

MUTITJULU ESSENTIAL SERVICES
PUBLIC SUBMISSION



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

MUTITJULU ESSENTIAL SERVICES PROJECT

Mutitjulu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 26 February 2024

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Acronyms

APPA	Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
AM	Approach to Market
CLC	Central Land Council
CPR	Commonwealth Procurement Rules
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (NTG)
DNP	Director of National Parks
ECHMP	Environmental and Cultural Heritage Management Plan
EDTL	Executive Director Township Leasing
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GST	Goods and Services Tax
MCAC	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation
MPB	Major Projects Branch
MESP	Mutitjulu Essential Services project
MWG	Mutitjulu Working Group
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
OTL	Office of Township Leasing
PWC	Power and Water Corporation (NTG)
RFT	Request for Tender
UKTNP	Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

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1. Executive Summary

The Anangu¹ who comprise the Mutitjulu Indigenous community are the recognised Traditional Owners of Uluru, Australia's most prominent natural icon. The community resides in a township zone of approximately 1,121 hectares, 1.5 km to the east of Uluru within the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (UKTNP) (the 'park'). The community has strong cultural connections to the park under Tjukurpa², and in 2021 recorded a population of 298³ people.

The Director of National Parks (DNP), within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) portfolio, is responsible for the provision (supply and maintenance) of essential power, water, and sewer services to the Mutitjulu community. The DNP became responsible for the delivery of these services when the park was established in 1985.

The existing essential services supporting the Mutitjulu community are over 30 years old, are non-compliant with current Australian standards and have become increasingly unreliable.

The Mutitjulu Essential Services project (the project) will upgrade and where necessary, replace the essential power, water, and sewer services across the three neighbourhoods. The project will improve habitability and safety within the community and also increase capacity for anticipated growth in the population and infrastructure.

The estimated cost of the project is \$91.87 million. This includes management and design fees, construction costs, contingencies, and a provision for escalation.

Tourist visitation to UKTNP can only occur by the permission of the Anangu Traditional Owners. Support to the Mutitjulu community through the essential services improvements and other practical contributions such as provision of health, police and education services are necessary to permit these arrangements to continue.

This **Public Submission** outlines the need and justification for the project, its scope, options considered, planning and design concepts in addition to its public value.

¹ The term used by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal people, from the Western Desert region of Australia, to refer to themselves.

² The system of Anangu law, history, knowledge, religion and morality that binds people, landscape, plants and animals.

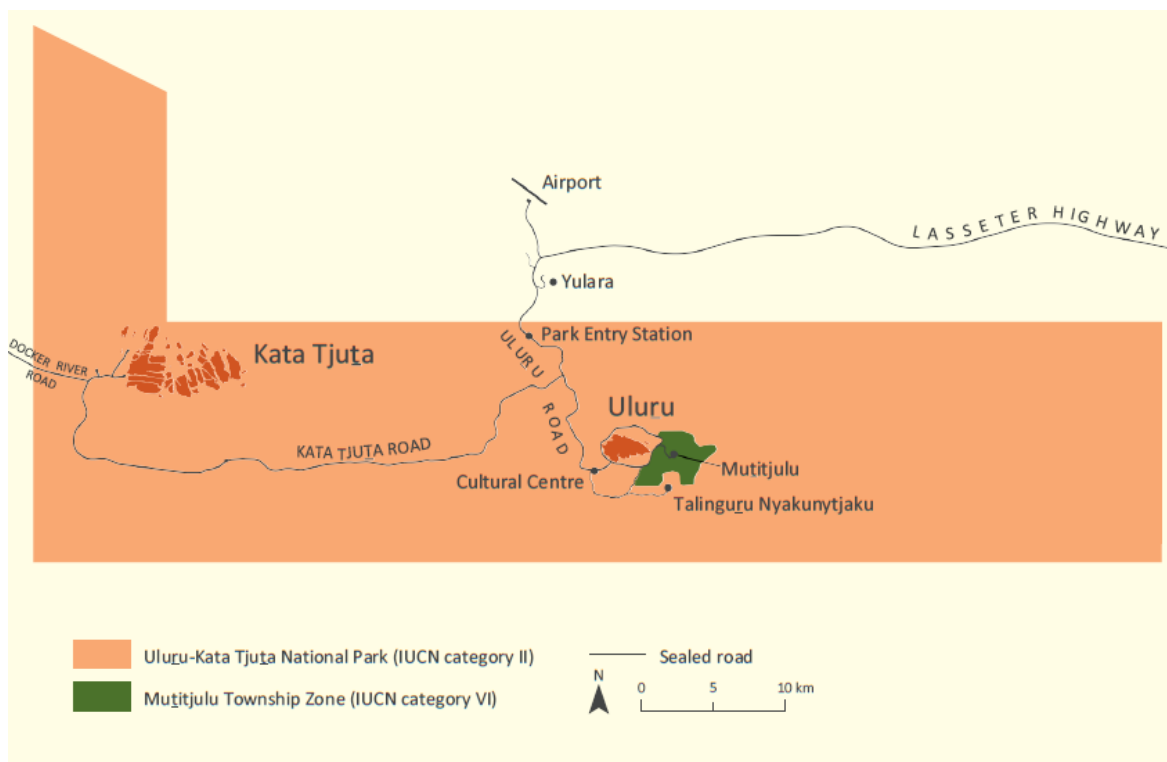
³ 2021 Mutitjulu - Uluru, Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

