

# KANTRI LAIF

News for North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Managers

Kimberley... Northern Territory... Gulf of Carpentaria... Cape York... Torres Strait

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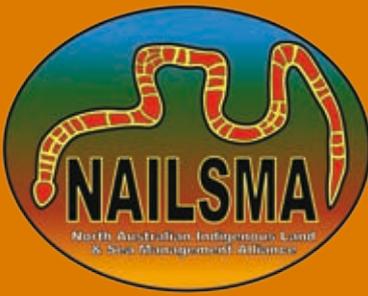
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## message from the Executive Officer

Welcome to all those readers of the only Indigenous newsletter for north Australian Indigenous land and sea management and development by Indigenous people in northern Australia. Much has happened since the last edition of *Kantri Laif*, which has experienced a slight delay due to staff changes in the NAILSMA office. On that note, I'd like to thank a few important individuals that have worked hard to shape the alliance to where it is now.

Ms Lisa Binge was the first staff member that joined me in establishing the alliance, and worked tirelessly on *Kantri Laif*, scholarships and scoping the leadership issues for those future generations of people in the rural and remote parts of the north. Lisa's efforts on these activities have not gone without notice, and she has been an integral part of the face of NAILSMA. Our thanks go out to Lisa in her future endeavours, and hope that one day she may be able to cross our paths again when she feels the need to return north from her country.

Mr Steve Johnson worked on the Indigenous Knowledge Strategy and joined us at our initial forum at Menngen on Wardaman country. This is the first IK strategy to be developed across the north, and most likely, the country and I have no doubt that Steve's efforts over the past 2 years through the strategy will provide much more appreciation of the unique position that IK holders have in maintaining vast expanses of important landscapes. Again, our thanks and deepest appreciation go out to Steve, and wish him well in his new job working as the Coordinator for the Li-Anthiwirriyarra Rangers at Borroloola.

NAILSMA has undergone continual growth around both projects, but respect as an entity that advocates and supports strategic research

and development around land and sea management across the north has increased. A region that is dominated by Indigenous people, culture and heritage, and a region that will increasingly be recognised as a global centre of high biodiversity that has been managed by its residents for millennia. The opportunities as well as issues that are on the horizon before us include water, biodiversity, coastal management and surveillance, carbon and employment. Opportunities to work with industry and the private sectors through partnerships are also growing daily, as the values stated above become global assets that provide an opportunity for Indigenous people to present their positions for national and international benefit. The hard fought battles on land rights and native title have provided these opportunities.

Unfortunately, NAILSMA's relationship with the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas Management is coming to an end, as the CRCTS was not successful in gaining a third round of funding. This means that the CRCTS will effectively cease to operate at the end of the 07/08 financial year. It's important that the CRCTS is recognised for the positive foundational support it has provided to the alliance over the past 4 years, in particular the support from former CEO's Dr John Childs, Professor Gordon Duff, current CEO Dr David Garnett, Advisory Committee Chair Daryl Pearce, NAILSMA Chair Peter Yu and Board members. The vacuum of research, collaborations and opportunities will decrease as there is no other entity working across the region – only NAILSMA remains.

The establishment of the Indigenous Water Policy Group has been a significant and important addition to our activities and fills an important gap in light of the attention that our rivers are



NAILSMA Executive Officer

gaining in the north for non consumptive and consumptive purposes. I believe that whilst it's important to ensure that Indigenous rights manifest into real outcomes for people on country, I also believe that we have some important foundational work to do with ensuring Indigenous aspirations are on the national agenda around water development in the north. You can read about the membership of the group in the article inside this edition.

Importantly, our logo, which you can see on our newsletter and website at [www.nailsma.org.au](http://www.nailsma.org.au) was designed by Larrakia brothers Ian and Anthony Lee. It was a monumental effort to come up with a design that encapsulates the values, people, traditions of the north and I think they done an outstanding job. Thankyou both!

Finally, NAILSMA is developing a stronger position on important matters for Indigenous people across the north through the creation of policy positions that can be articulated to governments at all levels to ensure that Indigenous development around land and sea management can continue to grow in accordance with the needs, aspirations and requirements at the local, regional and national level. This will take some time and effort to finalise, but is inevitable and necessary to ensure that the delicate mix of rights, responsibilities as well as recognition can be provided with the purposes of our future generations. ■

# "Ghosts of the Gulf"

**airing on ABC  
Message Stick  
6pm July 31st**

Don't miss this terrific documentary about the ghost nets issue filmed late last & early this year. It will be aired on the ABC television show "Message Stick" on 31st July at 6pm EST.

This film showcases the great work done by Indigenous rangers attached to the Ghost Net Programme & was completed in the last week of February.

Final filming took place at Mapoon on the western side of Cape York and was unique in the fact that for the first time indigenous rangers who had been previously trained in net processing were used to train a new mob from Mapoon. Richard Woosup from Injinoo and Peter and Angela Harper from Napranum took to the task like seasoned professionals and really did get into the spirit of the theme of the Project, being "Saltwater People Working Together".

As the Project Facilitator responsible for their initial mentoring and training it was a proud moment for me personally and further proof of the hard work & commitment Indigenous Rangers have shown towards the Programme.

It was also shot at Numbulwar Homelands and Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory.

A select amount of still images have been placed (& can be downloaded) on this website for your information.

This documentary will be the first in a series of short films showcasing the important work that rangers do with NHT & Caring for Country. ■

**For more information contact  
Gary Luchi at [gary@ghostnets.com.au](mailto:gary@ghostnets.com.au)**

# New Staff Join **NAILSMA**



## Lorrae McArthur

Lorrae McArthur joined NAILSMA in August 2006 and is based in Darwin. Lorrae is the Communication Support Officer for the new Indigenous Water Policy Group project that is facilitated by NAILSMA. Basically, Lorrae's job is to help keep everyone informed about the governments plans for water reform in northern Australia and to keep everyone up to date on all the different types of research on water. Not only will she be communicating with Indigenous groups across the north, she will also be communicating with government and non government agencies so that there is a good transfer of information that everyone understands.

