

**Pilbara Community
Services Excellence
Awards 2025**

FINALISTS



Pilbara for Purpose Inc

For Purpose. For Pilbara. For People.

ORGANISATION FINALISTS

Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation

Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation (AAC) is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting Aboriginal people across the Pilbara through employment, enterprise and holistic community development. They are one of Australia's largest providers of Remote Employment Service through the Community Development Program (CDP) and a leading force in culturally-responsive employment and support pathways. Their *Ready2Work – Health Sector Program*, designed through a deeply community-led, collaborative and creative process, is an innovative approach to bridging the gap between job seekers and the health industry, reflecting the strength of collaboration between AAC, local training providers, employers, and community partners. This tailored program targets job seekers who are disconnected from employment pathways and face systemic barriers to employment with essential skills, confidence, and practical experience to pursue careers in health care, while also meeting the growing demand for a local, work-ready workforce. The *Ready2Work – Health Sector Program* has shown that a human-first, culturally responsive, trauma-informed approach can achieve employment outcomes where conventional models have failed. It isn't just training. It is healing, empowerment and belonging.

AWARE

The AWARE group was established in 2021 by a dedicated group of parents of children with disability who recognised the urgent need for a collaborative, community-led approach to inclusion and support. AWARE is a grassroots initiative that has grown into a powerful support network across the community of Ashburton. AWARE has created a safe, welcoming and inclusive space: a hub where community members can connect, speak openly without fear of judgement, be heard and feel genuinely included. It is a place of belonging, learning and empowerment. Through community outreach and engagement; inclusive events and activities; collaborative partnerships; education and advocacy; peer support and connection; and community education and awareness, AWARE provides hope, connection, inclusivity and a strong sense of belonging.

Blue Beanie Projects

Blue Beanie Projects is grassroots, not-for-profit health promotion charity, which exists to reduce youth suicide and strengthen the wellbeing, resilience and social connection of young people aged 5-25. Guided by their motto "*The Spirit of Youth. Strong. Resilient. Empowered*" Blue Beanie Projects is a movement grounded in lived experience, driven by passion and committed to creating real change from the ground up. What makes Blue Beanie Projects different is not just the work it does—but how it does it. Every youth engagement, every mural, every fashion show, and every moment of grief support is built on presence, trust, and love. This is an organisation that refuses to give up on young people, even when they've given up on themselves. It meets them where they are—often quite literally—and offers belonging before solutions, relationship before referral, and hope before outcomes.

Gumala 3a Program

In 2011, Gumala Aboriginal Corporation developed a unique Early Childhood centre and learning program at the remote community of Wakuthuni in the Shire of Ashburton, thanks to an innovative partnership with the University of Melbourne and Tom Price Primary School. Since its inception, the *3a Early Learning program* has expanded across the Pilbara and now has centres in many towns and remote communities in the north-west including Wakuthuni, Karratha, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Tom Price, Wickham and South Hedland. Through the 3a Early Learning program Gumala aims to help close the educational gap in Aboriginal communities by supporting literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development. By investing in early support, the Gumala 3a program empowers Aboriginal children with the tools and confidence they need to thrive throughout their educational journey and beyond.

Headspace Pilbara

Headspace Pilbara is a youth-focused mental health service committed to creating safe, inclusive spaces for all young people. With a strong emphasis on diversity, the team actively champions inclusion for LGBTQIA+ youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and those in remote areas. Through youth-led initiatives, culturally responsive outreach, and affirming programs like Pride Month celebrations, Headspace Pilbara empowers young people to feel seen, supported, and valued, making a lasting impact on the wellbeing and inclusivity of the Pilbara region. By embedding principles of cultural security, equity and inclusion into all aspects of their work, Headspace Pilbara has become a trusted service and genuine empowerment for young people across the region.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) is a Martu organisation that aims to preserve and strengthen Martu culture, care for Country, and support Martu people to build strong, sustainable livelihoods and futures. Based in Newman, KJ works across the four remote communities of Jigalong, Punmu, Parnngurr, and Kunawarritji. In response to a visible and growing crisis: increasing youth crime, volatile substance use and a deepening sense of cultural and familial disconnection among Martu youth in Newman and remote communities, KJ launched the *Jijiku Yiwarra* (Mantu Youth Program). Recognising that an entirely new model was needed — one grounded in Martu culture, kinship, and care - the program was built around “*kanyirninpa*” — the Martu principle of nurture, responsibility, and relational authority across generations. The innovation was to flip the model from transactional support to relational healing. From court-mandated supervision to Elders and families walking alongside young people on country. From western program logic to Martu-led design. *Jijiku Yiwarra* has delivered measurable, visible, and deeply meaningful outcomes for Martu communities and Newman. What began as a small-scale pilot addressing youth disengagement has grown into a trusted, flexible platform for Martu-led diversion, reconnection, and healing. *Jijiku Yiwarra* is a way of rebuilding futures, one trip, one story, and one child at a time.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa / Newman Women's Shelter