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2. Introduction

Mutitjulu Indigenous Community

- 2.1. The majority of Mutitjulu residents are Anangu, with approximately 20% non-Anangu who work in the community or the park. The community's population can fluctuate substantially with residents travelling to neighbouring communities or when relatives and visitors stay for extended periods of time.
- 2.2. Services for the day-to-day functioning of the Mutitjulu community include township infrastructure, housing developments, health, education, police, and social/community services. These are the responsibility of Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government (NTG) agencies, as well as a range of other organisations, including the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation (MCAC).



- 2.3. The existing essential services supporting the Mutitjulu community are over 30 years old, non-compliant with current Australian standards and have become increasingly unreliable. They are at capacity and are inhibiting necessary developments within the town.

Figure 1 – Mutitjulu Township relative to the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (UKTNP)

Jurisdiction and subleasing in UKTNP

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- 2.4. The UKTNP is on Aboriginal land, jointly managed by its Anangu Traditional Owners and the DNP. The World Heritage listed park occupies 1,325 km² in the spiritual heart of Australia's Red Centre in the Northern Territory (NT), approximately 450km southwest of Alice Springs by road. The park is dual World Heritage listed for both its natural and cultural values.
- 2.5. UKTNP was first declared a national park under Commonwealth law on 24 May 1977, and the Australian Government handed the park deeds back to its Anangu Traditional Owners on 26 October 1985. As a condition of the land grant, Anangu immediately leased the land to the DNP, to be jointly managed by a board comprising of a majority of Traditional Owners.

Sublease from DNP to Executive Director Township Leasing

- 2.6. On 16 March 2017, the DNP granted a Sublease to the Executive Director of Township Leasing (EDTL) over an area of the park including the Mutitjulu community. The EDTL administers the area covered by the Sublease on behalf of the Commonwealth and works with a consultative forum of Traditional Owners and residents of Mutitjulu. The area covered by the Mutitjulu Township Sublease remains part of a Commonwealth reserve and the World Heritage area.

DNP - Asset Infrastructure program

- 2.7. The DNP is responsible for the conservation and management of the Australian Government's terrestrial and marine protected area estates. The DNP is currently responsible for seven terrestrial reserves (consisting of six national parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens) and 60 Australian marine parks.
- 2.8. The DNP manages a large portfolio of capital assets (valued at more than \$324 million) written down value, the majority of which are in remote locations, including:
- a. essential services infrastructure delivering power, water and sewer services to the national parks including to the Mutitjulu community within the UKTNP - the subject of this submission
 - b. visitor infrastructure such as roads, walking trails, viewing platforms, visitor and cultural centres, ablution blocks and facilities for commercial operators.
 - c. ranger stations, administration offices, visitor entry stations, staff housing and facilities essential to the survival of threatened flora and fauna.
- 2.9. The project is one of a number of projects funded out of two significant commitments towards critical infrastructure in Commonwealth managed national

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parks made by successive governments in 2020 - Investing in Our National Parks, and 2023 - Critical Infrastructure Funding for Mutitjulu.

3. Purpose of the Works

Project aim

- 3.1. The Mutitjulu Essential Services Project aims to provide a continuation of essential services to the Mutitjulu community whilst reducing the environmental, health and financial impacts that result from aging (greater than 30 years old), failing and inadequate infrastructure. The project will provide the Mutitjulu community access to the necessary services to support public health and safety objectives. The project will meet the community's current and forecast requirements and enable the DNP to meet the conditions of the Mutitjulu Township Sublease.

Project objectives

- 3.2. The project objectives are as follows:
- a. meet the DNP's obligations under the Mutitjulu Sublease to provide the Mutitjulu community with functional, reliable, and safe essential services infrastructure
 - b. remove township development constraints on future growth
 - c. deliver infrastructure compliant with Australian standards
 - d. increase Indigenous and local employment opportunities
 - e. avoid degradation of the natural and cultural values of UKTNP through consideration, assessment, and mitigation of potential environmental and cultural heritage impacts.

4. Need for works

- 4.1. The need for the works detailed in this submission are to:
- a. replace aging infrastructure, as existing services networks are at the point of failure
 - b. improve habitability and safety, and improve capacity and provide capability for improved health services
 - c. upgrade capacity for population and infrastructure growth.

