



STORIES OF CHANGE

STORY #4
MARCH 2019

Littlewell *strength in shared strategic vision*

Change

On the outskirts of the town of Mingenew in Midwest Western Australia lies a former Aboriginal reserve named Jinjamarba Baba, or Littlewell. In 2010, a group of elders—who are either former residents of Littlewell, or their descendants—established the Littlewell Working Group. There are now 30 members in the Group. The vision of the Group was to preserve the reserve, and build a heritage trail to celebrate and honour the lives of people who had lived there. They also wanted to record the history of the area, and post it online, so that their stories would not be lost in time.

The reserve was closed in 1972, and given to the Shire of Mingenew to use for recreational purposes. Littlewell realised early on that it would be important to work closely with the Shire in order to move towards their long-term dream. A key spokesperson was elected for the Group, who spent time building a relationship with the shire, with the local community, and other key stakeholders. Over time, this responsibility was shared by group members.

Littlewell has now achieved their dream to establish the trail and record their stories. This is a testament to their persistence, resilience, strategic thinking, and effective governance over the years. The Group won the 2019 NAIDOC Award for Caring for Country and the 2018 award of Woolworths Community Group of the Year through the Western Australian Regional Achievement and Community Awards as further evidence of their success.

“These stories are everything, they are important for our grannies, for us to be able to say this is where we came from, this is who we are, some of our grannies are young, teenagers, not really interested in these stories now, but in a few years they will be, now they will be able to have something to listen to, they will know who they are, know they come from somewhere.”

- Kathy Jacobs

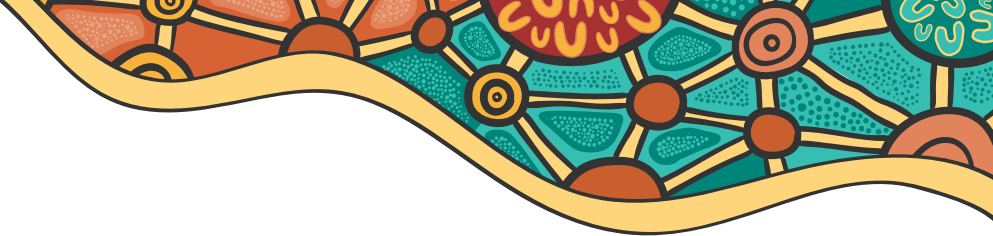
Social Policy Implications

There are a number of success factors that enabled Littlewell to achieve their dream. These factors are worthy of reflection, and should be incorporated into the design of other policies, programs and initiatives in order to yield positive results.

Littlewell had total control over decision-making, and directed their energy towards building relationships and working in partnership. This approach was key for Littlewell's success. The Working Group developed a strong relationship with the Shire of Mingenew, which was then formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This enabled the Shire to submit funding applications on the group's behalf, as the funding body required the application to be submitted by the legal owner of the land. Littlewell also established close relationships with Lotterywest, the key funding body, and with CFD.

Community control—which underpins CFD's community development approach—and working in partnership have been recognised as factors common to successful community-managed programs and organisations.





Specifically, community ownership over decision-making, and the 'establishment of trusting relationships with partners.' Through its relationships with the Shire and CFD, Littlewell is further evidence of the success of such an approach.

In addition to these factors, the long-term focus of Littlewell was a key enabler in their achievements. The group worked over many years to achieve their vision, and this would not have been possible in a shorter time-frame. This is partly due to the time it takes to build strong and meaningful relationships with partners, and because change takes time. In designing policy, programs or funding opportunities, a short project life cycle presents challenges in achieving social change. A lack of long-term commitment from external funding bodies has been acknowledged as an obstacle to successful community programs.

"Given the level and extent of disadvantage in some communities, and the fact that responses to social problems require significant time and resources, strict adherence to short-term implementation timelines is problematic (Hunt, 2010; Smith, 2004 in CFCA Paper No. 32)."

CFD reflections

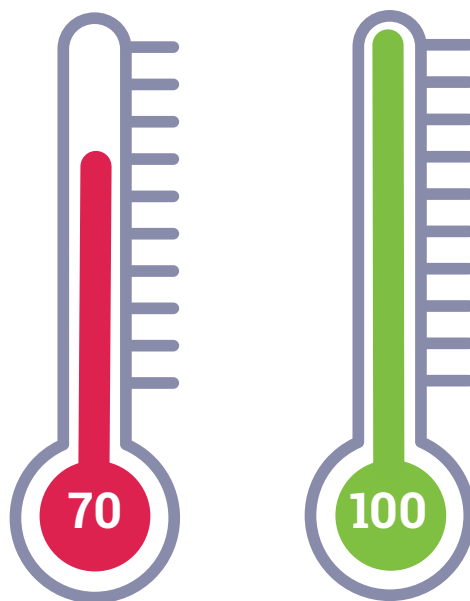
Littlewell have achieved all of their project indicators, and now, their dream indicators as well. As demonstrated below, the ultimate goal for the group was to establish a heritage trail at the reserve to commemorate the lives of Aboriginal families who resided there, and this has been achieved.

