sufficiently contained that Aboriginal language groups can still organise effectively and sufficiently large for substantial sums of money to be available. A comprehensive Australia-wide survey would provide a more detailed picture of the accommodations that have taken place at the regional scale, and would clarify the early conclusions drawn here about what is exciting occurrences: the development of large scale regional cultural institutions where custodians and advocates of Aboriginal culture have achieved access to the resources and expertise to create spaces at the cutting edge of architecture, heritage display and community facilitation.

The authors would like to acknowledge the time and access that was given to them by the Gwoonwardu Mia staff, patrons, board and reference group and the contribution of other key people who had made contributions to the development of an Aboriginal cultural centre in Carnarvon. The work was made possible through a Curtin Targeted Fellowship provided to Tod Jones by Curtin University.

Endnotes

ⁱ Most recently, increasing the supply of labour, skills and Indigenous participation was a key plank of the *National Long Term Tourism Strategy*.

ⁱⁱ A recent report into Australian Aboriginal art centres based on Aboriginal corporation reporting indicates that those centres (not all art centres are Aboriginal corporations) have seen their art sale revenue decline between 2007 and 2011 by 52.1 percent (Australian Government Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, 2012). However, it should be noted that 2007 was an extremely strong year for Aboriginal art sales, representing the peak of a number of years of growth.

ⁱⁱⁱ CDEP

^{iv} The Yamatji region overlaps with the Gascoyne region, which is the settler name for the area covering the Shires of Shark Bay, Carnarvon, Exmouth and Upper Gascoyne, approximately 700 Kilometres north of the capital city of Perth.

^v The Royalties for Regions scheme was an initiative of the Western Australian National Party, which held the balance of power following the 2008 election. It aims to return 25 percent of the State's mining and petroleum royalties to regional areas.

^{vi} This included a meeting facilitated by Fred Chaney in November 2005.

^{vii} The quotations are in the original, indicating its basis in the Objects of Association.

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