

**MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR – A GROWING FOCUS**



As the Bushlight project works with an ever-increasing number of communities, the Maintenance section is also expanding its operations. Two new staff members will be joining our Maintenance Coordinator, Marcus McKay, as the project extends its maintenance services to include non-Bushlight installed RE systems.

Providing regular and coordinated maintenance is “beneficial to everyone” says Marcus, as it increases the pool of qualified and reliable contractors. It also takes the pressure off Resource Agencies while ensuring that communities continue to receive reliable power.

Currently, maintenance contracts are being established and grouped into maintenance runs, which group systems geographically (see above map). Bushlight expects that these runs will encourage an ongoing relationship to develop between communities and contractors. The aim of setting-up an annual maintenance schedule is to identify potential problems before they affect the operation of the system.

Bushlight’s maintenance contracts are “providing additional work for the industry” says Marcus. It is important that Bushlight has confidence in the quality of contractors’ work and the team will periodically accompany them on service runs to ensure consistent quality and to build and encourage relationships within the industry.

There is a strong demand for Bushlight to assist with the maintenance of non-Bushlight systems, providing this focused approach across regional and remote Australia.

To find out more about maintenance, contact Marcus: [maintenance@bushlight.org.au](mailto:maintenance@bushlight.org.au)



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**MOUNT THEO: TURNING YOUNG LIVES AROUND**

The Mt Theo Program is the primary organisation responsible for addressing substance misuse in the Warlpiri region. In 1994, as a community response to crisis levels of sniffing in Yuendumu, Mt Theo Outstation was opened. The Program is now recognized nationally and internationally as providing an effective and innovative response to substance misuse. (from <http://www.mttheo.org/home.htm>)



The new dormitory at Mt Theo

The supervisors at Mt Theo (most of whom are traditional owners) take the young people hunting and gathering for bush foods. They provide love and care to the young people and engage them in informal counselling and healing discussions about life issues. Young people are taught about country and culture, and are engaged in cultural activities such as painting and beading. Sometimes there are structured programs such as horticulture and construction courses.

Bushlight has worked with Mt Theo Program managers and residents to design and install a community renewable energy system to help Mt Theo continue to provide this important service to the region’s youth at risk. A new dormitory building has recently been completed and the Bushlight system will provide power to this new building too, enabling the use of fans, lights, refrigeration, entertainment and washing machines to make visitors more comfortable.

Mt Theo is an example of a successful community response to the challenges of life in remote areas. Visit their excellent website to find out more about Mt Theo and their plans for the future:

<http://www.mttheo.org/home.htm>

**In this Issue of Bushlight News**

MOUNT THEO: A COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT	1
KIMBERLEY REGION : LIVING THE DREAM	2
TOP END ACTION: WHAT THE DRY SEASON WILL BRING	3
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR: A GROWING FOCUS	4

**KIMBERLEY REGIONAL MANAGER MOVES ON**

John Schmidt has been the Kimberley Regional Manager for Bushlight since the project’s inception in 2002. Kimberley local and Bushlight’s current Project Officer in Derby, David d’Antoine, will take over as Regional Manager on John’s departure on June 30 2007.

“In the first year or so I spent a lot of time working with ATSI Regional Councils and visiting many, many communities with Ernie Hunter learning the territory, building understanding and support for the Bushlight project goals.”

“By 2004 we had Bushlight projects in full swing and have been hard at it ever since. It is a great satisfaction that virtually all of our communities are just so delighted with their Bushlight system and having access to reliable 24hr power supplies. Many have been able to divert money to new community projects such as business enterprises, once released from the weekly burden of finding money for diesel. This is the absolute core of what we set out to do and the community members are saying we were right on the money.”



John Schmidt bids farewell to the pindan and his trusty Bushlight vehicle

**KIMBERLEY REGION: LIVING THE DREAM IN MUNGET**

The community of Munget sits atop a red pindan cliff overlooking the turquoise water of Pender Bay on the Dampier Peninsular, 170kms north of Broome. It has taken Lennie O'Meara and Jacinta Monck a lot of hard work to get this little homeland to where it is today, and they have plans in the pipeline for further improvements.

When Lennie and Jacinta moved permanently to Munget in 1999 they had a block of bushland and a spectacular view but nothing in the way of infrastructure. Their first house at Munget was a small self-built dwelling made from bush timber and recycled corrugated iron sheeting. Their only power supply was a small portable generator which they purchased in 2001. Residents even had to cart water from town until pipes were laid in mid-2002.



A Bushlight community system was installed in September 2005, at the same time as the completion of a new four bedroom house funded by WA Department of Housing and Works.