If you are interested in hearing more about the Indigenous Water Policy Group project, please call Lorrae on (08) 8946 6973 or send an email to [lorrae.mcarthur@cdu.edu.au](mailto:lorrae.mcarthur@cdu.edu.au)



## Honorlea Massarella

Honorlea Massarella began work as the Enterprise Development Officer for NAILSMA in September 2006. Honorlea's role is to assist Indigenous groups in developing projects that create independent economic opportunity within communities. The types of projects that Honorlea helps promote are culture-based and have improved social, economic and cultural outcomes. Currently, she is helping six Indigenous groups develop business projects that may be considered for funding by other agencies and business support institutions for long term development.

If you would like to talk about small business ideas, have a chat with Honorlea on (08) 8946 7168 or send an email to [honorlea.massarella@cdu.edu.au](mailto:honorlea.massarella@cdu.edu.au)



## Samara Erlandson

Samara Erlandson is the new Indigenous Project Officer for NAILSMA. She has taken over from Lisa Binge and is based in Darwin. Samara has been working with the Northern Territory Government for the last two years. She has been employed for a one year period to look after Scholarships, Leadership and Kantri Laif.

If you would like to talk to Samara you can contact her on (08) 8946 6883 or send an email to [samara.erlandson@cdu.edu.au](mailto:samara.erlandson@cdu.edu.au)



# Young Leaders Meet in Darwin

By Lisa Binge

Fifty Indigenous youth from across North Australia have taken another step towards leading the way in their communities, following the first ever Indigenous Youth Land and Sea Managers Forum.

The Youth Forum, organised by the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) was aimed at supporting youth leadership.

"NAILSMA supports the future generations of Indigenous land and sea managers, who will be responsible for much of northern Australia." Lisa Binge of NAILSMA says.

"We need to examine ways in which we can support youth, as well as give participants the opportunity to meet other youth and form their own support networks."

During the two day forum, youth participated in a number of workshops and had the opportunity to brush up on skills like public speaking and report writing.

"Young people need to have the appropriate skills and their eyes wide open for the big job ahead."

Participants also gave individual presentations of the types of land and sea management work they are involved in back home.

Projects showcased included the Yiriman Project in the Kimberley, a project initiated by Aboriginal elders through concerns that young people had no jobs and no future.

A participant also talked about being involved in the Cape York Traditional Knowledge Recording Project that trains young people to use video cameras to record elder's knowledge on their homelands and store this knowledge for future generations.

Guest presenters were invited from NT Fisheries, Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), Northern Territory Government's Indigenous Economic Taskforce and the Department of Natural Resources and the Arts. Indigenous MLA and Member for Arnhem Barbara McCarthy was also a guest presenter and gave an inspiring speech to participants.

"It was fantastic to have Barbara McCarthy at the forum. Participants enjoyed her talk and said her words were very inspiring."

"The forum was successful in bringing together young representatives from across North Australia including Torres Strait, Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory and the Kimberley."

"We received great feedback and everyone's looking forward to the next forum."

The NAILSMA Youth Forum was held on 9th and 10th March 2006, at the Darwin Airport Resort.

NAILSMA would like to acknowledge the Tropical Savannas CRC, The Christensen Fund and the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage for sponsoring the forum. ■

# Dugong and Marine Turtle Management Project Overview and Update

By Sasha Kiessling and Lorrae McArthur

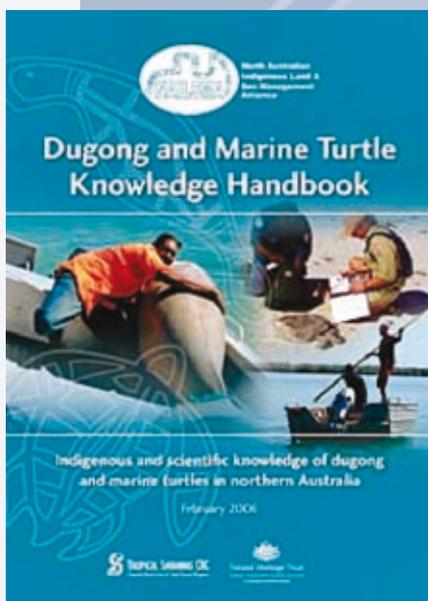
The NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project (DMTP) is ongoing in the Kimberley, Top End of the Northern Territory, Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York and the Torres Strait. Project partners in these regions have been busy working with participating communities in developing and delivering management activity plans for their regions.

The DMTP aims to achieve “Healthy and sustainable populations of dugong and marine turtle in northern Australian waters that support indigenous livelihoods.” Towards this goal, project partners have developed Regional Activity Plans in consultation with Traditional Owners (TOs) in selected pilot communities. These Regional Activity Plans point out community concerns, aspirations and ideas for the sustainable management of dugong and marine turtles. Despite the many different backgrounds and locations of the communities involved, many similar issues have been identified, including:

- A commitment to using Indigenous Knowledge as the basis for sustainable management;

- The need for more information on dugong and marine turtle populations and their habitats;
- Capacity building of Indigenous rangers;
- Sound partnerships between communities, other regions, researchers, government and non-government agencies and industry;
- Education within communities, as well as the transfer of knowledge to a wider audience

The DMTP Project Coordinator, Rod Kennett, oversees cross-regional research, communications and training. Rod is working to improve Indigenous peoples representation in government land and sea initiatives, especially those related to dugong and turtle research and management. In 2006, Rod led a team of speakers at the national Coast to Coast Conference, and, has been taking the views and aspirations of northern Australian salt water people to local, state and national level forums. DMTP Regional Facilitators have been appointed to work closely at the regional level and are moving forward with their Regional Activity Plans. Updates for each regional project partner are presented on the following page.



## The “Dugong and Marine Turtle Knowledge Handbook”,

is a comprehensive guide to Indigenous and Scientific knowledge of dugong and marine turtles in northern Australia, has recently been launched by NAILSMA.

See our website to download a free copy

[http://www.nailsma.org.au/publications/knowledge\\_handbook.html](http://www.nailsma.org.au/publications/knowledge_handbook.html)



**Project Partner:** Kimberly Land Council  
**Turtle & Dugong Project Officer:** Daniel Oades

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Daniel Oades joined the DMTP project in June 2006 as a secondment to the Kimberley Land Council from the WA Department of Environment and Conservation. With a university degree in marine science and

extensive experience in land and sea management, Daniel is happy to be back working on Bardi country where his grandmother is from. Daniel is currently working with Bardi Jawi People in the Kimberley region in key areas along the Dampier Peninsula (Ardyaloon, Lombadina/ Djarindjin.

