

REPORT TO NGAANYATJARRAKU SHIRE ON CONSULTATIONS AND HERITAGE SURVEY IN
RELATION TO PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF A BYPASS ROAD ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF
JAMESON COMMUNITY

Dr David Brooks

Principal Anthropologist, Ngaanyatjarra Council Land and Culture Unit

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Executive Summary

A heritage survey was undertaken on 19th November for the purpose of determining an acceptable route that was 'clear' in terms of heritage issues, for a planned Bypass Road around the western side of Jameson Community. The need for such a route to be identified had arisen in the context of plans by the Shire to channel large vehicular 'through' traffic as much as possible along the so-called 'Cutline' between Palytjikata junction past Jameson, rather than along the Warburton-Jameson road as is currently the practice.

This was a more complex and time-consuming exercise than the usual 'clearance surveys' undertaken by Ngaanyatjarra Council Land and Culture for Shire roadworks. This was largely due to the fact that the proposed works will impinge in a major way on the Jameson community. There were issues of community amenity (dust, noise, safety) and a known proximity to very important cultural sites (which are restricted to senior men). Thus the matter needed to be discussed sensitively with the community and the decision-makers at Jameson given time to absorb and think about the proposal. Preliminary discussions were required, and planning arranged among several parties, including the mining company Cassini, which has a significant interest in the matter. In addition, complications and delays arose at several points in the consultations, related to the existence of some prior suppositions about where the new route might be located.

In the event, an agreed route for the new Bypass road was driven and confirmed as acceptable by the heritage survey team convened by me (David Brooks) on 19th November. This route is delineated on maps attached in this report (see Figure 2) and a GPS track log of this route was supplied to the Shire by Cassini staff member Peter Collet. The Shire may proceed with road construction along this route as soon as it likes.

A comment is required here concerning the other road building that is proposed around the outskirts of Jameson, on the southern and eastern sides of the community, to augment the Bypass and rationalize access to the airstrip, among other things. These locations and proposals have not yet been the subject of a heritage survey, and are not addressed further within this report. The report deals with the western Bypass road only.

Background

The issue of the 'transport corridor' from west to east across the Ngaanyatjarra Lands has probably been a consideration for the Shire for some time, but it has been intensified in the last twelve months by the 'ramping up' of the proposed mine development some 30 km south of Jameson (the 'West Musgrave Project') by the joint venture partners Cassini and Oz Minerals. In April and May 2018 the company (referred to here by the shortened form 'Cassini') progressed planning and supported heritage surveys for some of the infrastructure components of the proposed mine. These components included a haulage road that was to be located between the central mine area and the Warburton-Jameson road – joining that road at a point near Mt Burt, 30 km south west of Jameson. This access route was investigated in this way on the assumption that the ore from the mine would be trucked out of the Lands to south west Western Australia via the Warburton-Jameson road, past Warburton, then down to Laverton and destinations beyond.

However, during September 2018 the Shire President, Damian McLean, advised the company and the Land and Culture Unit, which is working closely with the company on the West Musgrave Project and has been undertaking the relevant heritage surveys, of a new plan to re-locate the Ngaanyatjarra transport corridor so that heavy traffic would make use of the Great Central Road in the section east of Warburton to the Palytjikata intersection, and then the 'Cut-line' between that point and Jameson. Near Jameson, it would merge into the existing main road past Blackstone and Wingellina.

The advantages of this new proposed route, as we understand them, are that:

1. It allows for the large community of Warburton to be bypassed.
2. The Warburton-Jameson road is located within hilly country which limits the amount of straightening and widening that can occur, and makes over-taking of slower vehicles difficult, whereas the 'Cut line' is located in more open terrain that allows for optimum location of the alignment and good visibility.
3. It allows an extra 110 km of the Great Central Road to be used for the transport corridor, with only a 50 – 60 stretch of the 'Cut line' required; whereas the Warburton-Jameson road is 130 km in length. (This does however mean that the overall route is some 40 km longer than the existing route.)