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Replacing aging infrastructure

4.2. Three (3) engineering assessments commissioned by the DNP over the past five years assessed the condition, compliance, and capacity of engineering services at Mutitjulu. These reports included:

- a. Uluru-Kata Tjuta Essential Services⁴, DNP, GHD, - November 2018
- b. Uluru-Kata Tjuta Non-Essential Services⁵, GHD - November 2018
- c. Mutitjulu – Essential Services Infrastructure Planning and Concept Design, Infrastructure Options and Costing Report, ADG Engineers - November 2020.

These assessments highlighted the degradation in performance and condition of the essential services supporting the community, including the water supply, sewerage, and power supply services. This degradation has occurred over the past three decades due to the age of the existing services and adaptations to the system that have altered the original design intent.

Improve habitability and safety

Services Generally

- 4.3. The inground infrastructure (inground electrical cabling, water, and sewer pipes) was built circa 1990 and is at the end of its functional lifespan. As a result, it is prone to failures which interrupt required services. Information derived from community representatives and park operations staff notes evidence that these events are occurring on a regular basis. **Refer to Attachment A – Photos of existing services.**
- 4.4. Should the services infrastructure not be replaced, service disruptions will increase in both frequency and severity. Emergency repairs are costly in such a remote area and result in unplanned and unmanaged outages to the community. In the event of a catastrophic failure the DNP would be unable to continue to provide essential services to the community of Mutitjulu.
- 4.5. For the community, prolonged power outages will result in overflow of sewer systems and interrupted water supply due to pump failure resulting in significant health and safety impacts. Air-conditioning will no longer operate resulting in extreme indoor temperatures making housing uninhabitable. Furthermore, for residents needing necessary medical support systems, a prolonged power

⁴ 'Essential Services' include power, water supply including fire reticulation and sewerage systems.

⁵ 'Non-essential Services' include roads, footpaths, stormwater, and communications generally.

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outage would have a significant adverse impact on their health and require relocation to a community with available services.

- 4.6. Prolonged disruption to essential services would require the community to be temporarily relocated to an alternate location where these essential services can be provided. If this is required due to failure of the Mutitjulu essential services, the relocation will result in potential health risks and a significant disruption to the lives of the residents, as well as considerable financial and reputational cost to the DNP.
- 4.7. Mutitjulu has evolved over time from a camping area with limited electrical supply, water supply and individual septic systems to an established community with essential services infrastructure. This has resulted in some of the services being located outside of the road corridor and not within established easements. This is not best practice and increases the risk of services being struck and damaged. This project will locate all essential services in the road corridor or other recognised service corridors.

Sewerage systems

- 4.8. The 2018 GHD report reviewed the sewer system within the town and found the current system is not suitable, citing that *“Currently adopted self-cleansing grades are not achieved for several sewer lengths”*. A sewer that is not self-cleaning is prone to detritus build up and pervasive blockage issues. Refer to **Attachment A – Photos of existing services** - photos 1 and 6.
- 4.9. The 2020 ADG report found the lack of emergency sewerage storage posed a risk of *“surcharge of sewage into the community should a pump become inoperative (such as during a power outage)”*. Pump blockages and failure are a common maintenance issue and are given priority to rectify due to the lack of storage. If not fixed within a limited timeframe the sewer will overflow into the community. This risk was realised when a pump failed and sewerage backed up into the nursing quarters, resulting in a public health issue and the nursing quarters being temporarily uninhabitable.
- 4.10. The above issue is compounded by the location of the main sewer pumping station being adjacent to the health centre and the school.

Electrical services

- 4.11. Risks with the current electrical service include the cables being ‘direct buried’ rather than installed inside conduit, disintegration of the cable’s protective

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covering leading to faults and outages and a lack of earthing at the electrical pillars.

- 4.12. In 2019, metal cages were installed around the electrical pillars located throughout Mutitjulu to provide protection from vandalism and vehicle impact. **Attachment A – Photos of existing services** – photo 4. Whilst this protected the pillars from impact it did not replace the pillars which remain in poor condition and at end of life. **Attachment A – Photos of existing services** – photo 5.

Water supply including fire hydrants

- 4.13. The existing water supply network is serviced through 60 mm diameter piping, which does not provide sufficient pressure throughout the neighbourhoods for such basic services as showers and drinking water. A network of the size of the entire community should be serviced by pipes of at least 150 mm diameter, in accordance with Australian Standards.
- 4.14. There is inadequate fire hydrant coverage in the town, with existing hydrants being non-functional or in a poor state, making them non-compliant with Australian Standards. The pressure within the water network is insufficient for a compliant hydrant network. **Refer to Attachment A – Photos of existing services** - photo 2.

