



East Arnhem Region

**RAHC**  
REMOTE AREA HEALTH CORPS



*Community Profile*

**Groote Eylandt**

1st edition  
December 2009

This Community Profile provides you with information specific to Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory.

The information has been compiled through a number of text and internet resources, and consultations with members of the local communities.

The first version of this Community Profile was prepared for RAHC by The Echidna Group and we acknowledge and thank Dr Terri Farrelly and Ms Bronwyn Lumby for their contribution.

Other sources include:

<http://www.bhpbilliton.com/bb/ourBusinesses/manganese/gemco/traditionalOwners.jsp>

[http://www.touristaustralia.com.au/destinations/northernterritory/destination.asp?product\\_id=9039802](http://www.touristaustralia.com.au/destinations/northernterritory/destination.asp?product_id=9039802)

[http://www.ozoutback.com.au/postcards/postcards\\_forms/groote/Source/1.htm](http://www.ozoutback.com.au/postcards/postcards_forms/groote/Source/1.htm)

RAHC would also like to acknowledge and express gratitude to the Aboriginal people of Groote Eylandt who have so generously shared aspects of their culture and communities for use in this Profile.

\*Please note: The information provided in this community profile is correct, to the best of RAHC's knowledge, at the time of printing. This community profile will be regularly updated as new information comes to hand.

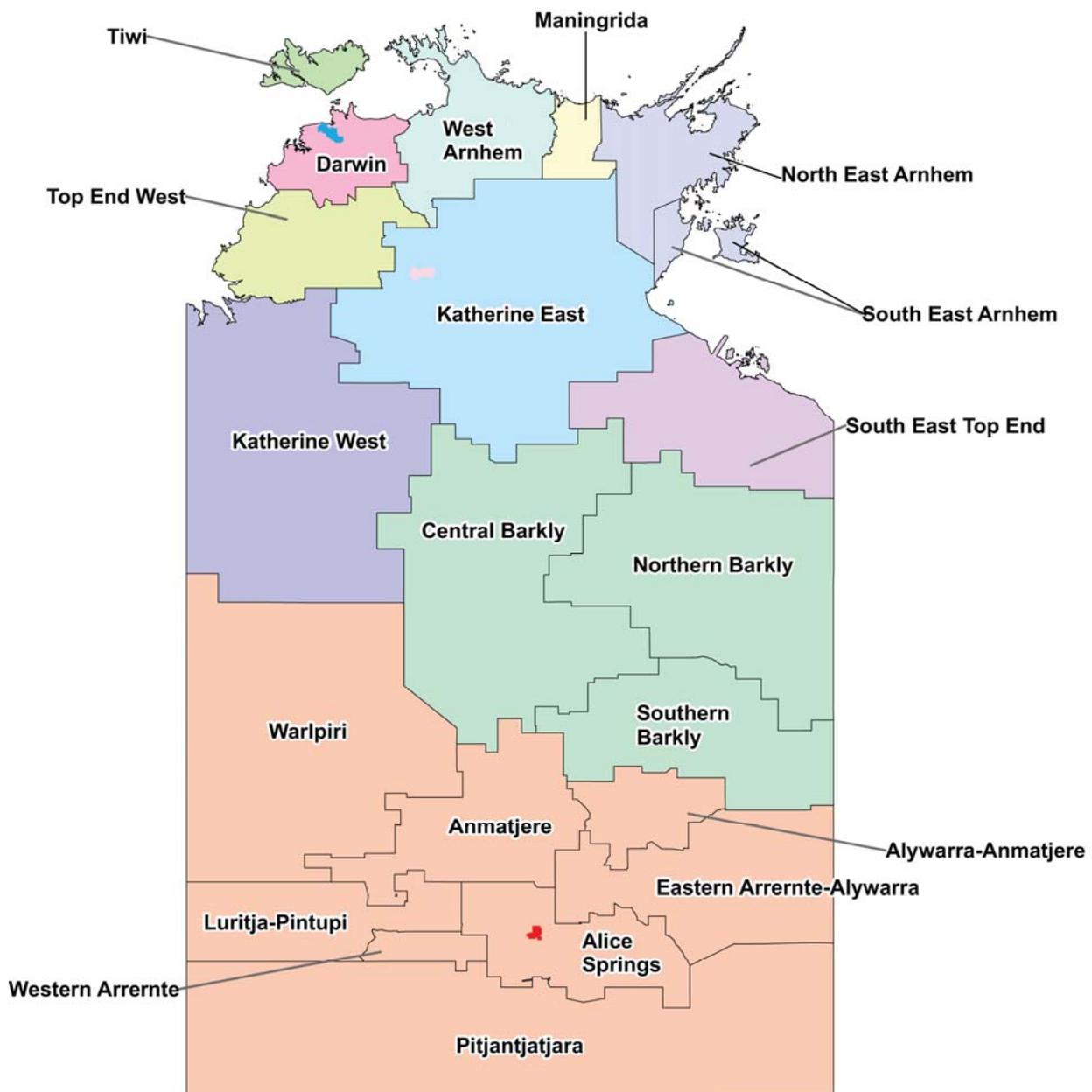
If you have any further information about this community that would be useful to add to this profile please contact RAHC via: [enquiries@rahc.com.au](mailto:enquiries@rahc.com.au) or call 1300 MYRAHC.

