

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands

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Early History

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands also known as the AP Lands, includes land which was originally the North West Aboriginal Reserve (proclaimed in 1921) as well as a number of pastoral leases which were taken up in the 1930's. Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people (Anangu) have lived on these Lands for many generations and their beliefs and stories define their relationship with it. Traditional ownership has always been with Anangu even though pastoralists and others have owned the pastoral rights over the Lands. For many decades, relationships between pastoralists and Anangu had been strained due to misunderstandings over rights to land use.

During the 1970's, a desire began to emerge from within Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people to exercise practical ownership over parts of their Lands. This desire was expressed in a number of ways. Some people wanted to fence the boundaries of these lands for the two fold purpose of grazing cattle and defining areas of traditional responsibility. Others wanted to secure some kind of mining rights around their communities. This was a result of taking part in a trip to Munyarai, south of Mimili to ratify the protection of sacred sites in relationship to an application for an exploration lease by the Shell Oil Company (1974).

In June 1976, this desire for direct ownership of traditional lands culminated in a large gathering of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people at Amata. People openly discussed ownership of land and the result was to begin a dialogue with the South Australian Government, which clearly established the need for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people to own the title to their Lands.

The Anangu who met at Amata decided to meet again and this forum became known as the Pitjantjatjara Council. As the months passed the council expanded to include related communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. During the late 1970's, the possibility of gaining land title for the South Australian Lands looked very promising. Resource people were employed to facilitate the process of gaining "Land Rights" and this led to the establishment of the Alice Springs based Pitjantjatjara Council Resource Centre (1979).

Land Title for the South Australian Lands

During the late 1970's, negotiations for land title continued with the Labour Government in South Australia. Government leaders, including the Premier Don Dunstan, visited the Lands to hear first hand the desire of the people to own their land. Expectations were high until the election of a Liberal Government in November 1979. It was thought that a

new conservative government wouldn't favour the radical idea of Aboriginal people owning their land. Negotiations continued with the new government and it was decided to convene a Pitjantjatjara Council meeting in Adelaide (February 1980). Two bus loads of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people travelled from the Lands and camped at Victoria Park Race Course in the eastern park lands. The Premier David Tonkin, was invited to attend this meeting and hear the desire of the people to be recognised as the owners of their Lands.

As a result the Premier arranged to meet with the Pitjantjatjara Council executive and establish a new negotiating process. Within fourteen months a bill was passed in parliament, which granted Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people title for their Lands. The title was handed over to the people by the Premier in the creek at Itjinpiri 5-6 kilometres north of Ernabella on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands (November 1981).

Negotiating the Anangu Pitjantjatjara (AP) Land Title

During the period of negotiation, advisors and Aboriginal people worked hard to establish a land title with strong powers. Pitjantjatjaras and Yankunytjatjaras wanted control over those entering their Lands. They also wanted control over mining activities and the right to negotiate with mining companies. Many issues had to be ratified before agreement could be reached between Pitjantjatjaras, Yankunytjatjaras and the government. Pitjantjatjara Council and its advisors became very experienced in resolving difficult issues. The Pitjantjatjara Council executive worked continually with traditional owners seeking their consensus at open forum meetings before conveying important decisions to the government in Adelaide.

As time passed it was necessary to decide on a name for the new "Land Title" which would be representative of all people on the Lands. Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people discussed a number of options and finally decided on the words "Anangu Pitjantjatjara". As the executive continued negotiating with the government, it was becoming clear that a body would be needed to administer the new legislation. The responsibility of managing the requirements of the new title was beginning to emerge as a much greater task than creating the land title.

Administration of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Land Title

After gaining "Land Rights", it was necessary for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people to form a body to administer their land title. This body was named Anangu Pitjantjatjara or AP after the same name given to the land title. AP was difficult to fund initially, because the concept of Aboriginal people owning and administering their own Lands was quite new. Hence it was agreed that staff from the Pitjantjatjara Council Resource Centre in Alice Springs would operate the permit system for Anangu Pitjantjatjara. The council's lawyer and anthropologist would continue with the Pitjantjatjara Council executive to act on behalf of Anangu Pitjantjatjara and manage the negotiating process with mining companies. Gradually funds became available and a senior project advisor and secretary were employed, relieving the burden on the projects

section of the Resource Centre. The South Australian Government would have liked Anangu Pitjantjatjara's administration to be based in South Australia, however they were aware of the difficult financial climate that prevailed.