Capacity for population growth

- 4.15. Housing in the community is currently at capacity with extended family members occupying single dwellings. Consequently, the construction of new housing is critical to alleviate current overcrowding, improve living conditions and allow for growth.
- 4.16. The NTG is in the planning phase to construct 12 new dwellings on nine lots in mid-2024. Services connections for the houses will be enabled through an Early Works project which provides services to the nine lots. With the completion of these works in June 2024 the NTG will commence progress on the new housing.
- 4.17. The current capacity constraints of the infrastructure are preventing the community from achieving the objectives outlined in the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park Management Plan 2021, which accommodate community growth. A demand assessment made by GHD in 2018 stated *“The existing water reticulation network does not meet pressure requirements under a peak hour scenario”*. This assessment was reflective of the town’s current size without any consideration of forecasted growth.

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5. Options considered

Introduction

- 5.1. The location of the Mutitjulu community is across three neighbourhoods; Mutitjulu itself, and two smaller neighbourhoods known as Maruku and Rangerville which accommodate community support services including UKTNP rangers, police, health, and education workers. These three interdependent neighbourhoods are depicted in Figure 2, below.

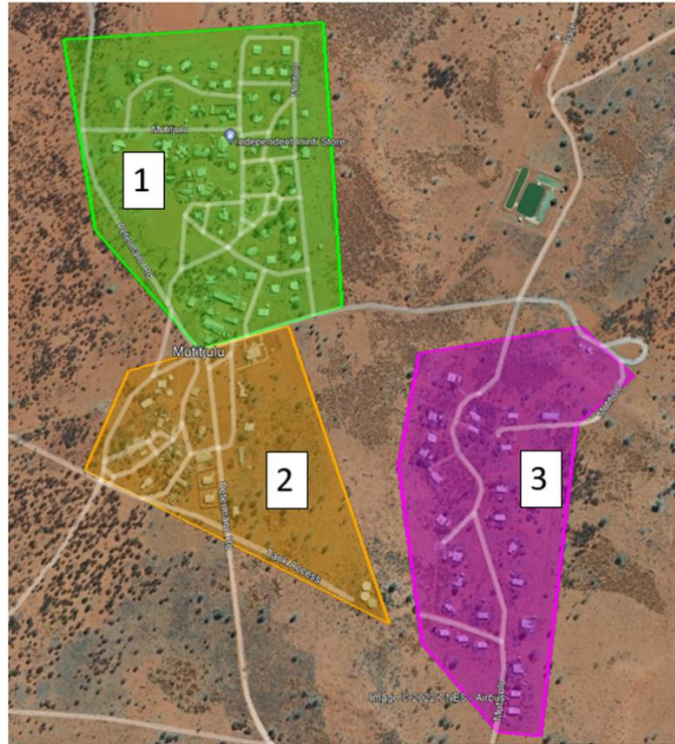


Figure 2 – Mutitjulu neighbourhoods depicting 1.Mutitjulu 2.Maruku 3.Rangerville

- 5.2. The state of degradation of essential water, sewer and electrical service infrastructure is similar across all three neighbourhoods, and the rectification of each service in each neighbourhood falls within the scope of the project.
- 5.3. Analysis and preliminary design work within the engineering reports mentioned at section 4.2 were used to identify and assess options to replace the essential services across the three neighbourhoods. Accordingly, three discrete options were considered, as follows:
- Option 1** - Do nothing (status quo).
 - Option 2** - Essential services replacement across all three neighbourhoods by one Head Contractor procurement.

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- c. **Option 3** - Essential services replacement as three separable portions with separate Head Contractor procurements.
- 5.4. Conducting the works in separation by infrastructure service type rather than neighbourhood location was considered in the planning process but discounted. Overhead power distribution was also considered but ruled out by Traditional Owners as it would conflict with cultural and environmental values. It was determined as non-viable due to the preference of combined trenching for different service types to reduce ground disturbance and the number of overlapping services in the existing infrastructure. The optimal outcome is for all services to be in one trench with sewer at the bottom then water then electrical at the top.

Option 1: Do nothing ('status quo')

- 5.5. The 'do nothing' option includes maintaining the status quo. This involves the DNP continuing the increasingly costly repair and maintenance program and responding to urgent reactive maintenance needs whilst deferring any considerations for major replacements indefinitely. This option was assessed and considered as non-viable for the following reasons:
 - a. The services are failing and at the end of their design life.
 - b. The services are affecting the community's ability to expand, thus exacerbating overcrowding, and inhibiting improved health services and economic growth. The current services are unable to provide for much needed dialysis equipment at the health centre.
 - c. The services are not built to standards suitable for safety and maintenance compliance, especially noting the remote location.
 - d. Service breakdowns are resulting in sudden and unplanned disruptions/outages for residents. As this worsens, depending on the severity of the disruptions/outages, Mutitjulu may be evacuated until such time as repairs are made. System failures may also result in unacceptable environmental and safety risks under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) (WHS Act). This may result in the unplanned closure of the park until such time as services were again available to staff housing.
 - e. Emergency repair works are expensive due to the rapid response required. Standard procurement processes designed to deliver value for money

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outcomes will not provide rapid contractor mobilisation or retention and come at a premium. Given the location of Mutitjulu, the acquisition and transportation of material is costly and can include long lead-times, further extending the timeframe for repair and impacts on the community.