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# The Northern Territory



## Legend

<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Alice Springs Urban	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Katherine East
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Barkly	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Katherine Urban
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightpurple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Borroloola Area	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Katherine West
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Central Australia	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Maningrida
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Darwin Rural	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Tiwi
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Darwin Urban	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightyellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Top End West
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> East Arnhem	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightcyan; border: 1px solid black;"></span> West Arnhem

This map of the Northern Territory, divided into regions, has been adapted from the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) Program Management & Implementation Section (2008) Map of the Northern Territory.

The depicted areas are for the purpose of the Remote Area Health Corps Community Profiles alone, and do not represent any Aboriginal language group, land or cultural group boundaries.



# South-East Arnhem Area Profile

This map of the South-East Arnhem area has been taken from the map of the Northern Territory, adapted from the OATSIH Program Management & Implementation Section (2008) Map of the Northern Territory.



Major Communities – Groote Eyelandt & Islands		
Name	Population	Resource Centre
Alyangula	800	East Arnhem Shire Council
Angurugu	850	
Milyakburra	180	
Umbakumba	467	

\*The population figures refer to the number of Aboriginal peoples living in the community, and are estimates only.

It should be noted that in many Aboriginal communities, population figures can fluctuate dramatically, due to a number of factors including seasonal changes (wet and dry seasons), and ceremonial activity. Communities can also be known by several names – this may include the European name given to it after colonisation, and several Aboriginal names.

## Languages in the Region

The below languages are present in the East-Arnhem region. However it should be noted that as a result of colonisation, the growth of towns, and the transient nature of some Aboriginal peoples, there may be many different Aboriginal languages evident in a given area.

### Yolngu languages:

Dhay'ya – Djarrwark, Dhalwangu  
 Dhangu – Golumala, Rirratjinu, Galpu, Wangurri  
 Dhuwala – Gupapuyngu, Gumatj, Manggalili, Wubulkarra, Mandarrpa  
 Dhuwal – Djambarrpuyngu, Liyagalawumirr, Datiwuy, Marrangu, Djapu  
 Djangu – Warramirri, Mandatja  
 Djinang – Murrungur, Mildjingi, Wulagi

Alawa  
 Anindilyakwa  
 Kriol  
 Nunggubuyu

Kriol is the contact language now spoken as a first language by most Aboriginal people across the region. Kriol is spoken in the Barkly and further north, but not generally far south of Tennant Creek.

### Aboriginal Interpreter Service

[www.dlghs.nt.gov.au/ais](http://www.dlghs.nt.gov.au/ais)  
 NT Dept of Local Govt & Housing  
 Central booking service 08 8999 8353

The AIS Provides 24 hours 7 days a week central booking service.



# Groote Eylandt

## (Groot-eye-land)

Groote Eylandt means 'big island' in Dutch, and is indeed the largest island in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Dutch were the first Europeans to record the existence of the island, located 630 kilometres from Darwin off the east coast of Arnhem Land.

Groote Eylandt landscape is typical of the Top End, light woodland savannah country fringed by mangroves on the coast.

There are a number of communities on the island including Alyangula, Angurugu and Umbakumba.

Alyangula (ali-an-goola) is the main town with a population of around 1200 residents. Angurugu has a population of over 700. There is a small Aboriginal community of Umbakumba on the east coast of the island. Indigenous persons make up 42% (656\*) of the Groote Eylandt total population.

The first mission on the island was established at Emerald River in 1921, by the Anglican Church Missionary Society, then moved to Angurugu in 1943 after the RAAF took over the Emerald River airstrip as part of Australia's northern Defence. The mission continued until the community became a self-governing Aboriginal Town Council in 1979.

The economy of the island changed dramatically with the discovery of the manganese near Angurugu. In 1955 commercial geologists took manganese samples and in the early 1960's negotiations between BHP and the Church Missionary Society (representing the Aboriginal people) agreed on royalty payments to allow large scale mining to start. In 1964 the BHP subsidiary, Gemco granted leases on the island and in 1966 the first shipment of manganese ore left the island bound for a processing works in Tasmania. The island produces over 2 million tonnes of manganese a year-about 10% of the world's total production.