This new plan posed the question for the company as to whether it could accommodate this change within its own transport plans. If it did so, it would then be hauling ore out of the mine northwards to near Jameson, then along the new route as described above. The plans to go west from the mine site would have to be abandoned. The resolution of this issue is of course a matter for the company, and cannot be anticipated here.

The other issue that the new plan posed was where to locate the route in the immediate vicinity of Jameson. While the Jameson 'Cut line' has certain factors in its

favour as indicated above, it is currently a relatively little-used access route specifically into Jameson community. As it approaches Jameson, it follows a makeshift alignment immediately around the western edge of the community. It is not integrated into the network of bituminised streets within the community.

Clearly, a new location would be required so that the community would be effectively bypassed by the heavy 'through' traffic that would be the major users of the transport corridor in future. Good practice, in terms of community amenity, would dictate that this route would need to be much further away from the community than is currently the case. The mining company would also have its own standards in such a matter: that is, they would need to ensure that their activities, such as hauling ore in huge trucks, did not compromise local community amenity, including safety.

Following the advice from Damian McLean as mentioned above, I indicated that I was scheduled to do my next piece of work on the mine development project starting in mid October 2018, and that I would now factor into my plans the need to do a clearance survey for the possible new Jameson Bypass route.

By the time I arrived in the area in mid October I learned that Elves Brites had already undertaken some local consultations about the plans and had driven a possible route with some senior men, his purpose being to assess the physical suitability of various options in conjunction with seeing which options might be acceptable to the senior custodians of the important cultural sites and other cultural constraints known to be close by. He was clear in his own mind that his work was not a heritage clearance, and that this clearance would be undertaken by an anthropologist (me) at a later time.

While his approach seemed logical enough, and would under many circumstances be a helpful and sensible way to proceed, unfortunately in this case one of the senior men, who happened to be the key person in the consultations, became confused when I arrived and began talking to him about the clearance, saying that he had already done it. There was another complicating factor here, which was that the route they had driven was within 300m of the edge of the community at some points, which taking all factors into account would be regarded as too close, or at least as short of best practice, by many experts.

This kind of hiccup can quite often occur and providing I can sort out matters in due course (which I eventually did) it would not concern me too much and I probably would not even mention it in a report like this. However it happened to coincide with another issue that had arisen. This was that the new Shire CEO, evidently in attempting to institute some more standardised and professional procedures into how the organisation sources and administers clearance processes, was pressing the Manager of Land and Culture, Alex Knight, to submit a proposal and quote for this clearance. I understand that he also had time constraints with funding and possibly the availability of the road works team for the construction of the Bypass and the upgrading of the rest

of the Cutline. Alex passed this matter on to me, but I had to say that given the complications I could not reasonably assess how much time it would take me to be able to provide the requested clearance.

During the time I was at Jameson working with Cassini on other matters, between 23rd and 30th October, I made several unsuccessful attempts to get the key elder to cooperate. Then on the 5th and 6th November, while in Alice Springs, I received numerous calls and viewed and responded to many emails sent by or involving Alex, Damian and the Shire CEO over when the survey would be done. I said that I would do it in two weeks time.

Survey preliminaries

On the 16th November I made a special trip from Warburton to Jameson to talk to the key elder and this time he agreed to cooperate. This led to me visiting Jameson again on Monday 19th, when we undertook the survey and managed to get the clearance obtained. As I had no one else either from the Council or anywhere else to assist me (it being normal to have two staff persons undertake such an exercise) I sought and obtained help from Zoran Seat, the Exploration Manager for Cassini, who sent Peter Collett, an employee, up from the camp for the day for this purpose. He helped transport some of the clearance team on the survey and assisted with mapping and the use of the GPS in the field. Zoran had also assisted me beforehand, over the weekend, by providing locational data to Peter for the printing out of maps.

During his earlier visits mentioned above, Elves Brites had pegged out a route which as indicated, was quite close to the community. The immediate reason for the closeness, I came to understand, was because of the location of a storehouse for men's cultural materials (which they call their 'museum'). The structure is among some mulga bush about 500 m. west of the community. The senior men who accompanied him had steered him far enough east of this structure that it would be out of sight from the new road. This brought them within 300 m. of the community.