Once Anangu Pitjantjatjara was able to employ its own staff, they took over the permit system, which governed the entry of outsiders onto the Lands. The first major task the new organization had to address was to resolve the question of the consumption of alcohol on the Lands. There was much discussion and many people wanted a total ban over its use. Eventually this became law and the Lands became alcohol free. The organization was now fully immersed in the process of administering its Lands.

Restructuring of Councils.

After gaining land title for the South Australian Lands, the role of Pitjantjatjara Council on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands changed. The function of meeting together every two months to discuss land business was transferred to Anangu Pitjantjatjara. A similar situation occurred in Western Australia where the Ngaanyatjarra people had formed their own council. Pitjantjatjara Council was re-designed at the executive level with the executives of Anangu Pitjantjatjara and the Ngaanyatjarra Council acting as a joint executive of the Pitjantjatjara Council, thus avoiding duplication. Pitjantjatjara Council Resource Centre staff continued to serve the two new councils as well as homeland councils, organizations and communities under the umbrella of Pitjantjatjara Council.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands

Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people were single minded about re-locating their administration from the Resource Centre in Alice Springs to a location on the Lands. Finding a site became a very important issue and eventually everybody agreed to it being located at the geographical centre of the Lands. This decision was pursued vigorously and cost estimates were drafted for an office complex and associated housing to be built near Yurangka, which was a homeland on the Fregon to Amata road. Applications for funding were rejected on the grounds of the site being remote from the services of major communities, namely Amata, Fregon and Ernabella. Another reason was that road access to the site from major communities was subject to flooding after heavy rains, rendering it inaccessible for many months.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara then considered basing itself closer to one of the major communities. A site south of Amata and east of the old airstrip was considered, however this site may have conflicted with traditional sites in the area. Choosing a site near Fregon was an alternative, however there were real problems associated with relying on the services of power and water from this community.

The process of finding a suitable site took many years. Finally a site was chosen between Ernabella and Fregon on the southern side of the Musgrave Ranges and a few kilometers west of the main road. Advisors from the Projects section of Pitjantjatjara Council

surveyed the area for a suitable water supply and two successful bores were drilled in 1988.

In October 1988, the director of Anangu Pitjantjatjara with advisors from Projects and Land Management, selected the site at Umuwa to be developed as the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands. The site was originally called Pututja, however this conflicted with the name of a nearby homeland. Hence the name Pututja was replaced with Umuwa soon after the development began.

Functions of Anangu Pitjantjatjara

During the 1980's, the functions of Anangu Pitjantjatjara increased to keep in step with the requirements of the legislation. It assumed the ownership of all buildings and roads on the Lands and was successful in gaining finance to fund a building inspector to manage building issues and a roads crew to service the many roads on the Lands. These functions are presently part of AP Services and AP Roads. Anangu Pitjantjatjara was also responsible for looking after the Lands. Hence in the early 90's, after holding a series of workshops across the Lands, a Land Management Unit was started. None of the roles of Anangu Pitjantjatjara conflicted with the resources already supplied by Pitjantjatjara Council.

The purpose of moving the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office to the Lands was for Pitjantjatjara's and Yankunytjatjara's to have easy access to the body administering and servicing their Lands. It also made it easier for staff to perform their tasks on the Lands, hence the site at Umuwa was a good choice. Schooling as well as the store and medical services were available at Ernabella about 26 kilometers to the north.

Design Parameters

In concept, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands at Umuwa was to be a resource centre and not a community. Aboriginal directors and their staff would be based there, including the regional staff of the Nganampa Health Council. Once it became known that Anangu Pitjantjatjara was building a regional centre at Umuwa, many others including government departments were hoping to take up residence there, rather than in towns like Marla, which is off the Lands. It was essential that the functions of Anangu Pitjantjatjara not be diminished in any way. The centre was never designed to be large, because the AP administration and service divisions were created to serve Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities, rather than service a small township at Umuwa. Water resources were also limited as was the original power supply.