“So far in my role in the Turtle and Dugong Project, I have travelled with local Bardi people to promote the project and learn about wider coastal management issues around Australia. I have met with other Land and Sea Managers at the Coast to Coast Conference in Melbourne, and at the Maningrida Aboriginal Sea Ranger Workshop, linking up with other Aboriginal Land and Sea Managers, particularly from Northern Australia.” Says Daniel.

Gathering scientific data and recording Traditional Knowledge are two important parts of this project. Vincent Angus, member of the Kimberley Turtle and Dugong Steering Committee explains: “The project is a good thing for the community as it will help to accurately count how many turtle and dugong we are taking (hunted). If it is found we are taking too much then we can look to slow that down. We have got knowledge of the green turtles, but not much on hawksbills and the loggerheads that also come here. We also want to show our kids the right way for hunting, making sure they’ve got a hunting future too.”

The project is also fulfilling the community’s long held aspirations to establish a ranger organisation. Eight rangers are currently appointed, including two Head Rangers, Brian Lee and Eddy James. The team will monitor the number of turtles and dugongs caught over coming hunting seasons and map cultural sites, nesting grounds and traditional law and practices.

Brendan Chaquabor (DMTP Steering Committee) says “The community will be driving this project and rangers will be working for the benefit of their own community and protecting country. The project will transfer information from traditional owners to visitors and make sure that rules of the country can be kept strong.”



Brendan Chaquabor, Celia Chaquabor and Kevin Dougal, fishing at One Arm point.

**Project Partner:** Northern Land Council  
**Regional Facilitator:** Libby Larson (newly appointed)

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The Northern Land Council is supporting the Dugong and Marine Turtle project in two regions within the Northern Territory. They are the Yolngu communities of northeast Arnhem Land associated with the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, and the Yanyuwa communities in the south west Gulf of Carpentaria associated with the li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers.

The Dhimurru Sea Ranger Unit is involved in regular turtle monitoring activities, as well as protecting nesting habitat’s from feral pigs and participating in beach clean up’s. Balupalu Yunupingu (Senior Sea Country Ranger) is appointed to oversee the DMTP in this region. He has also been closely involved in developing and implementing the Dhimurru Sea Country Plan, which was launched at the Garma festival in August 2006. The Sea Country Plan includes a shared co-operation agreement between community, government and non-government agencies working for sea country in the north eastern Arnhem Land region. Their turtle and dugong project Regional Activity Plan is incorporated into Dhimurru’s Sea Country Plan so that it is integrated as part of the bigger picture for sea country management.

A turtle recovery project is ongoing under Dhimurru's Sea Country Plan and involves dry season beach surveys by the rangers to rescue turtles caught in ghost-nets (disused fishing nets) and other marine debris. In 2005, 78 turtles were found - 56 of which were still alive and released back into the ocean. With funding from the Department of Environment and Heritage, in 2007, Dhimurru, NAILSMA and researchers from Charles Darwin University will be working together to monitor the movements and survival of post release turtles using satellite transmitters and tracking. In addition to this, Dhimurru has purchased a new sea ranger vessel that will be used to map seagrass beds for a better understanding of turtle nesting grounds.

The li-Anthawirriyarra rangers are involved in a range of monitoring activities across the east coast of the Northern Territory (specifically the Borroloola region). Steve Johnson has recently been appointed as the Sea Ranger Coordinator (replacing Felicity Chapman) and will oversee the activity plan for this region. Activities include, carrying out beach and boat patrols to count turtle tracks and dugong sightings, recording of hunting data from community members and observing the movements and impacts of tourist boats in the region. Turtle tagging initiatives are also underway. Rangers keep a record of when and where tagged turtles are sighted each year. They are particularly interested in finding out what causes unnatural turtle deaths, such as entanglement in ghost nets, tourism and toxic poisoning.

The li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers have a good track record of working with other organizations. The Sea Rangers have developed strong working relationships with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in collecting satellite tracking data on the daily movements and migratory patterns of marine turtles.



li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers at the May Dugong and Marine Turtle Project regional workshop

**Project Partner:** Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

**Regional Facilitator:** Bradley Wilson

Although Bradley Wilson only joined the DMTP in September 2006, he is already very familiar with the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria region having spent the last few years working for the Mornington Shire Council.

Bradley works in consultation with the TOs of the Wellesley Islands and adjacent mainland. This region comprises of the traditional land and waters of the Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and Gangalidda peoples, whose native title over the sea was recognised by the Federal Court in 2004. Dugong and marine turtles are central to the culture, identity and economy of all the Indigenous groups of the Wellesley Islands region. Bradley has assisted in establishing an Indigenous Ranger program on Mornington Island. And in addition to this, has gained support from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service for rangers assisting in quarantine inspections and reporting on foreign vessels.

A Sea Country Plan has recently been launched by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation – in which the content of the Turtle and Dugong Action Plan is incorporated into the broader sea country management objectives. One of the activities outlined in the plan is to map sea-grass around the region and assess the location and quality of turtle and dugong feeding grounds.

A key long term objective of the Mornington Island community is to empower rangers with the authority to enforce laws for the protection of their lands. With the impacts of tourism, marine debris and commercial fishing in the region, Traditional Owners endeavour to see traditional law included in long term management plans.

**Project partner:** Balkanu – Cape-York Development Corporation

**Regional facilitator:** Brian Singleton

The Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation uses the Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP) project as the foundation for developing community based management plans. Since the Turtle and Dugong Project got underway, they have extended their research to include recording of local knowledge and customary law on dugong and turtle. "Old people want to share this information – so that country can be managed right." says Chris Roberts (Team Leader of the Caring for Country Unit-Balkanu).

