



Ulpanyali

Living only a few kilometers from one of Australia's most popular tourist destinations provides residents of Ulpanyali community with many opportunities to develop livelihoods and share their knowledge.

Ulpanyali is a homeland situated in the heart of the world renowned Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park in Central Australia. There are five houses and four tin shelters at the community which is surrounded by rugged ranges, water holes and gorges. Residents of Ulpanyali speak Luritja and English and have lived in the area for



Iconic Kings Canyon in Watarrka National Park

many years, long before the National Park was established in 1989. The National Park is now visited by hundreds of tourists from other parts of Australia and around the world. The tourists stay at Kings Canyon Resort, which is only 2 kms down the road from the community.

Traditional owners, Julie and Stephen Clyne recognise that Ulpanyali's proximity to such a thriving tourist location has brought many opportunities to the community. Under their strong leadership residents are striving to establish new livelihood activities and further develop existing enterprises.

This story is about the new enterprises and activities in Ulpanyali, and how Bushlight has helped the community to acquire reliable 24 hour solar power to help them achieve their aspirations and live comfortable, healthy and sustainable lives on country.

Ulpanyali and Bushlight

In late 2007, Ulpanyali was allocated a share of funds from the Central Land Council's (CLC) Uluru Rent Money Community Development Project. This project puts a portion of the entry fee paid by tourists to enter Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park into a trust fund for local community development projects. This money is then allocated to families that have a strong

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.

cultural connection to the country within which Uluru and Kata Tjuta lie.

Ulpanyali residents decided to put a portion of their rent money towards improving the community's power supply. Prior to this time the community was relying on a single phase 31kVA generator for all of their power needs. The generator ran for approximately 11 hours each day which was costing an estimated \$9600 per year in diesel. Relying on this generator for all of their energy needs was not a long term sustainable option for Ulpanyali.

Kings Canyon resort generates their energy via a 225kWp solar power station, with a back up diesel generator. The system is owned and managed by the Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation. It was commissioned in November 2003 and was partly funded by the Australian Government through the Renewable Energy Commercialisation Program and the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program (RRPGP). Power and Water Corporation also contributed funds.

Being situated so close to Kings Canyon Resort, connecting to this power grid seemed like a reasonable solution to Ulpanyali's energy needs. Residents, with the support of the CLC, entered in to extensive discussions with various Government stakeholders regarding the grid connection. Over time, it became clear that connecting to the Kings Canyon grid would take a lot of time, and also be expensive and technically difficult.

Ulpanyali residents started looking for a new solution to improving their power supply.

Residents had heard about Bushlight and how Bushlight has helped many other communities with their energy needs. They decided to investigate the feasibility of having a Bushlight system installed in Ulpanyali.

In November 2007 a series of Community Energy Planning (CEP) (see boxed insert above) meetings commenced whereby residents discussed their energy needs and aspirations for the future. Residents agreed that a Bushlight system would provide the best solution for the community. In July 2008 a 120V Bushlight renewable energy (RE) system was installed in Ulpanyali. Residents contributed a portion of their Uluru rent money to the installation. They are the first Bushlight community to have contributed their own money to the installation of the system. Twelve months on, residents have expressed great satisfaction with their Bushlight system.

Julie Clyne told Bushlight that having solar power has helped the community in many ways and that it is now easier to live on country. Residents have



Ulpanyali residents talk to Bushlight staff member Nardia Bray during a CEP meeting

saved a lot of money because they don't need to run the generator very often and therefore don't need to buy much diesel. They have also saved money by not needing to drive to Alice Springs (450 kms away) as frequently to buy fresh food.

Being able to refrigerate food and water has been a significant positive change in the community. Before Bushlight the fridges and freezers would start defrosting during the hours the generator



Bushlight solar array at Ulpanyali

was not running, and food would often be spoilt. Julie told Bushlight that the children in the community are drinking much more water now that they can keep it in the fridge rather than drink it from the tap. On summer's days tap water is frequently quite hot because the underground pipes are close to the surface of the ground.

Julie said that having reliable energy services has allowed residents to focus more on other developments that will build the community's ability to be strong, sustainable and self-reliant. As discussed below, there are currently four new projects that are getting the young people involved in meaningful work in the community.

