Where is Balgo?
Balgo (Wirrimanu) is one of Australia’s most remote Aboriginal communities located in the south-east Kimberley region of Western Australia approximately 1780km north-east of Perth and 900km south-southwest of Darwin (nearest capital city). Halls Creek lies 210km to the east of Balgo. Balgo lies on the northern edge of the Great Sandy Desert and on the western edge of the Tanami Desert.

Balgo itself is a site 460 metres above sea level and its climate is tempered accordingly. Temperatures in Balgo range from nine degrees in winter to 45 degrees Celsius in summer. The average annual rainfall is 315mm, most of which falls in the months of December to March.

What is it like to work for the Department for Child Protection in Balgo?
Despite being 3.5 hours from the Halls Creek office, Wendy (Snr Community Child Protection Worker) says that the team is very supportive. Wendy is in contact with her team on a daily basis and is visited by DCP case managers and other staff at least once a month. Housing is very comfortable and there is always a way to wind down, whether it’s swimming at Lake Gregory with inter-agency colleagues or driving to Halls Creek for a day trip. Wendy says that being an Aboriginal person herself it is rewarding to work with a community that continues to practice local culture and tradition.

Given the remoteness of Balgo, as a DCP worker building strong relationships is essential. Lynette (previously Snr CCPW) developed great relationships with the local women who taught her about local food gathering practices and native plantation during her weekends. Carla (previously Team Leader) says “the collegiate support and interagency relationships were very strong and the community in Balgo is a very unique and positive community.”

About the community
Balgo is in the Shire of Halls Creek with a population of about 460 people. Most of the Balgo community speaks Kukatja, which is one of the Western Desert languages. Most of the adults (except the elderly) also have sufficient command of English to communicate with non-Aboriginals. Other languages spoken include Walmajarri, Jaru, Pintupi, Walpiri and Kriol. The Kukatja name for the locality of the Balgo Township is Wirrimanu.

People have access to general services in Balgo including an Administration Office (Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation), Balgo Clinic (with Flying Doctor Service) and Palyalatju Maparnpa Health Committee and a general Store (Outback Stores). The Catholic Church (Kutjungka Catholic Parish) is a prominent establishment within the community which also operates the Catholic primary school (Luurnpa). Young local people in the community also have access to developing their skills through the community Trade Training Centre. Balgo is a “dry” community and alcohol is not permitted.

Balgo is also home to the world-renown Warlayirit Art Centre. Balgo art first appeared in the 1970s with the introduction of canvas and paint by Catholic missionaries. Today, Balgo art is renowned for its energy, diversity, innovation and vibrant colours; many of its artists are internationally acclaimed.

Living and working in Balgo, Western Australia

Housing
Subsidised housing through the Government Regional Officers’ Housing (GROH) will be provided to employees and their families.

The Department for Child Protection is committed to employing Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to be more reflective of our client base and to deliver quality services to the community.