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) is a Martu organisation that works to preserve Martu culture, support sustainable livelihoods, and build strong futures for Martu people. Newman Women's Shelter (NWS) is a local organisation providing crisis accommodation, outreach support, and community programs for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence in Newman and surrounding communities. *Food in the Park* – a collaborative response to a deepening crisis in East Newman: food insecurity, particularly among Martu families – was built on a shared belief that real, lasting impact happens when the community leads. The model was shaped by Martu voices, driven by Martu priorities and grounded in Martu engagement, a foundation that has made the program effective, trusted, sustainable and culturally strong. KJ and NWS have long-standing, trusted relationships with Martu in and around Newman, both operating from a community development ethos – one that values Martu culture and recognises the importance of local knowledge, relationship-building and long-term presence. This grounding allowed *Food in the Park* to take shape in a way that truly created community leadership. The program has been strengthened by a network of committed partners including BHP, Creating Communities, Compass Group, Foodbank, Sodexo and Bunzl. *Food in the Park* responds to the immediate need of addressing hunger, while opening the door to deeper conversations about justice health, housing, and long-term wellbeing creating a safe, more connected community for Martu families.

Karratha Central Healthcare / PKKP Aboriginal Corporation

Karratha Central Healthcare (KCH) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to delivering high-quality, reliable allied health and community wellbeing services tailored to the unique needs of Pilbara communities. PKKP Aboriginal Corporation (PKKP) is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that represents the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples. PKKP advocates for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage, Lores, lands, and waters of the PKKP people; supports self-determination by helping members remain connected to their traditional lands and culture; and works to improve health outcomes, employment opportunities, and enterprise development for its members. KCH and PKKP have demonstrated unwavering commitment to walking together in delivering culturally safe

healthcare to the Bindi Community (a small Aboriginal community located proximal to Onslow) with their regular Community Outreach Clinics. Guided by community consultation, their shared vision has placed health at the forefront by strengthening engagement, building trust in healthcare services, and reducing barriers and negative attitudes towards seeking care.

Karratha Women's Place

The Karratha Women's Place (KWP) is a not-for-profit, charitable organisation that provides a number of free programs and a safe place for women living in the City of Karratha to connect, gain emotional support, improve their physical, sexual and mental health, establish social networks and build friendships. An innovative idea introduced by KWP has been the creating and publishing of the *"My Story of Being a Mum"* book - a compilation of over 40 stories of motherhood collected from mums who live or have lived in Karratha. The mums come from various backgrounds, including stories from Aboriginals, migrants, mums with disabilities, single mothers, IVF journeys and fertility issues, multiple births (including triplets and twins), stepmothers and older mothers. The aim of the book was to validate and raise awareness of the experience of adjusting to motherhood.

Newman Community Centre

The Newman Community Centre has been a cornerstone of the Newman community for 30 years. Over the past 12 months, the Community Centre has undergone a significant and intentional shift to better represent the diverse community it serves. This rebranding was about creating a space where all people feel safe, welcome and represented. The Community Centre has worked hard to bring critical preventative health services directly into the community, making them accessible to everyone. Inclusive programming includes the introduction of *Pilbara Pride Month* activities and the *SLAY program*, which is designed to support girls aged 11-14 focusing on building self-confidence, leadership skills, body positivity and resilience. By championing diversity and inclusion through the rebrand, expanded health services, cultural engagement and inclusive programming, the Community Centre continues to reach new people, build meaningful connections and strengthen its role as a trusted and essential part of the Newman community.