Communities at Injinoo and Pormpuraaw on the west coast and communities at Lockhart and Hopevale on the east coast participate in the DMTP. Project Officers Robbie Salee (Injinoo) and John Clark (Pormpuraaw) are busy recording knowledge of customary law and traditional knowledge of the biology and ecology of dugong and marine turtle, as part of TKRP. Project Officers talk with senior elders and TOs about traditions, stories, concerns, aspirations and suggestions for turtle and dugong management. In this way a regional view of shared traditional knowledge develops, which will be used towards developing community-driven management plans. "In our community, leaders traditionally have to give permission for people to eat the turtle and dugong. This is just one of

the old ways we can go back to for managing the harvest.” says Lawrence Morgan.



Balkanu Project Officers, John Clark and Robbie Salee presenting at the May DMTP regional workshop

**Project Partner:** Torres Strait Regional Authority  
**Regional Facilitator:** Lachlan Sutherland

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Lachlan joined the DMTP in February 2006 – coming from his home in Wagga Wagga, NSW and inspired from his experiences of working in the Cape York Peninsula.



In Torres Strait, and unlike anywhere else in Australia, both dugong and marine turtles are considered Fisheries under the Torres Strait Treaty and are managed through the enactment

of the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1992. Dugongs and marine turtle are a traditional food source of 19 Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal communities within the Maluiligal (Western Islands), Guda Maluiligal (Top Western Islands), Kulkalgal (Central Islands), Kaurareg (Inner Islands), Kemer Kemer Meriam (Eastern Islands) Nations and of adjacent coastal communities in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Gudang Nation of Cape York Peninsula. The Treaty recognises the harvest of dugong and turtle as a traditional right of all traditional owners and inhabitants in the region. Sustainable use and management of dugongs and turtles will, therefore, require the active involvement of, and collaboration between, all of these communities, particularly at a Nation level.

Project Officers Charles David (Yam Island), Ishmael Gibuma and Koygab Pabai (Boigu Island), Horace Nona (Badu Island) and Kenny Bedford (Darnley Island) are working on different island across the Torres Strait. Their role will be to develop management plans for turtle and dugong, based on the aspirations and inputs of the local people of these islands. Additional resources have also allowed four new island communities, Mer (Murray Island), Dauan, Mabuiag and Ngurapai (Horn Island), to participate in the community-based project. Activities in these regions focus on the cultural management of turtles and dugongs, recording catch sizes, monitoring nesting sites, as well as providing training and education on the management of

these resources. The Australian Government is presently working in conjunction with Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and PNG Department of Environment and Conservation to engage western province PNG villages in raising awareness about the sustainable management of dugong and marine turtle.

Training and Education are important parts of the Torres Strait Activity Plan. Lachlan has developed a state-school education kit on turtle and dugong. The education kit adds to the existing cultural learning currently being carried out in schools and directs teachers to websites related to turtle and dugong, marine debris, and other related issues. Developed in close consultation with community elders, the kit also includes classroom activities, with an emphasis on involving community members as guest speakers to facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge from one generation to the next.

A one month long community consultation that was undertaken by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in 2006 has also overlapped the work of the DMTP. Lachlan and members of the TSRA facilitated community consultations for the AFMA to help collect community viewpoints on traditional methods for managing the local dugong and turtle fisheries that will result in informing government policy. The message from people has been loud and clear - “We say – give us the rights to impose our own traditional laws on our own traditional tucker.” (Horace Nona - Badu Island)

**Project Partner:** Anindilyakwa Land Council  
**Regional Facilitator:** Simon Hartley

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The Anindilyakwa Traditional Owners and Sea Rangers approached NAILSMA late in 2006 to see if they could join the DMTP. The Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) has a well established turtle and dugong management program for the Groote Eylandt region. The ALC has recently launched its Indigenous Protected Area and is a leader in discussions about problems caused by illegal foreign fishers that includes the taking of eggs and nesting turtles. In addition to this, the ALC significantly contributes to marine debris removal and is a participant in the Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme.

Following discussions late in 2006, a Regional Activity Plan will be drafted for the ALC Sea Rangers. The types of activities proposed for the plan include turtle harvest monitoring, monitoring of stranded marine wildlife, participation in communication activities and the socio-economic study, information exchanges and a program of nesting beach patrols. Given the strength and experience of the ALC ranger program in sea country management and the regional importance of Groote Eylandt for dugong and marine turtle habitats and populations, we are confident that ALC Rangers will make a substantial contribution to our collective efforts. NAILSMA looks forward to working with this region in the future. ■

# Water..... On and Under the Land, For Community and For Country

By Lorrae McArthur

Today, there are a lot of interests in water. All across Australia, farmers, irrigators, fisheries, parks and wildlife services, scientists, industries, government and Indigenous people have a stake in water. However, the interests in water are particularly strong in southern parts of Australia because water in those areas is in very short supply. This strong interest by our southern neighbours is expected to attract interest in water use across the north of Australia. Increasing the farming industry in the north may be one way to reduce pressure on water shortages in the south, and one way in which to ensure that remote Indigenous communities are able to become economically viable.

As a result of the water shortages in parts of Australia, the federal government developed a plan in June 2004 aimed at improving water management, in the interests of everyone. The plan is called the National Water Initiative.

## The National Water Initiative

Through this initiative, water will be traded, but the amount of water that is traded will depend on environmental water flows (the volume of water in river or underground water systems) and the types of commercial and non commercial interests in the water. In most regions of northern Australia it is expected that water use will increase with time and so too will trade opportunities.

Indigenous interests in the National Water Initiative are not known. A recent study by NAILSMA on Indigenous interests in tropical rivers found that people living in remote areas know little about the Initiative, and what the Initiative means for water management on their country. This lack of knowledge reduces the ability for Indigenous people to make decisions on water planning for the benefit of their communities and country. Without this input, Indigenous communities will miss out on the benefits from water trading, and their social and cultural interests in water may not be represented through the Initiative.

As native title holders, land owners and custodians of traditional estates, Indigenous communities have a distinct and acknowledged stake in changes to water management. The interests of communities need to be considered, understood, valued and included when deciding on how water will be shared and looked after. Indigenous communities need help to plan for their own water use, consider ways to increase their involvement in the management of water, and consider ways to benefit from the financial gains from the increasing commercial use of water.