The design of the facilities at Umuwa provided an opportunity to use the best ideas resulting from many years of experience gained across the Lands. Some of these ideas were:

1. Roads.

- Crowning and surfacing of access roads, allowing use in all weather conditions.
- Access roads to Umuwa from the main road were built on high ground, avoiding low swampy areas.
- The approaches of the access roads were orientated so the dust produced from them, would be blown away from the complex and not infiltrate buildings and houses. This was a critical part of the design.
- Service roads to bores and the rubbish dump were kept to a minimum rather than allowed to proliferate across the countryside ruining the environment.
- All roads and buildings were built in relationship to existing vegetation.

2. Housing and Buildings.

- Appropriate sizes for house yards were used (minimum of 50 x 45 meters).
- Correct orientation of buildings for cooling was used.
- Buildings and houses were designed to meet UPK standards (Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku standards, Dec.1987).
- Houses and buildings were built above the ground (minimum of 45 cm) to eliminate the entry of dirt and dust from foot traffic and ground breezes as well as the entry of storm water.

3. Essential Services:

- The water reticulation system was designed and installed so it could be easily accessed for repairs, maintenance and extension.
- The tank site on the hill was chosen for ease of management as well as space for additional tanks.
- The power supply chosen was a diesel/battery system, which had a low noise impact on the residents. Power reticulation was underground thus retaining the ascetics of the environment.
- One of the two bores was equipped with a solar powered pump, thus reducing the need for servicing and usage of extra diesel fuel.

4. Land Use:

- The industrial and office areas were designed to be the first stopping points for visitors, because these were the most frequented areas. The housing area was designed to be behind the office and industrial areas, making it more private and separated from the more public areas.
- Good storm water and dust management programs were implemented.
- Good security and privacy areas were established for the housing area, the industrial complex and the office complex.
- Sufficient space for expansion was allowed within each development site as well as adjacent to the Umuwa complex.
- Good vegetation buffer zones were built into the overall complex.
- Appropriately sized car parks with relevant overflow areas.
- A site was designed at the 15 mile crossing on Ernabella creek for large meetings and overnight camping.
- All landscape work was designed as minimal care, providing a suitable working and living environment for Anangu and their staff. One of the goals of the work was to minimise the infiltration of dust into buildings and houses.
- A camping area was set aside in the valley west of Umuwa.

5. Industrial Area:

An industrial yard was also designed for Umuwa, which included a small shed for the power supply, storage areas including facilities for Pitjantjatjara Council Projects and a garage capable of servicing graders and road building machinery. If pressures on the garage increased beyond those created by the functions of Anangu Pitjantjatjara, a roadhouse was the planned solution. It was to be built on the main Ernabella to Fregon road and would supply a number of services like those supplied by the Ngaanyatjarra owned roadhouses on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. A roadhouse would be a separate entity and geographically separate from Umuwa, thus reducing the pressure on the Umuwa infrastructure.

Finance

Although finance had been difficult to obtain for the building of an Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) were aware of the effort made by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people to find the

best solution. In 1988/89, \$45,000 was made available for a water survey, which was conducted by Pitjantjatjara Council Projects.

The survey was successful and two bores drilled as a result. Hence in 1989/90, a further one million and fifty thousand dollars (\$1,050,000) was made available for the development of the Umuwa infrastructure. These funds were used to construct the road system and airstrip, install the essential services, build the office complex and the first staff two houses, build the garage and industrial complex, erect fencing and begin the landscaping. The first two houses were for the Anangu director and senior project advisor to Anangu Pitjantjatjara.

In 1990/91, further funding allowed the erection of three more houses for Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services and Roads staff. This included a house for the Anangu director of the section. Pitjantjatjara Council Projects invested further funds and constructed a large storage shed as well as upgrading their accommodation facilities.

In 1991/92, Nganampa Health Council was able to finance the building of their office complex adjacent to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara office. They also built two houses, one for their Anangu director and another for their senior project advisor.

In 1992/93, the supply of capital funding was slowing down, however finance was available to build an office complex to contain the expansion of Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services including AP Roads. The building site was pegged in the winter of 1992 and a building constructed in the spring of the same year. Office space was also made available for ATSIC staff and the legal and anthropology staff from Pitjantjatjara Council.