Jacinta told Bushlight in May 2007 that one of the biggest changes since having reliable 24 hour power is that they have not had to throw out so much food because they no longer have to turn the fridge/freezer off at night. This is an important outcome particularly given that there are four young children living at Munget and it is a long drive to get to a shop. The home computer has enabled Oseyahn, the oldest child at Munget, to start her primary schooling from home through Kimberley School of the Air and made it possible for Lennie and Jacinta to run their community business.

The money Munget residents have saved on diesel consumption has meant that they have been able to focus more strongly on working towards their vision for the future of the community.



When Bushlight commenced the Community Energy Planning process in Munget in 2004, the vision for the community's future was to achieve economic sustainability and to preserve the coastal and bushland environments in their surrounding area.

Aspirations for the future were also identified by Munget residents. The primary aspiration was to set up an ecotourism venture that incorporated camel treks from the bush to the beach. In the past 12 months, Lennie and Jacinta have bought seven camels, and have begun marketing their camel rides and establishing networks with tour companies and visitor centres to attract more visitors.

In addition to the tourism enterprise Munget community has joined the Willing Workers on Organic Farms network. Volunteer 'WWOOFers' come and spend a week or two at the community helping with whatever is needed at the time in exchange for food and accommodation. The volunteers help with building, gardening, erosion prevention and camel work.



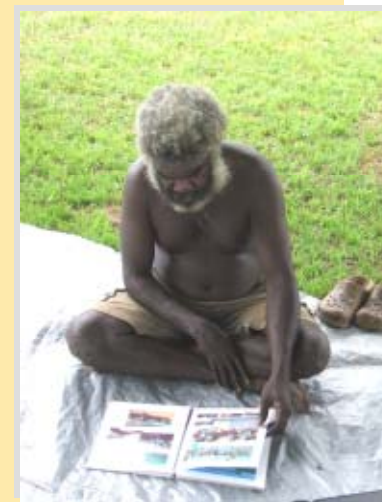
Jacinta Monck and Lennie O'Meara and youngest Munget resident Marlu, with David D'Antoine from Bushlight (centre)

Despite having achieved so much in the past few years, Lennie and Jacinta are keen to continue building on their achievements at Munget. They are currently seeking funding to build a café and gallery to attract more tourists and to help foster the local Aboriginal art scene.

**TOP END ACTION**

As the Top End emerges from the wet season, Bushlight's Darwin-based regional team are gearing up for a busy dry.

Bushlight's second round of funding has seen a new trend develop in Bushlight's operations toward working with larger communities and a growing emphasis on repair and maintenance (see story page 4). The Top End Regional Energy Planning process prioritised some of the team's activities in the Maningrida region for the first time, where approximately 80 solar systems are already in place. These systems are renewable energy systems that have been installed prior to Bushlight's involvement in the area.



Stuart from Ji-Benna looking at Bushlight photos

**Ji-Benna:** Currently at Ji-Benna community, small non-Bushlight household systems provide 24 hour power to the houses most of the year, but are unreliable during the wet season. Bushlight has commenced its Community Energy Planning process in Ji-Benna, spending a couple of days talking with residents about their power use, auditing the existing infrastructure and designing a power system to meet the resident's energy needs throughout the year. The resource agency, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, has a keen interest in Bushlight's approach in Ji-Benna and neighbouring homelands Ji-Malawa and Ji-Marda, as they've identified that aspects of Bushlight's program may also be suitable for other homelands around Maningrida.



Ji-Benna residents talking about energy use with Ken from Bushlight

**Lingarra:** Lingarra is a large homeland located near Yarralin, (south of Timber Creek) with a population of up to 75 residents. Bushlight was asked to work at this community as the existing hybrid power system was functioning poorly and community expenditure on diesel was very high.

Bushlight has focused on training residents about efficient energy use and auditing the existing system and the community's energy use. Bushlight, in consultation with residents and the Walangeri Ngumpinku Community Government Council, are addressing these issues by recommending that high demand appliances like solar hot water boosters are powered independently of the RE system. Bushlight is also implementing Demand Side Management solutions like changing all lights to 20 watt fluorescent tube lights and installing timers on ceiling fans. The community can expect the reduction in annual energy use from these changes to be in the order of 30 to 50 percent.

Even though the implementation of these solutions are yet to be completed, the basic training undertaken to date has already seen a drop in energy costs for residents, who are spending less on their fuel cards.



Lingarra kids join in the energy planning process

Ken Aitchison, the Top End's Regional Manager, believes that it is good practice to combine infrastructure development with training and information about energy use. "It's great to be working with a new bunch of communities in the Top End and to see the ongoing impact that reliable renewable energy systems are having in the communities" says Ken. "Ongoing maintenance of the existing systems is a real focus for us over the coming months to ensure that Bushlight systems will be working well for people living on country long into the future."