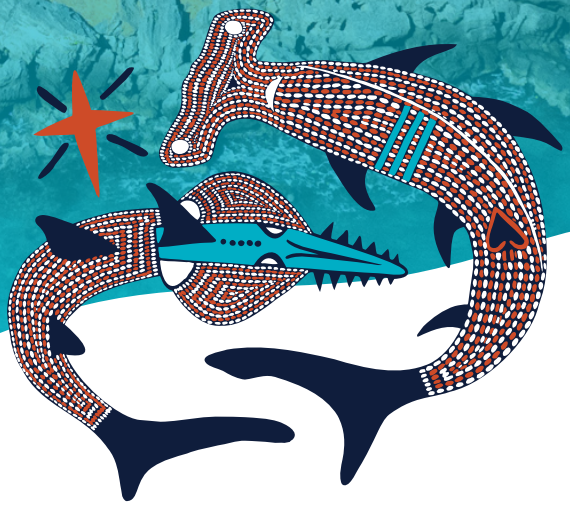
Anindilyakwa
Land Council

Stories from Groote

Edition 12
16 May 2025



Message from the CEO

It is a pleasure and a great responsibility to join the ALC as Chief Executive Officer, having commenced in the role on 29 April 2025.

In that short period, the Board and I have hit the ground running. In my first meeting with the Chairperson, we immediately prioritised strengthening our connection with the community and Traditional Owners. As a key step, we decided to conduct an ALC-led community meeting and BBQ in Angurugu to clearly articulate our renewed commitment. The central message is that Traditional Owners and clan members will experience a more accountable and transparent organisation moving forward.

The feedback from the community following this initial engagement has been encouraging, with many expressing that the ALC is finally going in the right direction. As one Board member aptly stated to me, “we have to keep things rolling.”

Building on this initial engagement, we will be visiting and conducting community meetings at Umbakumba and Bickerton Island in the near future. Furthermore, we are actively setting a schedule to meet with representatives from all 14 clan groups to allow me to personally introduce myself, listen to your specific priorities, and discuss how the ALC can best serve your needs.

This month, our ALC team’s participation in the third international conference on Machado-Joseph Disease (MJD) in Darwin highlights our commitment to supporting ground-breaking research, improving treatments, and enhancing the lives of those living with the disease within our community. Sharing culturally safe best practices alongside scientific advancements is a vital part of our support.

In this edition of ‘Stories from Groote,’ we offer insights into our very first Data Unit Strategic Plan, showcase the impactful work of Anindilyakwa artists through the ALC’s art program, and provide a deeper understanding of how our community support program is fostering a thriving Archipelago.

Your feedback and stories are always welcome. Please feel free to reach out directly at corporate.media@alcnt.com.au

Matthew Bonson, CEO

Subscribe now



Angurugu Community Meeting | Photo by: Britten Syd Andrew

Our Commitment to Community and Traditional Owners

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

CEO Matthew Bonson said the recent Angurugu community gathering was an important opportunity to meet with community members.



"The Board and I had the privilege of meeting with many community members. This was invaluable in introducing myself, outlining the ALC's key upcoming activities, and most importantly, listening to your aspirations and concerns. It was also wonderful to meet the dedicated staff at the ALC who are driven by this community vision," Mr Bonson said.

"It was also wonderful to meet the dedicated staff at the ALC who are driven by this community vision. My primary focus as CEO is to serve the best interests of the Traditional Owners," he said.

"Working closely with the Board, I am committed to advancing the strategic priorities, being a strong advocate for Traditional Owners, and shaping a sustainable post-mining future for the Groote Archipelago."

Mr Bonson said he will be focusing on accountability and transparency in his new role.

Accountability: Ensuring the ALC operates with clear lines of responsibility, where decisions and actions are transparently communicated and can be effectively scrutinised by Traditional Owners. We are committed to establishing mechanisms for regular reporting and feedback to the community on our progress against strategic goals and the management of ALC resources.

Transparency: Fostering open communication about the ALC's operations, financial management, and decision-making processes. This includes providing accessible information about projects, partnerships, and how the ALC is advocating for the rights and interests of Traditional Owners. Our aim is to build trust through clear and consistent information sharing.

"I acknowledge the significant work already undertaken by the ALC Board and look forward to building upon this foundation to realise their future aspirations, always with the community at the forefront," Mr Bonson said.









Angurugu community gathering | Photo by: Britten Syd Andrew

Data Unit Strategic Plan launches to support Anindilyakwa Decision-Making

Invest in the present to build a self-sufficient future

The ALC is taking the lead in First Nations applied data governance and sovereignty. As the first land council in Australia to have its own data unit, it is now launching a Data Unit Strategic Plan.The 2025-2028 Plan is an Anindilyakwa road map to applied data governance and sovereignty. It will provide the Anindilyakwa community with access to and control over information about their community and their country to support evidence-based decision-making and plan for a better future.

It takes direction from the ALC Board and works collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, including the Australian National University. The Data Unit works alongside some of Australia's leading statisticians and demographers at the ANU's School of Demography, Fenner School of Environment and Society, and First Nation's Portfolio to ensure that it follows best practices in population data analysis and geospatial and environmental data acquisition and analysis.

ALC Chair Cherelle Wurrawilya said with better access to information about Anindilyakwa health, housing, education, community justice and our country, the ALC will be better placed to plan for a brighter future on the Groote Archipelago.