An alternative possibility was for the route to be placed to the west of the museum. However out in that direction is a major tjukurrpa (Dreaming) track that can only be accessed or even talked about by senior men, and presumably for that reason, such an option was not pursued.

Later, in response to comments about the closeness of his pegged route to the community, which he agreed was not really satisfactory, Elves drew another route on a map which stayed true to the first alignment in the southern sector but went further west in the north. This route formed a straight line going north-south.

When I came to do this piece of work, I had the benefit of having previously (in 2009) surveyed the Dreaming track concerned. On the basis of this work the track had been mapped, with a 1 km corridor. This corridor represented an exclusion zone for

development purposes, in the context of mining exploration that was occurring at the time. I requested that this GIS data and some relevant site locations be provided to Cassini for purposes of generating maps for consultation and use in the field (see Figure 1). With the aid of my map showing the corridor I was able to point out to the men with whom I consulted that the Dreaming track was about 3 km away from the community in the relevant area.

The survey

Arriving at Jameson before 9:00 a.m. on 19th Nov 2018 I began talks with a group of men. Five of these participated in the survey. Because of the nature of the Tjukurrpa that was out in the area concerned, this was not a survey in which the women would take part. Peter Collett from Cassini arrived soon after.

With the aid of the maps, including the ones that showed the location of the Tjukurrpa corridor, I was able to get the men to agree to have a look at a route that would go to the west of the museum.

Thus we set off north out of Jameson along the Cutline for a short distance until we reached a spot we thought suitable for a departure point off road to the south west. This point turned out to be near a slight bend in the road (see maps for locational information). My idea at this stage was to give the community as wide a berth as possible out to the west, so that maybe it would be about halfway between the Tjukurrpa track (3 km out) and the community.

We did in fact traverse such a route, with our two vehicles becoming separated by about 200 m. as we made our way through a mulga thicket in the southern part of our journey. We came out at the Warburton-Jameson road a few hundred m. east of the small bore and outstation called Parntirrpi (see track log).

At this point we had a discussion about whether that route would be acceptable. It had become apparent to me as we were driving, from the things the men were saying and the way they were reacting, that although we were some distance from the Tjukurrpa track proper, there was an influence of that Tjukurrpa being felt by them that was making them uneasy. This was confirmed when we had the discussion at the end. The main man summed it up by saying, "I don't really like it."

We decided to "park" this as a possible (but unlikely) option and go to look for another option. So we drove east along the main road until we got to the peg Elves had put in at the southern point of his proposed route. We then followed his pegs northwards. But instead of being able to continue north in the second part of the traverse, the men kept directing us towards the east. We ended up following exactly the same route that Elves had originally pegged, all the way along. It was then that I realized that the influence of the museum's presence was acting as the same constraint on us now as it had at the time Elves had made his trip several weeks previously.

We went back to the community at this point, and had to avoid a storm that had sprung up. We then sat and had a difficult discussion. I was asking myself whether or not we would have to resign ourselves to the original route that was less than 300 m. out. I then suggested that we try a third option, “in the middle”, not so far west as our first attempt today, but to the west of the museum. There was still a reluctance. I think this shows how the men give far, far less credence to issues of community amenity than they do to issues of cultural concern. They would rather put up with noise, dust, safety questions etc, than take risks with their cultural inheritance. However, this does not mean that community people would not complain if a road went in and the amenity problems became apparent. If there should ever be an accident involving a young child that was playing in the vicinity of the trucks, it would be a catastrophe.

Eventually, the deadlock broke and we all jumped back into our vehicles and did just what I suggested, that is drive a “middle route”. See map (Figure 2) for location. On completion of driving this alignment, there was a sense of relief and agreement among the men that this route was “OK”. Clearance was given.