Option 2: Essential services replacement across all three neighbourhoods by one Head Contractor procurement

- 5.6. This option involves the replacement of all essential services within Mutitjulu in one project, managed by a single head contractor to complete in one mobilisation.
- 5.7. Within this option, existing electrical services, water, and sewer will be replaced by a new services network that meets the project's objectives; in a sequence across the three neighbourhoods that best suits the needs of the community and the DNP.
- 5.8. The advantages of this option are:
 - a. One single and comparatively large head contractor procurement will likely be more attractive to a wider range of tenderers.
 - b. Increased simplicity in communication and coordination between only one head contractor, DNP personnel and the local Indigenous community (i.e. rather than with up to three contractors).
 - c. Less disruption to the community as works are undertaken progressively.
- 5.9. The disadvantages of this option are:
 - a. The works may occur over a longer duration given potentially fewer contractor personnel on site (noting this may be offset through attracting a larger head contractor that can mobilise additional resources).

Option 3: Essential services replacement as three separable portions with separate Head Contractor procurements

- 5.10. This option involves an identical overall scope to Option 2, but with the service replacements to the Mutitjulu, Maruku and Rangerville neighbourhoods as three separable portions of scope procured separately. This could result in up to three different head contractors being mobilised to site independently however two or all three portions could be secured by a single contractor.
- 5.11. The advantages of this option are:

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- a. improved potential for value for money due to increased procurement competition
- b. the works could occur over a shorter duration due to contractor personnel from three contractors working on each portion simultaneously and independent of each other.

5.12. The disadvantages of this option are:

- a. the total cost of the project will likely increase as contractor establishment and mobilisation costs are multiplied across the neighbourhoods
- b. reduced simplicity and efficiency in communication between DNP personnel, the Indigenous community and up to three different head contractor representatives.
- c. Possible delays to the project as there likely would not be sufficient accommodation to house workers from three different companies at the same time, noting limited options or services in the general area.
- d. Liability at the completion of the works, with each section under a different contractor; it would be problematic to hold one contractor liable when the system is a network interconnecting the works.

Preferred option

- 5.13. **Option 2** is preferred, with a one head contractor procurement occurring for all essential services replacement across all three neighbourhoods. This option is the least complex and costly in procurement and provides for simple and direct communication and coordination between DNP staff, the Indigenous community, and a single contractor.

6. Scope of works

Location of the works

- 6.1. The works will be delivered in and around the Mutitjulu, Maruku and Rangerville neighbourhoods within the UKTNP. Refer to **Attachment B – Extract of 60% Design Documentation** for overall locations of the main services trenches.

Project scope

- 6.2. The project's scope will include replacement of the electrical, water and sewer services across the three communities, as follows:
- a. **Electrical.** The electrical network will comprise of new low voltage and high voltage cabling encased inside conduit from the power station to each current

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and new lot. New substations will be installed to ensure the network has enough capacity for both current and future requirements.

- b. **Water.** The water network will comprise of a new ring network to minimise dead ends and the subsequent water fouling. The network will service all current and new lots with potable water. Included throughout the network will be access to fire hydrants for emergency services that will have appropriate water pressure as required by relevant Australian standards.
- c. **Sewer.** The sewer network will be comprised primarily of gravity fed sewers, which will service all current and new lots. These gravity sewer lines will drain to new pump stations and a high-density polyethylene (HDPE) rising main that will pump the sewerage from the township to the sewerage treatment farm. Manholes and inspection openings will be included in accordance with the relevant Australian standards as part of the compliance obligations.

6.3. **Existing Network.** The existing power, water and sewer networks will be decommissioned including all existing septic tanks. Wherever feasible the existing network will be removed and appropriately disposed of either through recycling (water pipe) or disposal in an appropriate facility outside of the park with detailed records provided by the contractor to DNP confirming both material type and quantity. Where services are located inside existing lots or near culturally sensitive trees, services will be made safe and may remain in the ground subject to discussion and agreement between the contractor, DNP project manager and the community.

6.4. The following methodology will be followed to maintain connectivity of services to the community during the course of the works,

- a. temporary services will be established to maintain services continuity throughout the duration of the works
- b. the new essential services will be installed, connected to the main system, tested and commissioned
- c. the temporary services will then be removed.

7. Planning and design concepts

7.1. The area covered by the Mutitjulu Township Sublease remains part of a Commonwealth reserve and the World Heritage area. This requires additional environmental and heritage considerations including additional local approvals for

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the works. The entire site is of major cultural significance to Anangu and adherence to the environmental cultural impact assessments remains a priority for the DNP to ensure the successful delivery of the project.