By now Umuwa had a reasonably large infrastructure and found itself busy administering the Lands, managing its Services and taking care of Health. Although the supply of capital funding had slowed down, Umuwa was still very much in need of an appropriate visitors complex.

In 1994/95, a large sum of money (\$400,000) became available to build an Anangu Pitjantjatjara Training Centre. This centre was built over the summer of 1994/95 (November to February). Many people would come to the Training Centre from across the Lands and stay for periods of one week or more. ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) in its wisdom funded the construction of a visitors complex, to meet the accommodation needs of the students.

More facilities have been built since and includes housing for Anangu Pitjantjatjara Land Management staff and others.

The Development

The site chosen for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office was a small grass plain surrounded by thick clumps of mulga (*Acacia aneura*), witchetty bush (*Acacia kempeana*), colony wattle (*Acacia murrayana*) and weeping emu bush (*eremophila longifolia*), with some cork woods (*Hakea eyreana*).

In January 1989, the process of pegging the office site, roads, house sites and the industrial site began. Care was taken to design the house yards, office area and industrial area within the available grass plain. The centre line of the development was at about 60 degrees east of north. The main access roads were pegged from the Ernabella to Fregon road while taking care to use the land to the best advantage and retain as much vegetation as possible. The prevailing winds were from the south east, so the access roads were pegged to the south and south west of the development.

In October of the same year, the bores were equipped to supply water for the roads crew as they began building the new road system for Umuwa. Equipment was stored on what was to become the industrial area and care was taken to create minimal disturbance during the road building process. Top soil and grass from the first cuts with the grader were loaded onto trucks and tipped in long windrows to protect areas that were to be preserved. The access roads were watered and sheeted with limestone providing an all weather access to Umuwa.

Due to the shortage of funds, the roads crew were happy to build the airstrip in their own time. After it was pegged, a road was cut with a grader around the perimeter and late in the afternoon the grass within this perimeter was burnt. This reduced the need to shift many tons of topsoil and grass from the landing area. Once the work was complete and the surface compacted following significant storms, the airstrip was ready for testing. In June 1990, aircraft were able to use the facility.

During the first half of 1990, fencing was erected around the house blocks and the industrial and office blocks. The water reticulation was installed, the storage tank built on the hill and construction of the office and the first two houses commenced. Although air conditioning was being installed, all houses and major buildings were orientated east/west to take advantage of natural cooling. Houses were also built with a front and rear veranda. Ablutions were built off the southern veranda in keeping with UPK standards.

As the year progressed, both the garage and the generator shed were built and the relevant equipment installed. The diesel/battery power supply unit was very effective until the development demanded a larger supply.

In 1991, the next three houses were constructed for Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services staff in the first half of the year. Construction began on the Nganampa Health office and their two staff houses in the second half of the year. The Pitjantjatjara Council Projects shed was erected and a tropical roof built over their two transportables.

Staff from Pitjantjatjara Council Projects, Land Management and Environmental Health (Nganampa Health Council) were heavily involved in co-ordinating the design and development of the infrastructure for Umuwa.

Landscaping

In May 1991, Land Management staff continued with landscaping the new facility.

1. The first area to be landscaped was the office complex. The new building was surrounded with soft topsoil, which became airborne and quickly found its way inside the building. Areas were paved around the edges of the building, and tree and shrub areas established, thus stabilizing the environment. Walkways were built and vehicle access to the front of the building was eliminated.

The areas where the outside amphitheatres were to be built were pegged and loose soil pushed up with the blade of the tractor to outline the basic shapes. Many loads of soil were required to build the amphitheatres. They were shaped and compacted using a tractor followed by the application of large volumes of water to stabilize them.

Areas around the office were surfaced with scalps to further reduce the dust problems. Boulders were used to establish the division between people and vehicle areas. People areas were important to establish around the building, because it was to function as a meeting place for representatives of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people. The car park needed to be close enough to the office for access yet far enough away leaving areas around the building for people to walk and congregate with comfort.

Large pine logs were used to mark out the car park and establish patterns of use. These areas needed to be surfaced with scalps, providing an all-weather, durable and inexpensive surface.