## The Indigenous Water Policy Group

The Indigenous Water Policy Group has been set up so that the interests of Indigenous communities are recognized along with other interests in water, before water trading and management plans in the north are agreed to under the National Water Initiative.

Members of the Indigenous Water Policy Group include:

- Joe Ross (Chair)
- Peter Yu (NAILSMA Chair)
- Wayne Bergmann (Kimberley Land Council, CEO)
- John Daly (Northern Land Council, Chair)
- Murrundoo Yanner (Gulf, Traditional Owner)
- Gerhardt Pearson (Balkanu, CEO)
- Michael Ross (Cape York Land Council, Chair)
- Des Hill (Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation)

The members of the group are supported by a number of advisors including:

- Patrick Dodson (Lingiari Foundation)
- Peter Cullen (National Water Commission)
- Marcia Langton (University of Melbourne)

With the help of the Advisors, the Water Policy Group will oversee the development of a research program; assist in the release of a communication strategy; and ultimately, provide policy documents for government, industry, research and other stakeholders on a range of water related issues. For example, finding the best way to work with and engage Indigenous people in water planning and management.

## Research Program

Currently, a Research Program is being developed by the research team, Sue Jackson (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), Jon Altman (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research) and Joe Morrison (NAILSMA). The Research Program focuses on developing the best way to involve Indigenous communities in the National Water Initiative. Once the Water Policy Group are satisfied that the Research Program acts in the best interest of Indigenous groups, knowledge will be exchanged between community members and researchers to develop the management of water in their regions.

## Communication Strategy

A communication strategy that supports the Research Program is also in the process of being developed as part of the project. Briefly, the strategy includes the best way to exchange information among everyone interested in water so that everyone has a fair say in water management.

## Funding

The Indigenous Water Policy Group is currently funded for one year by the Australian Government Land and Water Australia (<http://www.lwa.gov.au/>). However, NAILSMA is looking for more funding for the group. ■

### For Further information on the project:

Go to the NAILSMA web site: <http://www.nailsma.org.au> and click on 'Programs and Projects', and then click on 'Water Policy Group'. On this web page you can find more information on the National Water Initiative ([www.pmc.gov.au/nwi/index.cfm](http://www.pmc.gov.au/nwi/index.cfm)) and download fact sheets about the water policy project.

Or, contact **Lorae McArthur** (Communication Support Officer, NAILSMA) by phone: (08) 8946 6973 or email [lorae.mcarthur@cdu.edu.au](mailto:lorae.mcarthur@cdu.edu.au).

The First Edition of the

# Dugong and Marine Turtle Project Message Disk is Out Now

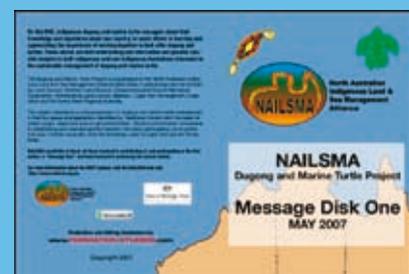
*NAILSMA is pleased to announce that it has released the first edition of the Dugong and Marine Turtle Project 'Message Disk'.*

On this DVD, Indigenous dugong and marine turtle managers share their knowledge of and experience in managing sea country, to assist others in learning and appreciating the importance of working together to look after dugong and turtles. The stories presented on the DVD are both entertaining and informative and provide valuable insights to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians interested in the sustainable management of dugong and marine turtle.

The Dugong and Marine Turtle Project is coordinated by NAILSMA and supported by the Natural Heritage Trust and Tropical Savannas Management CRC. Project partners include the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Anindilyakwa Land Council, Balkanu - Cape York Development Corporation and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

The project represents a unique approach to dugong and marine turtle management in that the issues and aspirations identified by Traditional Owners form the basis for project goals, objectives and on-ground activities. Good communication is essential to establishing and maintaining links between the many participating communities that span northern Australia, from the Kimberley coast to Cape York and the Torres Strait. ■

**If you would like to know more about the DMTP project, please visit the NAILSMA website [www.nailsma.org.au](http://www.nailsma.org.au)**





Attendees of the inaugural IWPG meeting held in Darwin in November 2006. From top left, Michael Ross (Chair for Cape York Land Council); Richard Jenkins (Balkanu – Cape York Development Corporation); Joe Morrison (EO for NAILSMA); Peter Yu (Chair for NAILSMA); and Wayne Bergmann (ED for Kimberley Land Council). From bottom left, Marcia Langton (Professor at The University of Melbourne); Marnie Parkinson and Rachel Amini-Yanner (Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation). Peter Cullen (Professor at National Water Commission) and Sue Jackson (CSIRO) also attended the meeting, but are missing from the photo.

By Lorrae McArthur

# The Indigenous Water Policy Group

The Indigenous Water Policy Group (IWPG) is an initiative created and facilitated by NAILSMA. The group is currently funded for 12 months by the Australian Government Land and Water Australia. The reason the IWPG formed was to:

- continue the work of the Lingiari Indigenous Water Rights booklets;
- to increase Indigenous people's awareness about the governments plan for water reform; and
- to help Indigenous communities and voices be heard in the development of policies around water across northern Australia

The group was set up in July 2006 and aims to support Indigenous interests in water resource management across the north of Australia. Core participants in the IWPG include the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Balkanu – Cape York Development Corporation, Cape York Land Council, and Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. Importantly, the group is supported by a research team comprising Professor Jon Altman, Dr Sue Jackson and Professor Marcia Langton. Special advisors to the group include Mr Patrick Dodson, Professor Langton and Professor Peter Cullen.

Since the group formed, it has met on two occasions. In November 2006 the IWPG met for the first time to discuss how to best represent Indigenous rights, responsibilities and interests in water across northern Australia.

The inaugural meeting was held in Darwin over one and half days. During the meeting and following discussions on the structure of the Governments water reform plan, the National Water Initiative, broad Indigenous issues in water management and water reform were identified. A mission statement and set of objectives were drafted as the result of identifying those issues, and, a draft research program for conducting case studies was endorsed.

The main issues considered relevant to Indigenous communities, townships and outstations in the north of Australia relate to policy development, governance arrangements, planning, health and employment. To address this set of issues, the IWPG aims to provide advice on policy, economic, social and cultural matters relating to water in the north of Australia through research.