- 7.2. Design progression has taken these additional requirements into consideration whilst also allowing for the following general design requirements:
- a. WSA 03-2011 Water Supply Code of Australia Version 3.1
 - b. Power and Water Corporation (PWC) NT Supplements to the WSAA codes
 - c. AS 1768:2007 – Lightning Protection
 - d. AS 3000:2018 – Electrical Installations
 - e. AS 3500.1:2018 – Plumbing and Drainage
 - f. AS 2067:2016 – Substations & High Voltage Installation
 - g. AS 3010:2017 – Generating Sets
 - h. Indigenous Community Engineering Guidelines (ICEG).
- 7.3. The overall design parameters for the network consider both operational and long-term maintenance solutions.
- 7.4. The following sections describe key design concepts for each of the three services to be replaced through this project.

Sewer

- gravity sewer network located in road corridor or easements
- minimise number of pumping stations to reduce maintenance
- service all lots including vacant lots and proposed new town lots
- provide duty and standby pumps with a spare to enable quick replacement if one should fail.
- The system has been designed to cater for the following:
 - current loads
 - known developments
 - service to 20 currently undeveloped lots
 - standard population growth over the next 10 years.

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Water

- lot demands have been determined based on the classification / usage of lots
- new lot connections provided for each lot within the community including currently undeveloped lots
- new fire hydrants provided using new potable water service
- the new water mains to form a looped network for redundancy and balancing of flows and pressures
- valving provided at key junctions of the mains to enable isolation of sections of the main should there be a failure or if maintenance is required.

Electrical

- The HV network designed on a ring main basis which provides flexibility should there be a failure of a section of HV cable as power can still be distributed to all substations.
- Substations provided at key locations within the community to convert the HV to LV for distribution to the lots.
- The LV network provided on a ring system that provides flexibility should a section of the LV mains be damaged or if maintenance is required to a section of the mains. This enables the impact of any outages due to a cable failure to be limited.
- The Mutitjulu Power Station includes two new 550kVA generators that normally operate in a duty / standby configuration. Should the duty generator fail, the standby set is programmed to start automatically.
- In its current arrangement, if the electricity demand from the community exceeds the operating point of the duty generator, then the standby generator will be automatically brought online to share the load.

Heritage and cultural requirements

- 7.5. Authority Certificates from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and Central Land Council have been obtained to enable cultural requirements to be reviewed and planned for. All requirements identified by these certificates will be met.

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- 7.6. In keeping with the cultural significance of the area, underground rather than overhead power reticulation will be installed, consistent with the existing network.⁶

Environmental requirements

- 7.7. The project will adhere to the relevant environmental requirements contained within the following legislation, legal and planning guidance:
- a. *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*
 - b. Mutitjulu Sublease
 - c. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – Mutitjulu Essential Services – Final report - December 2023
 - d. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management Plan 2021.
- 7.8. On 8 June 2023, the project was assessed by the Joint Board of Management as a Category 2 project under the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management Plan 2021, meaning that the project does not require an EPBC referral: “The footprint of the essential services infrastructure upgrade is not significantly larger than the existing area and the overall impact of the proposal is positive. The action is likely to have more than a negligible positive impact on the community and the park and not a significant negative impact on the park’s environment and/or natural and/or cultural values. The proposed upgrades are entirely within a highly disturbed and developed area of the Mutitjulu Sublease area of the community”⁷. An independent EIA assessment was recommended due to the scale of the works; the final report was issued on 21 December 2023. The findings of this independent assessment were consistent with the Joint Board of Management’s decision. This EIA made recommendations regarding the delivery of the works that will be incorporated into the Environmental and Cultural Heritage Management Plan to ensure adequate protection of the sites natural and cultural values.

Building requirements

- 7.9. The EDTL provides the authority for building work approvals under the Mutitjulu Sublease; on 16 June 2023, the EDTL provided consent for the DNP to

⁶ Overhead power lines are a standard design approach for the NT PWC. It is the express direction of the Mutitjulu Traditional Owners that they do not have overhead power lines.

⁷ Initial Consideration – approved by UKTNP Joint Board of Management 8 June 2023.

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undertake the essential services upgrade and geotechnical drilling within the township of Mutitjulu.

- 7.10. The project will be built to current Australian Standards. This will:
- a. minimise water loss within the system – refer to **Attachment A – Photos of existing services** – photo 3. The example shows the current system's water loss
 - b. reduce the potential for sewage leaking into the ground from aging infrastructure.

Workplace Health and Safety measures

- 7.11. During construction the contractor will need to adhere to the following Acts, accompanying Regulations and Codes:
- a. *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011*
 - b. *Federal Safety Commissioner Act, 2022*
 - c. relevant construction codes of practice.
- 7.12. The design and construction practices applied to this project will consider the unique challenges of building within a remote community. The safety considerations will include not only the contractors' workforce, but also the residents and visitors in the community during both construction and the ongoing operation of the infrastructure.