The first monitoring point reads '70' as the group had put a lot of time, money and resources into the project before CFD came on board as a key partner in 2014. The Group originally sought support from CFD to assist with writing funding applications for the reserve, and CFD has remained involved with Littlewell since. Between 2014-2018, CFD has worked with Littlewell on two projects – Littlewell Submission Writing Project (2014-2017) and Littlewell Oral History Project (2015-2018).

CFD's Community Development approach involves building on the existing strengths and assets of a community, and Littlewell is testament to the success of this model. Littlewell had complete control over the vision and implementation of their projects, which facilitated a strong sense of ownership for what they were working towards. CFD played a support role, providing the Group with additional assistance where required.

Now that Littlewell has achieved their dream, they are considering other potential cultural preservation projects in the area.

Progress towards dream indicator: A heritage trail is established at Littlewell reserve to commemorate the lives of Aboriginal families who resided there



First monitoring point

Second monitoring point

We are not in a position to attribute Littlewell's strengthened governance to its involvement with CFD. CFD is, however, in the process of conducting participatory research to better understand the impact of a community development approach on the governance structures of communities we work with.

The evidence base on what constitutes 'good governance' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development highlights a number of key themes:



Attribute	Description	Evidence to support this attribute
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1. Engagement

Community: community members and relevant local networks inform and/or participate in the decision-making process

Broader networks: relevant stakeholders from the broader network, such as governments or other external institutions, inform and/or participate in the decision-making process

The Littlewell Working group was formed in 2010, after a community meeting was held with Elders, key players and families from the Littlewell Reserve. All the families who have a connection to the reserve were consulted and as a result, they have representation from all of these families in the Littlewell Working Group. The 30 members are therefore able to bring their knowledge and understanding of the area to the work that they do.

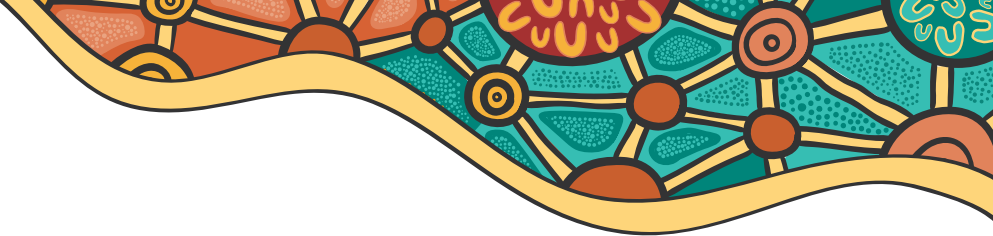
The group made the decision to elect a spokesperson to build and manage relationships with other stakeholders, both local and external to the community. This role has played a key role in strengthening engagement.

Littlewell has been very strategic about building a few key partnerships. Bringing the Mingenew Shire on board right from the start, for example, proved to be an effective approach as the Group later discovered Lotterywest would only accept a funding application if it was submitted by the Mingenew Shire. This was because the reserve site comes under the Shire's portfolio.

Fortunately, as the Group had already done so much significant groundwork in building the partnership with the Shire and securing their support for the vision, it was a straightforward process to get the Shire to submit the funding application on their behalf. This process may have been more challenging and drawn out if the Group did not have such a collaborative approach, or a pre-existing relationship with the Shire.



Littlewell has now achieved their dream. This is a testament to their persistence, resilience, strategic thinking, and effective governance.



2. Clear and shared strategic direction

A shared long-term view for what the community wants to do, and a timeline, or 'map', of how it will happen

The Group has shown strong consistency and commitment to the same, shared vision from the outset. An original planning document that the Group developed in June 2012 states, amongst other things, that they hope to 'Protect and preserve Littlewell for heritage and cultural education.' They continue to outline their intention to 'teach...next generations "Dreamtime Stories", their place of belonging, identity, culture, tradition, heritage'

In the same planning session, the Littlewell Working Group identified a key goal for the opening of the reserve: "On the day of handing back Mingenew Aboriginal Reserve Jinjamarba Baba, "Littlewell," back to "Littlewell Group" our Elders want to plant three trees where the original three trees are located. These three trees have significant cultural implications to our Littlewell people". In keeping with this original objective, the Littlewell Working Group plan to hold a special tree planting ceremony during the opening, to honour and celebrate the Mingenew mob, past and present.