A draft research program was considered by the IWPG. In general, the research program will focus on seven themes:

- Indigenous use of water,
- water markets and Indigenous rights to those water markets,
- economic development,
- capacity building through water planning and allocation, and,
- water resource management,
- community services, maintenance and delivery
- communications

In addition to this, regional workshops will be held to deliver information on water reform to communities and find out community aspirations and expectations in response to those reforms. Workshops are expected to be held mid to late 2007.

Communication among Indigenous communities, policy makers, Indigenous institutions, government, non-government organisations and potential investors will be developed so that information on Indigenous water related issues can be exchanged. Issues will be communicated through web based information, community workshops, plain English papers, newsletter articles and the media.

In March 2007, a second IWPG meeting was held to discuss the progress of the group. Research programs have been further developed and regional case study will be held in the Ord (Kimberley, WA), Maningrida and Katherine (NT) catchment areas to better develop the research program. The case studies aim to build the capacity of Indigenous organisations in north Australia in order to understand and influence the NWI policy agenda.

At the second meeting the IWPG discussed its strategic involvement with the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) research consortium. Indigenous people in the north will be engaged in research conducted under TRaCK to ensure that decisions for sustainable use and management of Australia's tropical rivers and coasts are based on extensive Indigenous knowledge.

For more information on this project please visit the Water Policy Group web page in the NAILSMA website ([www.nailsma.org.au](http://www.nailsma.org.au)) under Programs and Projects. The next IWPG meetings will be held July and October 2007. ■

**To have your say and find out more about this project please contact Lorrae.**

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# Green Turtles

that Call the Gulf of Carpentaria - 'Home'  
Recent research highlights the importance of collaborative land and sea management by Indigenous communities

By Sasha Kiessling

Green turtles are generally known for making long distance migrations, often covering hundreds or even thousands of kilometres of national and international waters. However, recent studies have shown that green turtles found in the Gulf of Carpentaria are "homebodies" - spending their entire lives within the Gulf waters.

Researchers from the University of Canberra, Kiki Dethmers and Nancy FitzSimmons, have analysed the family history (using genetic research) of green turtles of the Gulf of Carpentaria, using skin-samples that were collected by a number of Indigenous communities. The genetic results from that research agreed with another study that was jointly undertaken by the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation and Charles Darwin University, which tracked the movements of turtles using satellite radio transmitters. The genetic and tracking results agree that green turtles of the Gulf of Carpentaria mate, nest and spend most of their lives within the Gulf, and rarely - if ever - migrate outside of the region.

The results from these studies are important for the management of green turtles in the Gulf. While, the harvest of green turtles in Indonesia may have little or no impact on local populations, if the number of green turtle decline in the Gulf, it may take many years (even hundreds) before new turtles arrive from outside waters and rebuild the population. Most importantly, it means we can be assured that work currently being undertaken by Indigenous communities in the Gulf, such as the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project and the Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme, will have direct benefits for local green turtle populations and the people that depend on them. ■

## For the full story

see the special insert included in this edition of Kantri Laif, or visit [www.nailsma.org](http://www.nailsma.org)

# TRaCK: The Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research hub

By Michael Douglas

**Northern Australia's water resources are increasingly coming under the spotlight for both their development potential and recognition of their outstanding natural and cultural values. This is not surprising considering tropical rivers and groundwater systems are estimated to contain about 70% of Australia's fresh water resources.**

Crucial for sustainable development in northern Australia is the wise management of its rivers, coasts and catchments. As pressure on land and water resources increases down south, many are looking north to consider the options whilst others see a unique opportunity to protect the ecological integrity of Australia's tropical rivers and coasts. There is a need for new knowledge to inform public debate and support decision-making by governments, communities and industries about the sustainable use, protection and management of Australia's northern rivers and coastal resources.

The Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) research hub is a newly formed collaboration that will bring together over 70 leading tropical river and coastal researchers and managers across Australia to better understand rivers, catchments, estuaries and coastlines from Cape York to Broome. TRaCK involves 18 partners' agencies including five Universities, CSIRO, AIMS, eriss, GeoSciences Australia and departments from the Australian, NT, Qld and WA governments.

The aim of the TRaCK research hub is to provide the science and knowledge that government, communities and industries need for the sustainable use and management of Australia's tropical rivers and coasts. It will:

- o increase understanding of the environmental, cultural, economic and social benefits provided by tropical rivers and coasts
- o develop methods and tools for assessing the implications of current use and potential developments;
- o identify opportunities to develop sustainable enterprises; and
- o build the capacity and knowledge of the community to manage Australia's tropical rivers and coasts.

TRaCK is a \$30 million research program. Almost \$20 million in funding comes from the Commonwealth Environmental Research Facility (CERF), the National Water Commission, Land & Water Australia, the Queensland Government's Smart State Fund and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. A further \$10 million comes as in-kind contributions from TRaCK research partners.

A critical feature of the TRaCK research hub will be engagement with Indigenous people, who own and



The Daly River

manage large parts of the catchments and coasts in tropical Australia.

In particular Theme 6 of the TRaCK research focuses on identifying sustainable enterprises. This will include:

- o identifying culturally appropriate and sustainable ways of developing coastal and river resources for the benefit of remote and regional communities, and
- o developing business strategies that are well matched to the needs and aspirations of the people living in these communities.

An Indigenous Engagement Strategy has been developed to ensure that research is done on country the best way, with a minimal amount of humbug and maximum Indigenous participation.

TRaCK research will not only focus on links between the health of river systems and Indigenous livelihoods, but will draw on a wealth of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on the ecology of the region. ■

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The Daly River



# The Kimberley **Appropriat**

In October 2005, a landmark roundtable forum, the Kimberley Appropriate Economies Roundtable, was held in Fitzroy Crossing, West Kimberley to explore the sorts of development people saw as appropriate for the Canning Basin and Fitzroy Valley, and for the region as a whole.

There were over 100 people present, from the Fitzroy Valley, the wider Kimberley, elsewhere in Australia and overseas. Participants included traditional owners, farmers, tourism operators, training providers, small business people, academics, representatives of government agencies, environmentalists, pastoralists and other natural resource management stakeholders.