"For a long time, us Anindilyakwa people, like many First Nations groups, have struggled to have access data about ourselves. This is why in 2023 we took the step to be the first land council in Australia to have our own data unit, responsible for driving our effort to take control over the information about us and our country," Ms Wurrawilya said.



"I am proud that since this program has started, this Data Unit has been driven by young Anindilyakwa people who are gaining important skills for their future careers and is guided by an ALC board who work closely with the program to ensure its success."

"Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of all information the Data Unit holds is our top priority. It is important that as we pursue our goal of collecting and managing longitudinal linked data concerning individual outcomes on the Groote Archipelago, we maintain best practice in data security and safety."

As part of the goals, the Strategic Plan aims to establish and operate a comprehensive Community Information System for all Local Decision-Making bodies, with a first annual Anindilyakwa population census to underpin this database taking place in June this year.



The Data Unit team at work | Photo by: Britten Syd Andrew

Dadikwakwa-kwa shell dolls teaches history through play

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

Anindilyakwa artists are changing the way the history of First Nations people is told, by creating 12 Dadikwakwa-kwa shell dolls to give to the Manchester Museum for children to play with.

As part of the ALC's Art program, artists have designed the unique Dadikwakwa-kwa for children to play with and appreciate Anindilyakwa culture.

In workshops over the Easter holidays, visitors signed up to play with the newly created Dadikwakwa-kwa in sand at the Manchester Museum.

The Dadikwakwa-kwa Come Out to Play workshop comes after 174 Anindilyakwa cultural items were returned to Groote Eylandt in 2023 as part of a landmark repatriation project. The project was a collaboration between Manchester University, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the ALC.

The Dadikwakwa-kwa were traditionally used to teach kinship, literacy, numeracy and women's health. They are considered living entities, carrying the spirits of ancestors and guiding those who interact with them.

The impact of Dadikwakwa-kwa is a living example of culture and it has started important discussions on maintaining intergenerational teaching practices and how traditional cultural items can influence contemporary art practices and vice versa.

Anindilyakwa Arts and Culture Officer, Artist and Emerging Leader Maicie Lalara said the original 70-year-old Dadikwakwa-kwa collection has inspired Anindilyakwa Arts to carry on the tradition.

"Seeing the photos and hearing the old ladies talk about the dolls inspired the doll shell project. We follow the old ways, weaving like the ladies using the string to make clothes for the dolls. We don't want to lose our culture, and we want to share our knowledge to the world," Ms Lalara said.

"By giving 12 hand-made dadikwakwa-kwa crafted by Anindilyakwa artists to Manchester Museum we are sharing culture and history not behind glass but in our own way where everyone benefits," she said.



Chair Cherelle Wurrawilya said the relationship between Manchester Museum and the Anindilyakwa community is history-making.

"Dadikwakwa-kwa doll shells are unique practice to the Anindilyakwa women of the archipelago and each tiny doll represents our culture," Ms Wurrawilya said.

"It is a proud moment for the ALC seeing our Art Program support Anindilyakwa artists who have specially created 12 new shell dolls for children to play with and understand and appreciate the unique culture on Groote Eylandt."

The dolls form part of a permanent exhibition, Anindilyakwa Arts: Stories from our Country (Alawudawarra yirri-langwa-langwa angalya), created in close collaboration with the community, breaking with historical conventions of telling Indigenous stories through colonial perspectives.



Dadikwakwa-kwa doll shells are unique to the Anindilyakwa women | Photo by: Britten Syd Andrew

Community Support Program Connects Anindilyakwa People

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

The Community Support Program is one way the ALC is ensuring Anindilyakwa people thrive in one of the most remote archipelego's of the Northern Territory.

The ALC's Community Support Service provides vital services to communities on Groote from electricity to aged care, medical assistance, dental, funerals, animal management, safety, youth, royalty cards and deductions – which are among the many activities included in the program.

The Community Support Program was an initiative started by the ALC Board in 2018 to strengthen social wellbeing and ensure Anindilyakwa people can live independently in their home while connecting them to community.

Under the directive of the ALC Board, two community-based offices in Angurugu and Umbakumba provide services to address the everyday needs of the community.

Chair Cherelle Wurrawilya said the Community Support Program supports the Board's objectives and vision to protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture.

"The program and delivery are in the best interests of our Traditional Owners. We have a diverse community on Groote, from Elders to youngsters, and it is important to offer services that respond to everyone's needs and priorities," Ms Wurrawilya said.



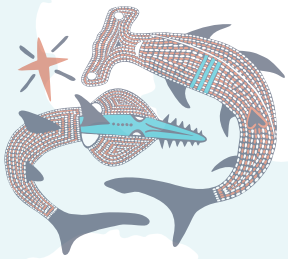
"Our program plays a key part in building community connection and providing services that helps the lives of Traditional Owners, every day. We are all part of the community, and we all need support, and the Community Support Program helps us meet the everyday needs of our people," she said.

"The services include helping people get to ceremony on and off the island, supporting the distribution of rent monies and at home care packages for the elderly".



The Community Support Program is vital for Anindilyakwa people | Photo by: Britten Syd Andrew

Our values



One People One Family
Ngarrurrakawuruma ngarnumamalya

Pride
Ngarriwerrikiyangmakwajinama

Honesty/Truth
Akuwerrikilyangmandukunadinama

Listen
Akeningmidini-yada

Respect
Akumaringkirradinama

Our Future
Ambakumurra-yada

The Strategic Plan 2023-33

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

Invest in the present to build a self-sufficient future

Create pathways for youth to stand in both worlds

Anindilyakwa Land Council

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