Newman Women's Shelter / Punmu Community

Newman Women's Shelter (NWS) is a community-led organisations providing wrap-around support to women and families impacted by family and domestic violence and associated homelessness. Punmu is a remote Aboriginal community in the East Pilbara. Isolated and limited in access to essential services, communities like Punmu face ongoing challenges in addressing family and domestic violence, poverty and food insecurity. With a shared goal to address critical gaps and enhance support for women and families experiencing family and domestic violence, NWS secured funding to place a worker in Punmu community. This position aimed to strengthen the relationship between NWS and Punmu community by embedding culturally safe, consistent support on the ground—someone the community could trust and turn to. This collaboration allowed NWS to work more closely with local families, respond quickly to emerging needs, and deliver services that would otherwise require extensive travel or go unmet altogether. It marked a significant step in deepening relationships, building local trust, and demonstrating the power of combining community-led knowledge with professional support to deliver effective, culturally safe outcomes in remote Aboriginal communities.

PHLAGS+

PHLAGS+ is grassroots, volunteer-led organisation dedicated to supporting and celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community in the Pilbara. Since its inception, there have been many inclusive events, workshops and gatherings that have provided the Hedland LGBTQIA+ community a safe and supported space. Today, the biggest event is the annual *Pilbara Pride Festival*, a vibrant, week-long celebration of LGBTQIA+ identity, culture and community in the Town of Port Hedland. Pilbara Pride has positioned itself as one of the most inclusive, community-owned Pride festivals in regional Australia. Through public events and consistent community engagement, PHLAGS+ has helped to increase understanding and awareness, challenge stigma and create safer, more welcoming spaces for LGBTQIA+ people. PHLAGS+ plays a vital role in normalising LGBTQIA+ experiences and ensuring that diverse voices are heard, respected and celebrated across all areas of community life.

Pilbara Community Legal Services

Pilbara Community Legal Service (PCLS) has been a cornerstone of justice and social support in the Pilbara since 1993. PCLS is committed to providing accessible, equitable, responsible and culturally appropriate legal and support services, including legal advice, tenancy advocacy, financial counselling, domestic violence support, housing assistance, and community migrant services. The past two years have marked a profound period of transformation for PCLS – a journey defined by resilience, bold reform and an unwavering commitment to its mission. Recognising a need to address systemic and cultural challenges that had previously constrained the organisation, PCLS embarked on a strategic renewal which included a new Executive Team; improved financial position; ambitious program of modernisation; and strengthened governance. By confronting challenges head-on and embedding resilience into every layer of the organisation, PCLS has re-emerged as a stronger, more capable force for justice, inclusion and community empowerment in the Pilbara.

Pilbara Community Legal Service and Karlka Niyiparli Aboriginal Corporation

Karlka Niyiparli Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (Karlka) is the Native Title representative group for the Niyiparli People. Karlka developed the *Home Ready Program*, a culturally grounded initiative to support members in achieving home ownership and reached out to PCLS to deliver *Money Business*, which equips participants with essential budgeting and money management skills. Identifying opportunity for a deeper, more sustained partnership to address interconnected challenges faced by community members, PCLS and Karlka formalised a partnership agreement to support Karlka members in areas beyond money management and home ownership – especially in Family and Domestic Violence support and Financial Counselling. The partnership between Karlka and PCLS is built on mutual respect, cultural understanding, and a shared commitment to the long-term empowerment of Karlka members. Karlka brings deep cultural knowledge, strong connections to community, and an intimate understanding of the aspirations, values, and lived experiences of Niyiparli people, ensuring that the partnership remains culturally grounded and guided by community voices. PCLS contributes decades of expertise in community legal services, financial counselling, and family violence support across the Pilbara.

Pilbara Community Services Ltd

Pilbara Community Services Ltd (PCSL) has been delivering reintegration services for the Department of Justice in the Pilbara region since 2011. Supporting prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families, PCSL provides essential reintegration programs that help individuals transition back into the community. Despite being a small team, their dedication allows them to cover the vast Pilbara region, making a meaningful impact and contributing to a safer, stronger community. Over the years, PCSL has grown into a trusted organisation known for its dedication, resilience, and ability to make a meaningful difference with limited resources. Their strength lies in collaboration, working hand-in-hand with community stakeholders, government, and industry partners to create meaningful pathways for change. Through this collaborative approach, PCSL continues to transform lives and strengthen communities across the Pilbara.