The Roundtable idea came from the wish of Kimberley people to assert their rights and set the agenda for the future development of the region. The project organisers are the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Environs Kimberley (EK) and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).

The centerpiece of the forum was a series of workshops in which Kimberley people who are engaged in sustainable development activities made presentations about their enterprises and projects.

Talks were given by traditional owners from the Fitzroy Valley about the work they are doing on country to protect threatened species (such as through the Yiriman Project), control feral animals and other invasive threats, keep water healthy (the Rivercare project), record information about plants, institute plans of management and establish and manage protected areas.

Many of the activities that were presented and discussed at the forum are based on partnerships and collaborations, and in all of them people spoke about the importance of cultural knowledge being recorded and taught, of senior and younger people working together and of 'back to country' trips.

Participants heard from organisations and projects that are developing business plans with the aim of becoming independent of government funding through delivering land management and other fee for services.

The manager of Bohemia Downs Station, Alan Lawford, spoke about his people's efforts to establish and maintain two communities and a viable cattle enterprise. There, new approaches to fire management in the region have been initiated, such as a fire warning system, and sustainable land management projects have been built around the participation of young people learning from their elders.

Sam Lovell, who established the first Aboriginal-owned tour company in the Kimberley, spoke alongside Dillon Andrews and Laurie Shaw, two Fitzroy Valley tour operators, about the key elements of success in running cultural tourism enterprises.

The owners of a highly successful organic farming business described their approach to small-scale agriculture and the increasing demand for their produce from restaurants across the country and national supermarket chains.

In the plenary sessions, participants heard from a range of national and overseas speakers. These



Kimberley Roundtable Discussion

# Local Economies

## Roundtable Project

included representatives from Ecotrust Canada, who spoke about the capacity-building support and advice, information services and low-interest loans that their organization provides to sustainable development enterprises and projects in rural and remote Canadian communities, many of them First Nations.

Across the two days of the forum, participants identified key principles for appropriate development and a number of main actions that need to happen for sustainable development to occur (see below).

The Roundtable organisers are continuing the work towards the implementation of these actions.

The main project outcomes include: the sharing of information about options for sustainable development in the region with a wide audience, including through the production of two reports and a DVD (see [http://www.klc.org.au/rndtable\\_docs.html](http://www.klc.org.au/rndtable_docs.html)); the building of linkages between different people and organisations including Traditional Owners, government agencies and local businesses; the engagement of state and federal policy-makers in discussions about the sorts of sustainable activities Kimberley people are engaged in, particularly on country, and the challenges they face, and about the uptake of the Roundtable recommendations; the undertaking of a collaborative research project on sustainable development options and opportunities in the region by KLC, ACF, EK, the Kimberley Development Commission and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; and the documentation and analysis of policy and programs (government and non-government) relevant to the recommendations including a gap analysis.

## Key Principles for Appropriate Development in the Kimberley

1. Development proposals recognise that the Kimberley region is a place of special cultural and environmental values with national and international significance.
2. Development proposals acknowledge that culture guides economic activity for Indigenous people, and appropriate development must be based on healthy country and strong culture.
3. Development proposals recognise and respect the rights of Traditional Owners to make decisions about their country.
4. Development proposals consider issues of Aboriginal access to land and equity of land tenure.
5. Conservation and cultural management are recognised as valuable and important contributions to the economy and society:
  - The local economies of hunting, fishing, looking after people, culture and country are valued and supported;
  - The rights of Traditional Owners are recognised when conservation areas are established;
  - Senior Indigenous people are supported in the transmission of knowledge and confidence to young people; and
  - Benefits from cultural information are returned to the holders of that information.
6. The people of the region are able to participate in planning for the region, are supported by government in that process, and their views are respected and included when implementing planning outcomes.

7. The Fitzroy River, ground-waters and conservation areas are protected by a legal framework.
8. A new economic system is developed, based on a diversity of enterprises that support the needs and wishes of Kimberley people.
9. Enterprise planning and management is built upon skills and knowledge transfer, and is tailored to the needs of the local area.
10. Successful and emerging local enterprises are supported by the establishment of region-wide co-operative networks.

## The 16 Actions

### Guidelines for Sustainable Development

**Action 1:** Develop an enforceable Statement of Guidelines for sustainable development in the Kimberley.

### Research

**Action 2:** Develop a long-term, integrated, and co-operative research program that includes the provision of results to the Kimberley community.

**Action 3:** Conduct a survey of local community interest in sustainable agriculture or other developments.

### Support and Integration

**Action 4:** Establish systems and structures to promote, assist and support new and existing sustainable and appropriate enterprises.

### Conservation Areas

**Action 5:** Develop processes that promote and support culturally appropriate conservation areas.

**Action 6:** Put in place real and effective arrangements for the co-management of the conservation estate by Indigenous people.

### Planning

**Action 7:** Investigate, develop and implement a planning process that includes Kimberley people as main stakeholders and decision-makers.

### On-the-Ground Initiatives and Activities

**Action 8:** Promote and support on-ground initiatives managed and operated by local people.

**Action 9:** Develop 'quality and integrity' control systems for tourism activities, which include the Roundtable's 'Statement of Principles' for Kimberley development.

**Action 10:** Develop and support enterprises built on cultural knowledge and expertise.

### Intellectual and Cultural Knowledge and Education

**Action 11:** Develop and support processes to protect and enhance cultural knowledge, and ensure that it is passed to future generations.

**Action 12:** Provide legal recognition and protection of intellectual knowledge as the property of Traditional Owners.

**Action 13:** Develop and support processes to facilitate the teaching of Indigenous culture, knowledge and language in schools and other training places.

### Funding

**Action 14:** Develop a streamlined and regionally controlled funding system that allows ready access to funds that support appropriate development initiatives.

### Land Tenure, Land Access and Land Management

**Action 15:** Develop and implement a process to efficiently and quickly deliver land title or access to land where appropriate.