### Governance

The island belongs to the Warnindilyakwa people, and is part of the Arnhem Land Indigenous Reserve. The language is Anindilyakwa and is spoken by 14 clan groups, other languages spoken include, Nunggubuyu, Kriol and English.

### Infrastructure and Community Life

Health Professionals stay at the mining town of Alyangula which has two fully licensed restaurants and a Beach Resort. Alyangula has many social activities and sporting events. There are free movies on show twice a week, a small arcade with a post office, a chemist, newsagency, clothes shop, gift shop, café, hardware, supermarket and a bakery. The town also has a hair-dresser, electrical goods shop, newsagent, video hire, takeaway food outlets, clothing shops, mechanical workshop, veterinarian and service station.

Alyangula public library is shared with the Alyangula Area School, providing books, magazines, videos, computer games and puzzles and is the showplace for craft items made by the traditional land owners of Groote Eylandt. A second public library is available at Umbakumba. There are walking tracks around Alyangula, a swimming pool and a golf course. There are areas of Groote Eylandt that are permanently closed to non-Anindilyakwa people, and all areas on the Eylandt are subject to closure without notice.

Groote Eylandt is well known for camping, fishing and boating. Recreation permits are required for camping. All of Groote Eylandt is Aboriginal Land and permission to enter must be sought prior to arrival from the Anindilyakwa Land Council.

Phones in the accommodation are free for local and national calls; international calls require a personal phone card. There is a police station located in Alyangula Groote Eylandt

### Access

Groote Eylandt has regular flights from Darwin and Cairns. The flight is approximately 2 hours from Darwin. On the island there is 18km of bitumen road from Angurugu to Alyangula. Roads to homelands are unsealed and not always accessible during the wet season.

There is a baggage limit of 20 kilograms when travelling via Air North and excessive baggage will be charged by the airline at approximately \$5 per kg. A carry on bag with the essentials and a change of clothes for the first night is advisable in case the airline has to offload your baggage to a later flight.

NB: Groote Eylandt has a very strict alcohol management system and it is against the law to bring alcohol onto the island. Takeaway alcohol cannot be purchased however you will be able to have a drink at one of the clubs.



# The Health Clinics

The following centres are managed by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families.

## Alyangula Health Centre

The Alyangula Health Centre provides quality health care to residents of Alyangula. It caters for routine and emergency patients with consultation rooms, an emergency room, a two single bed observation ward, X-ray unit, waiting room and dental clinic. After-hours services are available for emergencies and other serious health matters. Specialist doctors visit Groote Eylandt on a regular basis.



## Angurugu Health Centre

Angurugu Clinic is open Monday – Friday 0800 -1630 and is situated within the community. There are three nurses on each day and two Aboriginal Health Workers. There are no appointments, the Health Centre operates on a walk-in patient basis. Two Mental Health Workers also operate out of the Health Centre.

On Call is shared between up to 10 Remote Area Nurse's on the island so on call duties can be limited. Health Professionals will be a part of a large team and very well supported.

Bartalumba Bay, Little Paradise, Leske, Amagula, Yanbagwa, Malgala and Emerald River are also serviced by Angurugu Health Centre

## Accommodation/Vehicles & Food

Department of Health and Families vehicles may be available to do grocery shopping but are not generally available for personal use. There are plenty of places to get food on the island; however, it is advisable to take any speciality items with you that may not be obtainable at the supermarket.

There will be a small amount of basics in the accommodation on arrival but staff are expected to purchase their own supplies from the shop. Accommodation is clean, tidy and strictly smoke-free. Linen packs will be issued to Health Professionals on arrival and are to be returned at the end of the placement.



## Getting Advice

The following organisations and contact numbers may be useful in locating sources of advice about Groote Eylandt. Care has been taken to ensure these details are correct, however unfortunately some may change or be unattended.

East Arnhem Shire Council  
GPO Box 4246 Darwin NT 0801  
Ph: 1300 764 573  
[Info.eastarnhem@eastarnhem.nt.gov.au](mailto:Info.eastarnhem@eastarnhem.nt.gov.au)

Umbakumba Community Council Incorporated  
Alyangula NT 0885  
Ph: 08 8987 6790

Anindilyakwa Land Council  
30 Bougainvillea Dve Alyangula NT 0885  
Ph: 08 8987 4002  
[Permits@anindilyakwa.org](mailto:Permits@anindilyakwa.org)