Polly Farmer Foundation

The Polly Farmer Foundation is an Aboriginal Corporation that has supported aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Pilbara for nearly 30 years. Through its Follow the Dream program, the Foundation delivers culturally responsive academic enrichment that builds knowledge, confidence, and self-belief—supporting students' education and career aspirations. Founded by Noongar man and AFL legend Graham 'Polly' Farmer, the Foundation's journey began in the Pilbara in 1997 with the launch of the first Follow the Dream program - Gumala Mirnuwarni Education Project in Karratha and Roebourne. Its success quickly led to the Foundation's expansion. In the Pilbara today, there are 16 Follow the Dream programs with over 500 primary and secondary students. Strong community collaboration remains the cornerstone of the Foundation and Follow the Dream. The Foundation works closely with a diverse range of community, government, corporate, industry and philanthropic partners, placing great emphasis on close collaboration with community and family networks to help Follow the Dream students thrive.

Reach Us Pilbara

Reach Us Pilbara provides practical support services and advocacy to local Pilbara residents affected by cancer. Support services include but are not limited to cleaning, gardening, counselling, meal preparation, physiotherapy, childcare, support group sessions, group sessions, equipment rental, complementary therapies and travel assistance (outside of PATS). Reach Us Pilbara has shown remarkable resilience in addressing the ongoing challenge of access to sustainable funding by shifting focus toward community engagement, local partnerships and grassroots fundraising. They have hosted creative, community-driven events such as quiz nights, charity auctions and regional awareness campaigns. By strengthening relationships with local businesses and cultivating a strong presence in the community, they have built a valuable network of support. Reach Us Pilbara's ability to thrive without consistent government support is a testament to the resilience, adaptability and heart of their team and the Pilbara community. Reach Us Pilbara is now seen as a pillar of strength and solidarity in the face of adversity and a beacon of hope and support for cancer patients and their families.

Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation

Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation (RRKAC) is the Registered Native Title Body Corporate for the Robe River Kuruma people in the West Pilbara region. RRKAC delivers a wide range of culturally grounded services across youth and family support, cultural heritage, environmental management, housing, employment pathways, and community wellbeing. Programs such as Home Stretch WA, Target 120, RYDE, and the Housing Pathways Support Program are examples of RRKAC's multifaceted commitment to driving change. Over the past 12 months, RRKAC has confronted one of its most profound and ongoing challenges: the defence and protection of Jajiwurra (the Robe River) and the Bungaroo cultural precinct in the face of intensified water extraction and exploration activities. These areas are not only ecologically significant—they are the spiritual, cultural, and ancestral lifeblood of the Robe River Kuruma people. This tested RRKAC's ability to. By integrating advocacy, community care and cultural authority, RRKAC managed to uphold its cultural duties while continuing to deliver vital services and programs - building a stronger foundation for long-term sustainability and continued cultural survival.

Salvation Army Doorways Program

The Salvation Army Doorways team in Karratha provides vital support to individuals and families facing hardship, offering emergency relief, holistic case work, and practical education and social programs. Through initiatives like their Jabaja Homemaker, free community lunches and a strong presence in the advocacy space, the team works with compassion and dignity to empower people and strengthen the local community. The Doorways team embodies a community-led and person-centred approach. Whether through case management, group activities or collaborative events, individuals are empowered to identify their needs, make choices and participate in their own development.

The Y WA

In the Pilbara, the Y delivers two community-based programs – the South Hedland Child Parent Centre and the Pakala Jijikaja Yankunii-la in Newman (formerly known as the Empowering At-Risk Individuals program). New collaborations with Agility WA and Earbus Foundation have further expanded access to early intervention services at the South Hedland Child Parent Centre, which celebrated 10 years of service delivery. The Pakala Jijikaja Yankunii-la has been re-shaped into a safe, culturally responsive hub for at-risk children and young people, empowering pathways to a brighter future. These two programs provide holistic, wraparound support for children, young people and their families, reflecting the Y's deep commitment to working with local communities, partners and First Nations organisations to foster long-term, place-based changes so that every child can flourish and thrive at school, at home and in life.