3. Embedded culture

Governing in line with cultural and community values, understandings, and behaviours. Cultural principles that underpin First Nations systems of governance may include, for example:

- A wide network of relationships
- Relationships built on shared culture
- Decision-making by consensus
- Strong links between geography and community identity

The members of the Littlewell Working Group, despite now residing in different areas, are all connected by their shared experiences of the reserve. Their shared culture, and strong determination to preserve it, is the driving force behind everything that they do.

There are strong links between the Littlewell reserve and the identity of Group members, many of whom spent their formative years in the area. This is evident in the requirement for members to be former residents of Littlewell, or their descendants.

4. Effective administration

Sufficient and appropriate:

- processes (organisational policies, mediations, rules, roles and responsibilities),
- resources (natural assets, infrastructure, cultural, social, economic and human capital), and
- capability (leadership, financial management etc)

The Littlewell Working group chose not to incorporate and instead focused on a collaborative approach, developing strong partnerships to progress the Littlewell vision.

"Littlewell Group's aspiration/inspiration was to work in partnership with **Community First Development** and Mingenew Shire Council to preserve Littlewell as a place of belonging, history, culture, identity and heritage" – Littlewell spokesperson.

This removed many of the requirements on the group in terms of their administration, however they put mechanisms in place where necessary to assist them to effectively manage their affairs. For example, the election of a spokesperson was important for engaging with everyone and keeping all members in the loop.



5. Accountability: external and among community

Actions and decisions are justified and communicated, in particular to community members and the wider network

As an unincorporated group, Littlewell are not required to report to a regulator, as this line of accountability does not exist. At the same time, however, Littlewell invests time in its relationships, and is committed to keeping the local community and key stakeholders up to date with any developments or decisions. Littlewell Working Group has invested hundreds of hours travelling to the reserve to meet with stakeholders and the shire and there have been hundreds of emails exchanged. CFD has held regular teleconferences over the four years working with Littlewell.

6. Legitimacy

Acknowledged legal, jurisdictional and cultural authority, and the genuine power to make decisions

The Littlewell Working Group was formed by a group of Elders in 2010. All members have a strong connection with the land and local community, and have now been working together for an extended period of time. The Group derives its cultural legitimacy from these attributes.

As the Group is not incorporated and the reserve does not officially belong to them, it has built a strong partnership with the Shire to leverage their legal and jurisdictional authority.

7. Strong leadership

Influential and respected leaders who act on behalf of shared values, and are held accountable for the decisions that they make. Leaders should encourage cooperation, use resources effectively, resolve conflicts and problems transparently, care for Country, and get things done

Whilst there is no explicit hierarchy underpinning the Littlewell Working Group, the key spokesperson for the Group will often lead, through engaging with key stakeholders and keeping members on the same page. His style is strong and inclusive, and geared towards extensive consultation with everyone with an interest in the Littlewell reserve. Littlewell are very transparent and actively encourage partners to travel on the journey with them. They celebrate wins and successes with stakeholders along the way.

Key references and Acknowledgements

Australian Institute of Family Studies, 'What works in effective Indigenous community-managed programs and organisations', Child Family Community Australia CFCA Paper No. 32, 2015.

The Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, Indigenous Governance Toolkit: Culture is what makes governance strong, <http://toolkit.aigi.com.au/toolkit/2-1-indigenous-governance-and-culture>.

This paper has been co-authored with Thomas Cameron, spokesperson for the Littlewell Working Group.

We recognise the support of the Mingenew Shire, Lotterywest, CFD community development staff Doyen Radcliffe and Emma Mulvaney and volunteer Peter White who was instrumental in progressing the Group's aims.

We also acknowledge the members of the Littlewell Working Group and Littlewell family members, Buddy Alone, Reg Brockman, Yvonne Bradley, Annette Bynder, Lorraine Bynder, Colleen Alone, Anita Farrell, Kathy Jacobs, our respected "Littlewell" Elders, Roma Cameron (Deceased) Maxine Cameron (Deceased) Uncle Bill Jones, Uncle Vernon Brockman, Brother Horace Bynder (Harvey), Alfred Farrell (Patch). Their dedication and investment of time, travel and personal resources saw this vision through to fruition. We thank them for their bravery and courage to share their stories with us all.

COMMUNITY FIRST DEVELOPMENT

OUR VISION

First Nations peoples and communities are thriving

WHO WE ARE

Community First Development is a First Nations community development and research organisation that creates positive change in and with First Nations communities.

WHAT WE DO

We undertake social and economic development, and research projects in partnership with First Nations communities, businesses and people. Communities have control; they name the priorities and choose the design, assets, capabilities and approaches to achieve their vision. We provide tailored support through community partners, skilled staff, trained volunteers, key supporters and service providers



*We do things with,
not to or for, our people.*

CONTACT US

T 1800 819 542

W communityfirstdevelopment.org.au

E info@communityfirstdevelopment.org.au