

## **GASCOYNE ABORIGINAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTRE – LESSONS LEARNED**

### **Maureen Dodd and Lorraine Fitzpatrick**

The building of a Cultural Centre in Carnarvon that would convey the history and knowledge of the Indigenous people of the Gascoyne region of Western Australia began in 1992, when several senior Aboriginal men sat down with a former Deputy Premier and began to draw their respective countries and tell their stories.

Sadly not many of those men lived long enough to see the building finished let alone the doors opened. The journey of the Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre has already been a long one and it is not over yet. Along the way there have been many players, agreements and disagreements, disappointments and support from surprising quarters but the one constant has been the determination of the Yinggarda traditional owners of the Carnarvon area to see that the Cultural Centre was done the right Aboriginal way.

The lessons learned from the building of a Cultural Centre on the far west coast of Australia are, at the same time, both simple and hard but applying them to other situations may save a lot of anxiety for everyone.

### **Biographies**

**Maureen Dodd**  
**Chair of Mundatharrda,**  
**Board Member of Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre**

Maureen Dodd is a direct descendant of the Yinggarda people, traditional owners of the land west of the Kennedy ranges and through to the coast, in WA's Gascoyne region. Maureen was a founding committee member and is a Board member of the Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre. She is Chairperson of Mundatharrda Aboriginal Corporation and working to establish cultural tourism opportunities for her extended family in the Kennedy Ranges. Maureen has been involved in health and community development issues since the 1970s and was part of a delegation which travelled to China in 1981 to study the "Barefoot Doctors" scheme. She is a great believer in the efficacy of traditional medicine and people in the community where she lives still use bush medicines.

**Lorraine Fitzpatrick**  
**Senior Project Office,**  
**Royalties for Regions, Gascoyne Development Commission**

Lorraine has worked in the cultural industries sector for more than 20 years. For at least half of her career she has worked in regional and remote communities. In 2007 she embarked on a new and challenging adventure as the manager of the Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre, charged with turning an empty building into a viable and vibrant Aboriginal Cultural Centre with the support of the traditional owners and the four other language groups represented by the Centre. She has served as Vice Chair of Museums Australia national council since 2006.