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Noongar Mia Mia board director Laurel Sellers (left), managing director Tina Ugle and chair Jasmine Kadic and NXT TEC. managing director Natasha Di Ciano.
Photo: DevelopmentWA

ELEVATING INDIGENOUS OPPORTUNITY

ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS | BUSINESS SKILLS FOR KIMBERLEY WOMEN

PRESENTING PARTNERS





Addressing Indigenous homelessness

Noongar Mia Mia and NXT TEC. have teamed up to house Indigenous elders.

STORY: Liv Declerck



[We] saw instantly that we had synergies between our respective visions for our organisations

NATASHA DI CIANO

CONSTRUCTION of a housing project for Aboriginal elders is expected to begin early next year as part of a collaboration that's been years in the making.

Perth-based community housing provider Noongar Mia Mia and building technology company NXT TEC. Have teamed up to develop their vision for a residential development – the Woodbridge Project – that will provide secure, high-quality, culturally safe housing for 11 elders, with room for their carers.

As an Aboriginal-owned-and-operated organisation, delivering housing solutions for Indigenous people is a core part of Noongar Mia Mia's remit.

The Woodbridge Project will enable the not for profit to expand its mission to reduce financial and housing stress, improve quality of life, wellbeing and health, and recognise contributions to community.

There is a significant over-representation of Aboriginal people facing homelessness in Western Australia, according to the WA Alliance to End Homelessness.

Research has found 41 per cent of people accessing homelessness services per year are Indigenous, while only 3.3 per cent of the state's total population are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

In conversation with *Business News*, Noongar Mia Mia managing director Tina Ugle said the data around Aboriginal homelessness spoke for itself.

"Aboriginal people in WA are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Aboriginal Australians, and 33 per cent of all Aboriginal Western Australians aged 50 and over have reported that they have been removed from their families at some time," she said.

"Aboriginal homelessness increased by 29 per cent between 2016 and 2021.

"The fact is that we need properties now; we can't wait.

"The [Woodbridge] project recognises the lifetime of contribution Aboriginal elders have made to their community and partnering with NXT TEC. means we can build quality accommodation significantly faster than conventional construction, which enables secure housing for community members."

NXT TEC. managing director and 40under40 winner in 2011, Natasha Di Ciano, said the company was delighted to be working closely with Noongar Mia Mia to deliver housing solutions for those most in need.

"When Noongar Mia Mia heard about NXT and our technology, we met and saw instantly that we had

synergies between our respective visions for our organisations," Ms Di Ciano told *Business News*.

"Developing high-quality, affordable and sustainable housing for those who need it the most is closely aligned to our founding ethos as a company.

"This is a very important project for Noongar Mia Mia [to] showcase their vision for providing cultural [sic] safe accommodation for Aboriginal elders and also for future projects."

Canning Vale-based NXT TEC. has been implementing innovative building design with its technology, which involves each component of a building being pre-cast off-site before being transported to the designated property for assembly.

Ms Di Ciano said NXT TEC. had created a technology that could facilitate the pre-fabrication of each element of a building, which ultimately enabled structures to be built more quickly and sustainably than traditional methods.

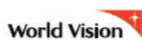
"Once [each element] is pre-cast using concrete and steel, they are brought to site as the complete component and we assemble them, a bit like LEGO," she said.

"They are all manufactured locally and we use local labour and materials.

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Natasha Di Ciano says the technology enables structures to be built more quickly and sustainably.



Aboriginal people in Western Australia are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Aboriginal Australians

TINA UGLE

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We manufacture close to sites to cut down on transport costs and logistics, and all that money saved is poured into the project instead.

"It is more efficient and more streamlined, and you get faster construction times and cost savings. Importantly, it reduces waste and emissions as well, so it's more environmentally sustainable.

"We are delivering high-quality, durable and energy-efficient homes."

The joint residential housing project with Noongar Mia Mia is to be built in the suburb of Woodbridge, with completion expected in less than nine months due to the use of NXT TEC's technology.

Ms Ugle said DevelopmentWA approached Noongar Mia Mia about five years ago to offer the Woodbridge property, located about 25 kilometres from Perth CBD.

Soon after the land proposal was made and then accepted by Noongar Mia Mia, the not for profit reached out

to NXT TEC. to engage the builder for a joint project.

Ms Ugle said NXT TEC. was keen to partner up and the planning and design phase was started soon after.

"We looked at other architects, but NXT TEC. was in line with our strategic vision," she said.

"They are innovative and their values and principles are very similar to Noongar Mia Mia, and we have a good understanding of one another."

The two organisations produced a residential complex design that would deliver as many units as possible, given the dimensions of the property, while providing maximum benefits for future residents.

Ms Di Ciano said the Woodbridge Project would showcase Noongar Mia Mia's capacity to deliver fit-for-purpose housing for Indigenous people efficiently and sustainably.

"It's fitted out to accommodate elders with all the requirements such as wheelchair access and NDIS requirements," she said.

"This is a showcase for Noongar Mia Mia to be able to do more of these

types of buildings and I think that's the key, being able to address the bigger and broader issue of housing.

"There is a real shortage, but to have the quality and sustainability is really important, too.

"The other outcome is to provide community and social benefits, employment opportunities, and demonstrate quality, environmentally friendly and affordable accommodation solutions, which, I think, we are all looking for in this market.

"We are definitely on board with Noongar Mia Mia for the long term and that comes down to the shared visions and objectives of each of us as organisations."

Noongar Mia Mia was founded more than 20 years ago to assist Aboriginal people in the Perth metropolitan area into long-term housing and provide support services and property management to ensure those people sustained their tenancy.

Ms Ugle said one of Noongar Mia Mia's goals was to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.



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"For us, this is about self-determination in terms of an Aboriginal organisation looking at solutions," she said.

"By us, for us, that's what we're all about.

"Growing our company to become a strong, viable organisation that will continue to build our goal.

"It's about partnerships and scaling our programs and our organisation and it's for the community.

"For me, it's really about creating wealth for our community."

The Woodbridge Project is expected to create up to 40 local jobs during construction and the final development will meet a seven-star energy rating in accordance with the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme.

"All the project specifications have been done, everything is pretty much ready to go, and we are just in the process of getting development approval," Ms Ugle said.

The project has been bolstered by funding support from Sisters of St John of God and a donation from the Estate of Sonya Rodgers.



A render of the Woodbridge Project. Image: NXT



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