The first trees and shrubs were planted in September and October 1991, to provide shade areas around the office as well as screening around pit toilets. Semi private areas were created so people could sit outside while meetings were in progress in the easily accessible conference room nearby. A large barbecue was designed and built on the southern side of the conference room for both large and small functions. This was completed in time for Anangu Pitjantjatjara to entertain the Cabinet of the South Australian Government who scheduled a meeting at Umuwa in May 1993. This was the United Nations Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

2. In January 1992, the second area to be landscaped was the industrial paddock and the woodlots, which separated the housing area from the industrial and office areas. A double row of witchetty bush/ilykuwara (*Acacia kempeana*) was planted inside the industrial area as a screen between it and the office area. This shrub has produced a very effective screen.

The two woodlots were the same size (20 meters wide by 100 meters long). The woodlot between the industrial area and houses was planted with the short form of river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis-northern*), while the woodlot on the opposite side of the road between the office area and houses was planted with the regular form of river red gum/itara (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). A row of shrubs was planted as a screen in each woodlot.

During this period, a woodlot of mulga/kurku (*Acacia aneura*) was designed and planted between the office area and the main access road into Umuwa to control the effects of road dust drifting into the office complex. Two collection drains were installed in this area to harvest storm water to irrigate the mulga. Some years later, quandong/wayanu (*Santalum acuminatum*) were planted in this woodlot to grow in association with the mulga.

3. During 1992/93 landscaping work continued around Umuwa. All staff members living in houses were encouraged to fill their yards with trees and shrubs to contribute to the overall landscape at Umuwa. Most trees and shrubs used to re-afforest the development were local to Central Australia and were capable of surviving on the annual rainfall. Landscaping advice was given to all staff as well as materials, trees and shrubs.

In the spring of 1992, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services office building was erected adjacent to the Nganampa Health and Anangu Pitjantjatjara administration offices. Hence, in the autumn of 1993, it was possible to complete the landscaping around all buildings in the office area (100 meters by 100 meters), including the remaining two pit toilets.

4. A landcare program was initiated on the land areas adjacent to the Umuwa development. In January/February 1992, all unnecessary tracks and roads in these areas were ploughed and sown with acacia seed. Some of these tracks were becoming watercourses and damaging the landscape.

Relatives and friends were beginning to build their own bush tracks to the housing area, causing further erosion. Hence in March 1993, a ponding bank system was built between the houses and the hill on which the water storage tanks were located. These banks were designed to collect storm water and assist the revegetation of this area. Trees were planted along some of these banks and have become well established over the years. An essential part of the Umuwa design, was to include the management of these land areas.

This work included the surrounding rangelands where an effective patch burning program was required to manage the fuel (dry grass etc) which was produced after periods of good rainfall. Hot wildfires were a threat to all communities on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands and Umuwa was no exception.

5. During 1994, the concept of a major training complex materialised at Umuwa. For some years the Anangu Pitjantjatjara executive had been involved in discussions with various government agencies with the purpose of establishing a major training centre on the Lands. Pitjantjatjara Council Projects and Land Management were once again involved in locating the new centre and planning and supplying the essential services. This development was a major expansion to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands. Care was taken when locating the building, not to diminish the importance of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara office.

The building was very large and provided an excellent opportunity to develop a landscape, which blended in with earlier developments. The landscaping work began in April/May 1995 and provided an excellent opportunity for training Anangu in landscape

design and development. The much needed visitors quarters were built during the same building program and provided more landscaping opportunities.

Reflections

The establishment of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Office on the Lands has been a significant development in the lives of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people. Time and considerable planning was invested in the creation of this Anangu resource centre. Umuwa represents a partnership between many people who live both on and off the Lands. It is a facility, which symbolizes the ownership by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of their Land and primary functions required to manage it.

The secret to these primary functions remaining viable is contained in the original concepts established during the Land Rights era. These concepts include the consultation process developed to represent the ideas of Anangu who live across the Lands. An Anangu form of government became visible during Land Rights and this system needs to be continually re-visited, reinforced and recognized by all advisors and agencies who are involved with Anangu Pitjantjatjara. When the members of Anangu families become part of the decision making process across the Lands, a momentum begins to emerge. This momentum contains direction, determination and conviction, which enables the Anangu Pitjantjatjara executive to act on behalf of Anangu.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara needs to obtain the informed consensus of Anangu through effective communication on relevant issues, before it can act with strength on their behalf.

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