



## Chile Creek

### About this Case Study

This Case Study provides a profile of the outstation of Chile Creek, its history, residents and enterprise development.

### Background to the Community

Chile Creek is a four-house outstation that lies approximately 200 kilometres to the north of Broome on the Dampier Peninsula in Western Australia. Chile Creek is in Bardi country and its local language name is *Jilirr*. The community is just two kilometres from the coast and beside a creek lined with mangroves. Like much of the Peninsula the country is known for its natural beauty, with the rich red pindan soils and crystal clear blue waters.

Elizabeth Puertollano, the Traditional Owner of Chile Creek was born at Bulgin (Hunters Creek) near Cape Leveque. Since both her natural parents passed away, she was adopted by her natural mother's sister whose husband was the Traditional Owner of *Jilirr*. Elizabeth grew up at

Lombadina Station which was owned by her Filipino grandfather who subsequently sold the station to the church who established Lombadina Mission. At this time Elizabeth spoke the local Indigenous languages and no English. After years of schooling in Lombadina she moved to Beagle Bay to become a 'native



The beach near Chile Creek

## Bushlight's Community Energy Planning Model

Bushlight's objective is to improve livelihood choices for remote communities by increasing their access to reliable energy services. To do so, Bushlight works directly with community members to provide them with independent advice and information about choosing which energy services are best for them, and advice on demand side management, and energy conservation. Using a range of pictorial resources, Bushlight invites communities to consider how they use energy and how much it costs them; and with them, look at what options are available for improving their access to reliable energy services.

Through workshops and community mapping exercises, Bushlight works with residents to prepare Community Energy Plans (CEPs). These plans detail the community's current energy needs as well as any future livelihood aspirations. The CEP documents an agreement between Bushlight and the community by setting out household energy budgets and the roles and responsibilities of the community in using and looking after their solar power system. The responsibilities of Bushlight, the community's service agency, and the system installer are also laid out.

After the initial CEP meetings and completion of the system design, Bushlight coordinates the installation of the RE equipment. Following installation Bushlight provides education and training in system operation and maintenance over several visits during the course of the first year. Bushlight's approach elaborates on the typical RE industry process by involving the community in all key activities and decisions.

nun', and then on to Broome in her early 20s which involved her first experience of seeing cars in the street.

Elizabeth raised her family in Broome before moving back to her traditional country at *Jilirr*. Roma Puertollano followed in her mother's footsteps in 2000 and has since changed the face of the community to a significant degree.



Community leader Roma Puertollano at the tourist kitchen in Chile Creek

When asked about the origins of the English name of the community, Roma said that she thought it probably reflected the multicultural reality of the Broome region, which continues today. Members of several local Aboriginal language groups coexist with English speakers and those speaking numerous Asian languages (Chinese, Japanese, and Malay to name a few). Roma surmises that Chile Creek is an estimate of *Jilirr* by non-Bardi speakers in the area.

### Pre-Bushlight Energy Services

Prior to the installation of the Bushlight system, the community was reliant on a Hybrid system with a seven year old 11 kVA diesel generator. This system was installed by Chile Creek's service provider Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation in 2002. The solar component of the energy system met only a very small proportion of the load and thus significant generator run time was required resulting in high costs for fuel. The generator used to run all night and most of the day unless residents were short on cash in which case it would only be run at night. Diesel consumption averaged 6,000 litres per year at an approximate annual cost to residents of over \$10,000.

### Economic Enterprise at Chile Creek

In the early years of the community's establishment there was little in terms of infrastructure. There was one pre-existing house at this time and no reticulated power or water.



When Roma first returned to live full-time at Chile Creek, enterprise development was not at the forefront of her mind. It was not until friends came to visit and commented on what a great tourist destination it would be that a seed was planted in her head. Little by little the community started getting organised to host tourists. The four tourist shelters and the ablutions block were funded by residents' own money.

As Roma said "All of this used to be bush. It took a lot of effort, a lot of swearing, a lot of anger and a lot of love to set this place up". The community changed from being an expanse of bush to being promoted as a tourist destination on regional and state television. Most tourists that come to Chile Creek enjoy a creek tour involving crabbing and bush walking. Some tourists come for a day trip from nearby Cape Leveque, sample Roma's well-known chilli crab dish and go back to the resort for the night.



By the time CEP commenced Chile Creek was already established as a tourist destination.

It was agreed at the CEP meetings that the Bushlight system would provide power to each of the four tourist shelters and the ablution block as well as each of the residential houses. It was also agreed that energy-hungry appliances such as power tools would be run using generator power.



Roma Puertollano, Benny Rahman & Bushlight's former Regional Manager David D'Antoine during Energy Planning Meetings at Chile Creek

### Community Outcomes & Looking to the Future

Chile Creek residents have stated that they are very happy with the provision of energy from the Bushlight system. All their day-to-day energy needs are met by renewable energy (RE) and occasionally they run the generator in order to power energy-hungry appliances such as the air-compressor (to re-inflate tourists tyres after driving on the beach), other power tools and the vacuum cleaner.

### Energy Services Planning

Bushlight first began working with Chile Creek residents in 2005, but it wasn't until Bushlight's second round of Regional Energy Planning that Chile Creek made it onto our list of eligible communities. In 2007 Bushlight began the Community Energy Planning (CEP) process (as outlined on previous page) with residents.

With the energy supply now sorted out, Chile Creek is looking to improve its water services. There is plenty of water available on the community but the pressure is inadequate.

In May 2007 members of Bushlight's Derby and Alice Springs offices travelled to Chile Creek to carry out the first of a series of meetings aimed at exchanging information to provide residents with information about Bushlight and for Bushlight to learn about the community and its energy needs.

There is no more noise from the generator at night and residents no longer need to spend money on diesel and maintenance for the generator. The money they are saving is being put into further developing the tourism enterprise. After self-funding much of the existing tourism-related infrastructure residents are now looking for support from elsewhere.

During 2008 a member of the Small Business Council has been working with Chile Creek residents to help them further develop their tourism enterprise. With their assistance Chile Creek has recently been successful in securing a grant from the Indigenous Regional

Development Program to upgrade the tourist accommodation in the community. The upgrades will include installing timber flooring and beds as well as enclosing them in mesh to keep the many enthusiastic insects at bay. In addition, Roma plans to establish three large safari tents to cater for increased tourist numbers in the peak of the season.

Roma would love to see more family live at Chile Creek, particularly in light of the growing workload relating to the tourism enterprise. There needs to be someone running the tourism business and someone else running the community. It is becoming too big for one person.

The community of Chile Creek is a real credit to Roma and her family. Bushlight is happy to be able to support this vibrant community in their endeavours to live on country and develop their economic enterprises. The provision of reliable 24 hour power assists residents to achieve their goals.



The pre-existing solar array at Chile Creek



The new Bushlight compound incorporating the old solar array (front) at Chile Creek