Tom Price Community Garden

The Tom Price Community Garden is a 100% volunteer-run, not-for-profit community-supported garden hub, which has been running for just over four years. The garden hosts the Little Sprouts (under 5s garden club), and the Gumala 3a kids and Rangers 4 Life groups from local Aboriginal communities who come to enjoy some gardening and crafts. Weekly Sunday morning Busy Bees provide an opportunity to connect, meet new people, learn and share skills while enjoying cake and a cuppa. In the last 12 months, a Herbal Tea Garden and a Permaculture Food Forest area have been established. The Herbal Tea Garden provides a peaceful place for relaxation and connection. The Permaculture Food Forest supports biodiversity, reduces environmental footprint, grows produce for the community, educates community about nature, gardening and sustainable living and provides a peaceful oasis.

Youth Involvement Council

The Youth Involvement Council (YIC) supports at-risk young people aged 5-25, working across multiple areas: diversionary programs, outreach, crisis accommodation, mentoring and youth engagement. YIC exists to empower young people to create positive life pathways and become contributing members of a safe, connected community. At the heart of YIC's success is its deep commitment to transformative collaboration. YIC partnered with WACOSS and the Town of Port Hedland in the *Heat Vulnerability Project* – a community-driven research and policy initiative designed to highlight the lived experience of heat hardship in the Pilbara region. YIC collaborated with the Telethon Kids Institute on the *"Journey Together" Photovoice Project* – a youth-led storytelling initiative that empowered young people to document their lives, their challenges and their strengths through photography. The *Drive2Thrive program* was designed with community and young people at the centre, and is about removing systemic barriers, providing wrap-around support and reframing the pathway to a driving licence as a platform for self-empowerment and long-term wellbeing. This innovative program reimagines education as a holistic empowerment journey– integrating personal development, cultural safety, justice diversion and employment readiness.

INDIVIDUAL FINALISTS

Ezekiel Uiduldum – Senior Student at Hedland Senior High School

With a natural curiosity for learning and a deep desire to uplift his peers, Ezekiel consistently seeks innovative ways to address challenges in his school and community. As 2025 School Captain, Ezekiel approaches his leadership not as a title, but as a responsibility—to listen, uplift, and act. He inspires his peers through collaborative conversations, advocating for more youth-driven projects within the school. His involvement in the Rise Up program has strengthened his understanding of how personal growth and community action go hand in hand. Ezekiel demonstrates creativity by balancing academic excellence with community service and work experience. Through his School-Based Traineeship at BHP, he inspires others by showing how young people can pursue both education and meaningful employment. By living out his values through action, Ezekiel encourages other young people to make courageous decisions—even when it means going against the grain. He proves that real change comes not only from big ideas, but from daily choices that affirm respect, responsibility, and community pride.

Lily Nguyen – Headspace Anglicare

Lily has chosen a career in the community sector, driven by a deep passion for helping others and supporting individuals to become the best version of themselves. She is a naturally curious person who consistently seeks to understand the root causes of social challenges and explore creative ways to foster positive change. Through all her efforts, Lily has become a quiet yet powerful force for good in the Pilbara. She has helped create spaces where young people feel they belong, where culture is respected and celebrated, and where services grow more responsive and inclusive. Her work reflects not only professional skill but also personal integrity and deep respect for community. Lily's contributions have driven real, positive change - not just in programs or policies, but in hearts, relationships, and the everyday experience of young people in the Pilbara. Her commitment to inclusion, curiosity, cultural respect, and youth empowerment makes her a truly exceptional community leader.

Taya Doherty – Junior Recreation Officer, Talent Pool

Taya consistently exemplifies the qualities of a young leader, inspiring both her peers and younger children through her actions, values, and commitment to community. She serves as a powerful role model, particularly for other young Indigenous girls, by demonstrating that leadership can begin at any age and that cultural pride and community service are essential aspects of personal and collective growth. Taya has demonstrated courage and initiative in challenging expectations around age, gender and leadership within her community. She has actively sought out roles where she can contribute meaningfully and create space for youth representation – particularly young Indigenous women. Through her employment (Talent Pool), her volunteer work with the Under 6s Auskick program and involvement in key community events, Taya defines what leadership can look like – collaborative, culturally grounded and driven by purpose and passion.