After the clearance Peter Collett created GIS files of the track log for mapping purposes, including a buffer zone along the track driven. The heritage survey results map (Figure 2) delineates this corridor. These GIS files were in turn supplied to David Brooks and Elves Brites.

Subsequent work by me has involved seeing that the mapping gets done, notes get written up and the report prepared.

As an additional matter, I know that Elves was concerned to try and find a route that apart from being ‘cleared’, was favourable from a physical point of view (landforms, type of soil, elevation etc.) I was not really able to factor this into today’s clearance as Elves was not present for it. However, there was nothing obvious to me that indicated that the cleared route should pose too many problems from a physical point of view. In addition, Damian had advised me in relation to this question that the physical features, soil type, elevation etc are not constraining factors in determining the route.

Local participants in survey

Reggie Smith

Steve Mitchell

Hudson McLean

Nelson Lane

Darcy Woods.

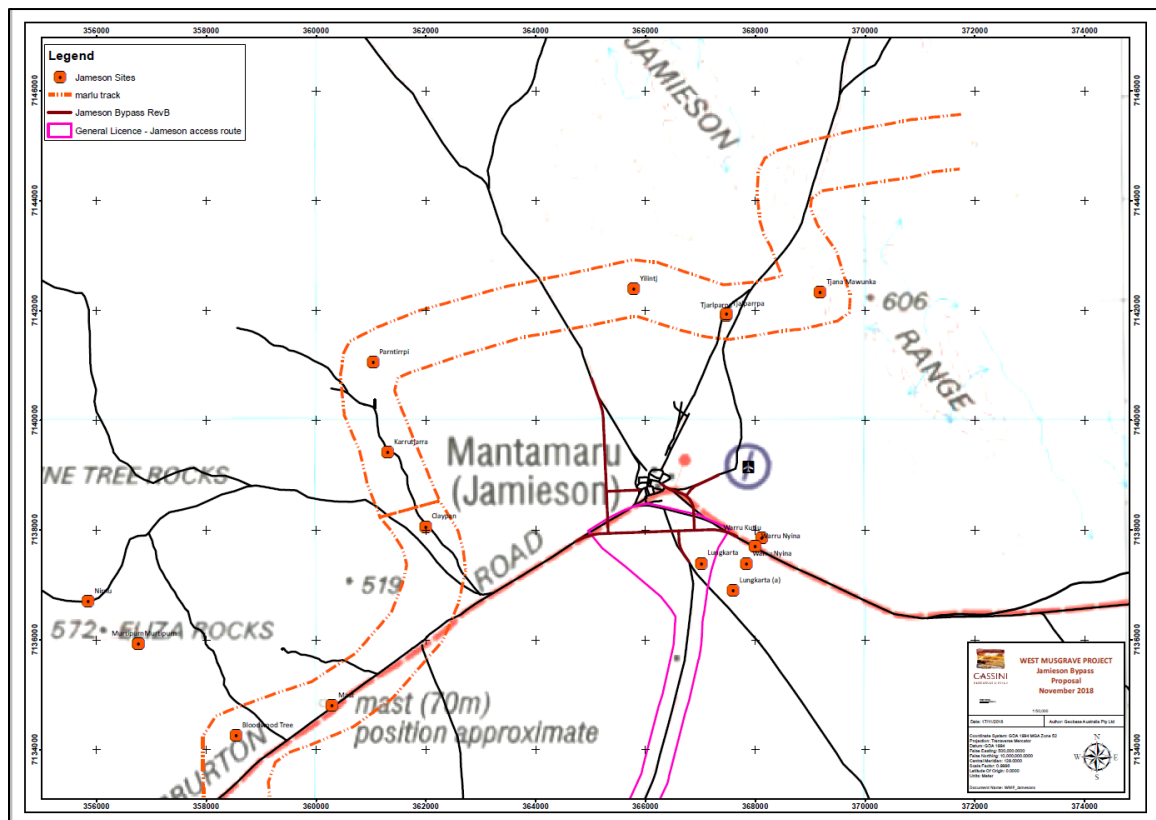


Figure 1: Cultural Heritage Survey Field map.