Ulpanyali Livelihood projects

Market Garden

Ulpanyali is in its first year of participation in a cooperative horticulture business with nearby communities Wanmarra and Akanta. With support from Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation and Community Enterprises Australia (CEA), the three communities are nearing completion of the first season of plantings and are preparing for the summer crop.

Ulpanyali planted cabbages, tomato, capsicum and cucumber for winter, and next season they will focus on watermelon and pumpkin. Each community will focus on growing different vegetables to maximise market potential.

The vegetables are sold locally to Kings Canyon Wilderness Lodge and Alice Springs based wholesaler Red Centre Produce.

Tourism business

Ulpanyali is in the process of establishing a community run tour business. The tours include a guided walk around the iconic Kings Canyon followed by a cultural information session, both led by the younger residents of the community. The cultural component includes discussion about land and the importance of looking after it, as well as providing an insight into the local culture and traditional foods.

Residents have so far conducted a couple of trial tours. One of the groups was made up of young Indigenous students from around Australia, the other were American tourists, who were delighted to experience hunting with the Ulpanyali men. Before these tours, residents went hunting and gathering for bush tucker to provide the tourists with a taste of their traditional cuisine. The tucker included kangaroo, witchetty grubs and bush tomatoes.

A website and brochures are currently under development as part of the communities marketing strategy. The Ulpanyali tourism business has been named is Kurrpurru Tour Company, which means Magpie or Butcher Bird.

Collaboration to upgrade facilities

Ulpanyali residents decided to spend the remainder of their allocated Uluru Rent Money on significant upgrades to two existing structures in the community. The two buildings will become an art centre and a mechanical workshop. The CLC, who is overseeing this project, approached the Centre for Appropriate Technology's (CAT) Projects and Regional Services Team (PaRST) to manage the works. They are responsible for the



Ulpanyali's market garden - the last of the winter crop.

community consultation, design and renovations to the buildings. Bushlight is also involved in these projects to determine how best to meet the energy requirements of the renovated buildings.

Art Centre

The women of Ulpanyali are looking forward to having a functional workspace to further develop their art business. Currently, two women in the community Julie and Linda, sell paintings at Kings Canyon Resort, but Julie is looking to expand into new art styles and get the young women involved in art. Residents have started studying art through the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education to develop their skills in fabric



Meeting with Ulpanyali residents, David Havercroft (PaRST), Hilary Furlong (CLC) and Ben Wall (Bushlight) to discuss the design requirements of the workshop upgrade. The meeting took place inside the existing workshop.



Community art centre meeting with CAT Project management Officer, David Havercroft

and lino printing. The ladies hope to continue selling their art at Kings Canyon Resort and expand the enterprise into other markets when they are better established. Having a dedicated workspace will help residents achieve this goal.

Mechanical Workshop

The men at Ulpanyali are undertaking developments to an existing workshop to make it a functional mechanical workshop. Initially it will be a space to work on vehicles owned by Ulpanyali residents and nearby families. Being so close to Kings Canyon Resort, and with limited services in the area, residents envisage that in the future the Ulpanyali workshop could expand to undertake repairs and maintenance on tourist vehicles.

In August 2009, initial consultations took place in Ulpanyali community. Staff from the CLC, PaRST, Batchelor Institute and Bushlight all visited Ulpanyali to help residents with the design requirements of the buildings.

There is a small amount of 'unallocated' energy available from the existing Bushlight system to cater for some of the energy needs of the art centre and mechanical workshop. For the art centre, most appliances are low energy users,

such as lights, fans and sewing machines, so most of its energy will come from the existing Bushlight RE system.

The workshop, on the other hand, has many energy hungry appliances such as power tools that use too much energy to be appropriate to run from the RE system. These will be powered by the community generator.

Looking to the future

For a small community of around 30 adults, there are a lot of activities taking shape in Ulpanyali. With Julie and Steven's strong leadership, young people are being inspired to take an active role in the new pursuits, and therefore contribute to the sustainability and security of their community. School age children are accessing a mainstream education through School of the Air, whilst living on their traditional country and maintaining their culture and language.

Julie commented that they need more people out there to help with all the new jobs! Family who live in Alice Springs are keen to move back, but the community currently lacks the housing to support more people. Hopefully in the future Ulpanyali will have further opportunities to grow and develop, and Bushlight looks forward to continuing to work with this inspiring community.