Taylor Crump – Youth Involvement Council

Taylor is a natural leader—not because he seeks attention or status, but because people are drawn to his calmness, consistency, and genuine care. He inspires young people and colleagues alike by simply being himself. He shows that leadership is not about being loud or commanding; it's about being present, listening deeply, and acting with integrity. He motivates by modelling a version of leadership that is kind, wise, and consistent. Taylor's connection with young people is where his impact shines brightest. They seek him out—not because he demands attention, but because they trust him. Taylor uplifts others simply by being present. Whether it's a child in Deadly Hearts, a teen in Mungka Maya, or a young adult in crisis on Mingle Mob, Taylor meets them with respect and humanity. He helps young people feel safe enough to express themselves and strong enough to keep going. His ability to sense people's needs—whether they're emotional, physical, or social—is unparalleled. He zeroes in without intruding and responds with practical, heartfelt care.

Emma Dumbrell – CEO, Yaandina Community Services

Emma's leadership journey is a powerful story of growth, resilience and unwavering commitment. She joined Yaandina in 2012 as Finance Administrator when the organisation had just 45 staff. In 2023, after more than a decade of dedicated service and proven leadership, Emma was appointed CEO. Under her guidance the organisation has grown to 125 employees, reflecting both strategic expansion and a strong, values driven culture. Her leadership has been instrumental in strengthening Yaandina's operational resilience, expanding its service reach, and fostering a workplace culture grounded in integrity, respect and continuous improvement. Her ability to lead with empathy while driving strategic outcomes has earned her the trust of staff, stakeholders and the communities Yaandina serves. Emma leads with integrity, empathy and vision. She is known for her calm and decisive leadership during times of uncertainty, and her ability to bring people together around a shared purpose. Her transparent communication and inclusive decision-making have built deep trust across all levels of the organisation.

Joanna Collins – CEO, Pilbara Community Legal Service

Joanna's leadership journey is one of courage, compassion and fierce dedication to empowering others. As CEO of PCLS, she has spent the last two years championing the needs of some of the most isolated and vulnerable communities – bringing heart, strategic clarity and tenacity to every step of the journey. Joanna leads not from a place of authority, but from genuine care and belief in the power of community. Her leadership is grounded in vision and lifted by her ability to listen, inspire and take bold action when it matters most. Through innovation, empathy and relentless advocacy, Joanna has transformed the way legal, financial and community services are delivered across the region. Her leadership has been instrumental in securing long-term contracts and expanding services including the introduction of a Domestic Violence Outreach Advocate and the first permanent solicitor in Roebourne. In 2024, she represented regional and remote centres at Parliament House in Canberra at the launch of the State of the Sector report, calling for visibility, equity and sustainable funding. Her leadership in advocacy continues to shape national conversations around family violence, tenancy and financial abuse.

Sarah Cameron – Regional Manager, West Pilbara Follow the Dream

Sarah's leadership journey is defined by her unwavering commitment to education, cultural respect and community empowerment in the West Pilbara, having dedicated over 15 years to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. Sarah's journey from classroom teacher to regional leader is marked by integrity, humility and a deep respect for culture. One of her most defining leadership qualities is her ability to inspire trust, build strong relationships and empower people. Sarah leads with authenticity and respect, listens deeply, values diverse perspectives and ensures that all voices are heard and reflected in program delivery. Her ability to foster and strengthen community partnerships has been fundamental to the success and expansion of the Follow The Dream footprint across the West Pilbara. Sarah has worked hard to bring new educational opportunities to the region, including partnerships with Red Dirt Robotics, Teamworks Australia, and Scitech. Under Sarah's leadership, the Follow the Dream programs in the West Pilbara have not only improved educational outcomes, but also strengthened cultural identity, community cohesion and long-term empowerment.