Impact on community

- 7.13. The project will result in unavoidable disruption to the community during construction, given the proximity of the works to the existing housing. The community will not be required to vacate premises during construction but will be affected during the construction phase in the following ways:
- a. temporary service disruption (up to four (4) hours) when changing from existing to temporary services
 - b. temporary service disruption (up to four (4) hours) when changing from temporary to new services
 - c. construction noise during working hours
 - d. significant construction dust
 - e. traffic diversions.

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- 7.14. The completed works will result in improved service provisions, safety, and environmental performance.
- 7.15. Conversely, there will be a significant impact on the community if these works are not completed. It is a matter of 'when' not 'if' one of these essential services experiences a significant and catastrophic failure that may result in emergency relocation of the community.
- 7.16. Active collaboration will occur through a Project Control Group and Community Liaison Officer in to assist in mitigating impacts to the community throughout the works. This collaboration will also enable members of the community to have an avenue to seek information and voice concerns or issues that may occur during construction.

8. Related projects

- 8.1. The essential services project has interfaces with the following related projects:
 - a. early works – essential services
 - b. new water treatment plant - demineralisation
 - c. sewage pond cleaning and maintenance
 - d. new renewable energy supply.
- 8.2. Whilst these projects do not affect the construction of the essential services, they do have interfaces through the supply (solar power and improved water quality) or treatment (sewer pond cleaning) services. Close coordination between the projects has been undertaken throughout their respective planning phases and will continue through the planning and delivery of the proposed project.

Early Works

- 8.3. The Early Works project involves the connection of existing power, water and sewer services to nine lots within Mutitjulu to enable the NTG to construct 12 dwellings. These are a very high priority for early delivery for the Mutitjulu community. The scope of work includes:
 - a. Supply installation and connection of power and water to the existing services. This will be a temporary measure until the completion of the essential services project that is the subject of this referral, at which time parts of the Early Works connections will be reconstructed and connected into the new system.

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- b. Supply installation and connection of a new sewer connection service and connecting into the existing sewer service.

The works are expected to commence in April 2024.

Water Demineralisation

- 8.4. The Water Demineralisation project will see the installation of a new water purification plant to reduce the hardness of the water. This plant will increase the functional life of reticulation pipes, fittings, and fixtures as well as household fittings, fixtures, and appliances. It will also reduce energy demand, meaning evaporative cooling systems will operate more efficiently and last longer.
- 8.5. The project is in the procurement phase and is forecast to commence construction in October 2024.

Sewage pond maintenance

- 8.6. Notwithstanding regular maintenance, the sewage pond is now experiencing excessive sludge build up and is not operating effectively. Consequently 1.2 metres in depth of sludge is to be removed in order to restore full functionality.
- 8.7. The project is in the procurement phase and will likely commence delivery in April 2024.

Renewable energy supply

- 8.8. A proposed new solar array and battery backup project will reduce the town's dependence on diesel generators and reduce supply costs. The project is in the planning phase and will likely commence construction in October 2024.

9. Consultation with key stakeholders

- 9.1. The DNP recognises the importance of providing the community, residents, statutory authorities, and other interested stakeholders an opportunity to provide input to or raise concerns about the proposed works. The community's location within the park, the EDTL Sublease requirements and the essential requirement to engage with MCAC as the relevant Aboriginal association under the Sublease, raises the criticality of stakeholder consultation for the project.
- 9.2. To manage the consultation process the Mutitjulu Working Group (MWG) was established to seek input and consultation for this project. The MWG meets monthly, or as deemed necessary by the members. The first meeting was held on 7 October 2022. The members are representatives from the following stakeholders.

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- a. Director of National Parks
 - b. Office of Township Leasing
 - c. MCAC
 - d. Central Land Council
 - e. Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
 - f. NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning, and Logistics
 - g. National Indigenous Australians Agency
- 9.3. The working group members are assisting the DNP to identify appropriate public consultation and engagement throughout the project life cycles.
- 9.4. The main concerns raised by community representatives have been the length of time it has taken since the announcement of initial funding in 2020 to undertake the works, and the importance of protecting three sacred trees. The community are in full support of the works to be undertaken.
- 9.5. The project is now well advanced and subject to the Committee's consideration and parliamentary approvals, the tender will be released to the market immediately thereafter in accordance with the project schedule.
- 9.6. An Environmental Impact Assessment was undertaken that supports the design of the services will not impact the sacred trees. The Central Land Council has provided a Sacred Site Clearance certificate which cites protection of the sacred trees. This information will be provided to tenderers to make allowance to comply with all the conditions of the certificate and for sufficient protection of the sacred trees throughout the works.