Tania Murray – CEO, Youth Involvement Council

Tania's leadership journey is one of depth, determination and quiet strength. She joined YIC as Operations Manager and quickly became a cornerstone of the leadership team. In 2023, she was elected as 'step-up leader' to guide the organisation whilst the CEO was on sabbatical and was appointed as CEO in 2024. Tania's journey from local girl to community CEO is a testament to what happens when leadership is driven by purpose, shaped by lived experience and rooted in love for community. Tania nurtures a culture of purpose, safety and vision – where people feel empowered, seen and capable of creating change. Her team speak of feeling supported, inspired and valued under her leadership. Since stepping into the role of CEO, Tania's leadership has not only maintained the strong legacy of YIC but has elevated its impact, visibility and effectiveness across multiple levels from individual youth outcomes to interagency collaboration. Tania's leadership is the kind that holds others together. She sets the tone for professionalism and empathy, action and reflection. She is admired not only for what she does but for how she does it – with grace, consistency and a heart for service.

Chanti McHenry,

Chanti is a proud Bardi, Noongar, and Ngarluma woman and cultural leader whose work reflects resilience, cultural advocacy, and positive community impact. Recognised with the 2024 Outstanding Aboriginal Education Award and selected for the 2025 Indigenous Marathon Project, she inspires others through her dedication to cultural inclusion, health, and national representation. Chanti's leadership journey spans education, sport and cultural activation, highlighted by her commitment to lifelong learning, wellness and Aboriginal empowerment.

Barbie McKenzie

Barbie is a proud Banyjima woman, born and bred in Port Hedland. As one of IBN's Young Leaders, Barbie shows compassion and empathy and epitomises the importance of her cultural respect for the leaders she works with and the leader she is becoming through hard work, clear communication and improving her own practices in the workplace. She continues to shine, even on the busiest days, always smiling and always ready to listen. Her door is always open to her team, and she leads with accuracy and gentleness, making sure no-one is left behind because they are new or still learning the ropes.

Mikarla French

Mikarla French is a proud Gamilaroi woman from Moree, Northern New South Wales, whose leadership journey is grounded in cultural strength, resilience, and a deep commitment to community empowerment. Since arriving in Port Hedland in 2022, Mikarla has progressed from a jobseeker to an up-and-coming leader within Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation in just a few short years. Her leadership is defined by her persistence, empathy and ability to have honest, sometimes difficult, conversations that lead to real change. Her journey is a powerful example of what can be achieved through determination, cultural pride and a genuine desire to uplift others.

Rochelle Williams

Rochelle is a proud Noongar/Yamatji woman who exemplifies the qualities of empathy, strength, and leadership, with a deeply rooted passion for supporting her community through trauma-informed care, cultural connection, and healing. Her innate caring and empathetic nature is evident in every role she undertakes, and her quiet but impactful leadership has already made a meaningful difference in the lives of many. Whether supporting families in crisis, guiding young people through emotional challenges, or lifting up her community through sport and education, she consistently shows up with heart, strength, and wisdom.

Catherine Widdup

Catherine is President of the Port Hedland Netball Association, as well as player, umpire, coach, and mentor. She dedicates countless hours to ensuring the Association runs smoothly, coordinating fixtures, supporting volunteers, responding to members, writing grant applications, and introducing new initiatives to strengthen the club and its culture. She has worked hard to bring structure, opportunity, and consistency to the Association so that players, parents, and volunteers all feel supported and engaged. For Catherine, leadership is about bringing people along on the journey, creating space for others to shine and advocating for what's right. Her leadership has helped build a stronger, more connected netball community, contributing to strengthening the social fabric of Port Hedland.

Gloria Jacob

Gloria has been a cornerstone of community service in Port Hedland for decades, standing as a consistent and powerful force for change. As founder member and ongoing leader of Port Hedland Lesbians, Allies and Gays Society Plus, she has helped shape and deliver the annual Pilbara Pride Festival, which has become a major regional celebration of diversity and acceptance. Gloria's leadership has never been about directing others – rather it is about walking alongside them, uplifting their voices and helping them build the confidence to lead themselves. Her volunteer contribution has done more than bring colour to the streets of Port Hedland – it has helped cultivate a more cohesive, compassionate and connected community, shaping the region's landscape of inclusion.

Steven Gadia

Steven is a high school student and also a volunteer at Headspace Karratha as a member of the Youth Advisory Group. Over the last year, he has organised two important community events: a fundraising initiative for breast cancer and an open day in partnership with Headspace Karratha to promote youth mental health. His fundraising efforts are self-motivated and show other young people the positive impact one person can have in their community. By organising these events, Steven was able to not only donate funds to various charities, but he also assisted in removing the barrier and stigma around topics that can be hard for people to discuss. Despite the pressures of school and other commitments, Steven was able to proactively volunteer his time and skills to organise these events.

Claudia Bailey

As Youth Engagement Coordinator for the West Coast Eagles in the Pilbara, Claudia has become a powerhouse advocate for young women. Her leadership has been instrumental in identifying and addressing the lack of consistent, inclusive and engaging opportunities for young women across the Pilbara, by developing and leading a range of initiatives that combine sport, education, cultural respect and community voice. A standout leadership achievement has been the design and delivery of the *Soar Program* – a tailored initiative for upper primary girls that blends footy skills with personal development, confidence building and health education. Claudia's success lies in her approach: trust first, engagement second. By building strong, genuine connections with young people and their families, she has laid a foundation for long-term change. Her programs and events don't just invite participation – they create belonging and are empowering a generation of young women to step onto the field and own their own future. Young women who had been disengaged are now mentoring others and coaching. Girls who once lacked self-belief are now stepping into leadership roles. These changes are the result of deep listening, intentional leadership and relentless community commitment.

Dee Van Beek

Dee's main focus is to empower and support women through the Karratha Women's Place. Her achievements include creating and publishing the '*My Story of Being a Mum*' book, which is a compilation of over 40 stories of motherhood that the KWP team collected from mums who live or have lived in Karratha. The book highlights the experiences of numerous women adjusting to motherhood with the aim of fostering feelings of validation and normalisation. Many contributors to the book reported that the experience of writing their story was therapeutic and encouraged feelings of pride. Dee was invited to speak at the KDCCI International Women's Day Luncheon to share her story of establishing the Karratha Women's Place.

Sara Makeham

As leader of the Family and Domestic Violence Team at Pilbara Community Legal Service, Sara is a powerful advocate against family and domestic violence. Her leadership role in advocating for FDV prevention has been deeply grounded in empathy, action and accountability. Recognising that systemic change requires a systemic voice, Sara led her team in contributing firsthand experience and insights to national policy submissions. She ensured that voices of Pilbara women, particularly those from regional and Aboriginal communities, were not only heard but respected in national reform conversations. Through strategic partnerships, she cultivated a network of collective advocacy. These alliances enabled coordinated safety planning, stronger referral pathways and culturally safe service delivery across the region, further embedding local voices in cross-sector responses. At every level, from grassroots education to government submissions, Sara showed that community-led solutions are powerful and essential. Her leadership has turned stories into strategy and advocacy into lasting impact.

Tevita Naroba

As Team Leader of Financial Counselling at PCLS, Tevita has taken a bold and value-driven leadership role in advocating for a more culturally grounded and community-led approach to financial wellbeing in the Pilbara. His leadership is strategic and deeply personal, grounded in his lived experience and unwavering belief that everyone – regardless of where they live or their background – deserves access to respectful, empowering financial support. At the grassroots level, Tevita has led the transformation of service delivery

to be more culturally responsive, making financial support more accessible and meaningful, particularly for those who have historically felt excluded or intimidated by mainstream systems. Tevita played a foundation role in establishing the Fijian Church in Port Hedland, creating a place of belonging, cultural identity and spiritual support for many who were far from home. The church isn't just a place of worship; it's a hub of connection, education and support. Through this space, financial wellbeing messages have been integrated into everyday community life, with church members now engaging in conversations about saving, debt management and planning for the future. Through roles on regional advisory groups, Tevita shares these community-led models with the wider sector, helping shape policy and reform to reflect the realities of remote and culturally diverse communities.

Rebecca Breglia

Rebecca's leadership journey is a powerful story of growth, dedication and cultural pride. As a proud Banjima woman, her journey reflects her deep connection to her culture and her passion for building stronger futures for Traditional Owners. From a casual staff member to Member Services Manager with Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, Rebecca stands out for her work ethic, empathy and commitment to serving her community. She has an inclusive, respectful approach, listens deeply and ensures that every voice is valued. Rebecca's leadership has resulted in stronger, more responsive Member Services that genuinely reflect the needs of Gumala's people.