10. Cost effectiveness and public value

Project costs

- 10.1. The total project cost estimate is \$91.87 million which includes management and design fees, construction costs, contingencies, and a provision for escalation. This cost estimate is within the budget allocation for this project.
- 10.2. Operating costs are expected to reduce when the proposed works are completed. Generally new, compliant infrastructure is markedly cheaper to maintain than aged and failing systems. The maintenance of the new infrastructure will be managed from within the DNP's operational budget.

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Public value

10.3. The public value for this project is summarised in the following areas:

- a. **Reduced risk of emergency relocation:** As this community cannot be sustained without these services, the public value of these works can be measured against temporarily relocating this community. Any evacuation of the Mutitjulu community to temporary housing would come at a significant financial, reputational, cultural, and social cost. It should also be noted that some Anangu may not be willing to move from their land while the situation is being resolved.
- b. **Reduced public health risk:** These works are critical to ensuring the essential services are maintained. A failure in one or more of these services may constitute a public health crisis. This project will significantly reduce the risk of public health emergencies (unplanned power outages, unplanned potable water outages and sewage backing up into houses).

Securing appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned to the priorities and need of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People is also a key target of the Commonwealth Government's Closing the Gap⁸ – National Agreement Targets.

- c. **Increased capacity for new buildings/services to be developed within the community.**

The Mutitjulu community has forward planning to build new houses, upgrade existing houses and support commercial office accommodation for the community's services providers and stakeholders. The details of the proposed developments have been shared with the design consultants to allow for capacity to support the new infrastructure.

Examples of the proposed developments over the next two years are as follows:

- construction of a new Mutitjulu Health Service Clinic which will provide dialysis services
- new supermarket
- new staff accommodation for community service workers
- new playground and shade structure
- residential housing for renal support staff.

⁸ Refer <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

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- d. **Opportunities for Indigenous business participation:** The DNP has a strong commitment to encouraging Indigenous employment. Tenders will be weighted to encourage Indigenous participation and to meet the Commonwealth Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation requirements.

Visitation to Uluru, a natural icon for the nation

- 10.4. The Mutitjulu Indigenous community are the Traditional Owners of Uluru and are custodians of Australia's most prominent natural icon. Since European settlement in Australia, Uluru has defined Australia worldwide; this is represented in the very significant annual tourist visitation to central Australia and the UKNTP itself, as indicated in the annual figures shown in Table 1 below⁹.

Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
UKNTP annual visitor numbers ¹⁰	239,613	222,118	127,981	93,221	406,821

Table 1. Annual tourist visitation numbers to UKNTP

- 10.5. Tourist visitation to the UKNTP and Uluru itself provides a very significant positive contribution to the economies of Australia and the NT, and under Traditional Owner arrangements can only occur by the permission of the Mutitjulu community. Support to the community through the essential services improvements and other practical contributions such as provision of health, police and education services are necessary to permit these arrangements to endure. The Rangerville neighbourhood provides an essential site for accommodating park staff, which directly support the management of the area's World Heritage values and associated visitor experience.

11. Project delivery methodology

Design and procurement

- 11.1. The level of design progression on which this SOE is based is 60% design (schematic design). The cost estimate and P80 Monte Carlo assessment included in the CCE are also based on this 60% design (schematic design).
- 11.2. Further progression to 90% (detailed) and 100% ('Issued for Tender') design is occurring in parallel with the Public Works Committee referral process, with

⁹ Source: DNP official records. Visitor numbers are counted through online and physical ticket sales, car counters, camping passes, tour bus numbers and externally sourced data.

¹⁰ The annual visitation figures present a dramatic decline from 2019 to 2020 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Tourist visitation is expected to resume and surpass 2019 levels in the coming years.

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reviews of constructability, cultural and environment impact at these later design milestones.

- 11.3. These documents will be released for an open tender via Austender, where a single 'Construct-Only' contractor will be sought. Construct-Only Head Contractor offers the Commonwealth a high level of quality control and budget certainty. By retaining responsibility for design, the DNP will have construction oversight combined with the support of the design engineers to monitor, manage, and certify the delivery of the construction in accordance with the design documentation.

Project program

- 11.4. Subject to parliamentary approval, contractual agreement with the preferred tenderer (Head Contractor) is anticipated by September 2024, with an expected 24 month construction period for the project. The target dates for key project milestones are also shown in Table 2 – Project Milestones below.

12. Revenue

- 12.1. No revenue will be derived from this project.

13. Key milestones

Milestone	Timing
Committee referral submitted	26 February 2024
Release tender (subject to Committee approval)	May 2024
Tender period	6 – 8 weeks
Construction contract award	Two months after close of tender
Construction period	24 months
Defects Liability Period	12 months

Table 2 - Project Milestones

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Attachment A – Photos of existing services



1. Sewer pipe showing build up



4. Power pillar protection measure



2. Fire hydrant missing connector



5. Power pillar



3. Potable water pit with leak



6. Ageing sewer pump station

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Attachment B – Extract of 60% Design Documentation