**Action 16:** Provide effective means for control of and access to land where Native Title exists. ■



### Roundtable Report Launch



Balupalu Yunupingu

# Partnership the Key to Dhimurru's “Both-Ways” Approach

By Sasha Kiessling

**Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru) is taking action to protect sea turtles in its region.**

*Miyapunu* (sea turtles) are an important cultural and subsistence resource for the Yolngu communities of northeast Arnhem Land. Yolngu people wanted to be sure that their sea turtles were being looked after and to understand what management actions they might look at. A process of investigation began by asking where the locally nesting turtles migrate to, what are the various threats to turtles in the region and with whom they share responsibility in caring for turtles. For more than a decade, Yolngu land owners have been working closely with, scientists, government, and non-government organisations through their land and sea management agency Dhimurru.

A “both ways” approach combines Yolngu knowledge and practice with non indigenous knowledge. Dhimurru began a green turtle tracking project in partnership with Charles Darwin University in the mid 90’s. Twenty green turtles nesting on Djulpan beach, which is about 45km south of Nhulunbuy, were captured and small satellite transmitters were attached to each turtle. As they migrated to their home feeding grounds, a radio signal was sent to a satellite receiver - circulating in space – recording and telling the team on the ground the exact location of each turtle. The satellite signals showed that when nesting was over, the turtles quickly moved in a direct path to the south (travelling on average 364 kilometres) to feeding sites from Blue Mud Bay to near the Sir Edward Pellew Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria. This took each turtle on average nine days to travel. This was an unexpected result, as it was assumed that the turtles would disperse far and wide outside of the Gulf after nesting.

As a follow up, further studies were conducted with Traditional Owners from Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt

to track another five green turtles as they finished nesting. Like the Djulpan turtles, all five of the Groote Eylandt turtles migrated home to feeding grounds in the south-west Gulf. These results led the group to suggest that perhaps all the green turtles nesting in the Gulf, stayed in the Gulf to feed (for more information see *‘Green Turtles that Call the Gulf of Carpentaria – ‘Home’* in this edition of Kantri Laif).

As well as this satellite tracking project, Yolngu Traditional Owners have partnered with other local organisations to develop sustainable approaches to sea country management. Working with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Parks and Wildlife of the Northern Territory, Dhimurru rangers have surveyed marine debris on selected Arnhem Land beaches. Dhimurru also work with the Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme to collect ghost nets from the beaches and (where possible) off shore. A new project will be carried out over the next two to three years to undertake further satellite tracking of turtles that survive ghost net entanglement.

Dhimurru also works in partnership with NAILSMA, on the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle project. As part of this project, Dhimurru will carry out important research and management activities, such as feral pig control in turtle nesting areas, and carrying out annual surveys of turtles caught in ghost nets.

Dhimurru and Yolngu traditional owners have a commitment to managing sea country, ensuring that Yolngu protocols are being respected now and into the future. This includes promoting active involvement in ceremony, and the promotion and transfer of knowledge and responsibility to youth. These activities listed above form the basis of Dhimurru’s Sea Country Plan – a further initiative stating activities for sustainable utilisation and management of sea country. Balupalu Yunupingu – Senior Ranger for Sea Country at Dhimurru explains:

# Yolngu Monuk Gapu Wanga Sea Country Plan

By Balupalu Yunupingu

*Yolngu have been caring for their land and sea country for a long time. Dhimurru have worked with the elders and from their vision Dhimurru have developed a Sea Country Plan. The elders have asked Dhimurru to look after Yolngu wanga (sea country for Yolngu). The elders have been concerned about too much rubbish coming in, commercial fishing in their waters and about their sacred sites in the gapu (water).*

*Dhimurru launched their Sea Country Plan at the Garma festival in August 2006. This plan identifies Yolngu concerns and outlines how Dhimurru will*

*tackle them. The plan talks about relationships with other stakeholders and how they can help Dhimurru manage their sea country. The plan also explains how important sea country is to Yolngu and that Yolngu responsibility is the same for land and for sea.*

*The Dhimurru committee members have appointed me as Senior Sea Country Ranger. There will be two more Sea Rangers to work along side me. I feel proud that I will be working for my elders and for my sea country because it is very important to us. ■*

## Miyalk Land and Sea Management Conference,

(Women's Rangers Conference), August 2006

By Maree Donohue



Mardbalk Women Rangers, from the Goulburn Islands region.

Between the 22nd and 24th of August, the annual Women's Rangers Conference was held at Gulkula, near Gove, hosted by the Yirkala Dhanbul Community Association's Landcare Department, and facilitated by Robin Knox of the Northern Land Council (NLC).

The conference saw the bringing together of Women's Ranger groups from right across the Top End of Australia, not just the Northern Territory, but from Western Australia right across to Queensland in the East.

There were guest speakers from organisations and Government departments including the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts' (DNRETA) Weeds Department, and the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA). The conference also included visits to the Yirkala Art Centre, the Yirkala Plant Nursery and the Yirkala Landcare Department office. The conference events were captured on video again as in the past.

There were two resolutions from the 2006 Miyalk Land and Sea Management Conference including:

- The Miyalk Land and Sea Management Conference recommends that there be an NT Government Weed Officer position based in the NE Arnhem Land region to work with the Miwatj Regional Weeds Committee and other stakeholders.
- The Miyalk Land and Sea Management Conference recommends that the NLC look at supporting regional women's and men's conferences to discuss issues of concern, such as changes to the Land Rights Act.

Both resolutions were passed unanimously. These resolutions will be put to the NLC North East Arnhem Regional Council meeting, and then, if adopted, will progress to the NLC Full Council.

The Miyalk Land and Sea Management Conference was a great event, and saw women empowered and invigorated, simply being able to share in each others company. It was a very inspiring and motivating experience for the women involved, and provided them with the opportunity to showcase their successful activities and professional achievements to others, whilst simultaneously learn about what others are undertaking in their own region. ■

For further information about the NLC Women's Program, please contact the NLC at (08) 8920 5100.

# Progress on Parkinsonia Control in Wagiman Lands on the Upper Daly River



Damian Huddleston, Cedrich Blitner, John Kulwain and Rhys Lee in disposable weed spray overalls about to treat Parkinsonia.

Jabul Huddleston with Parkinsonia

The Wagiman 'Guwardugun' Rangers who manage large areas on the Upper Daly River have been attempting to control the invasive weed *Parkinsonia aculeata* over the past two years. Outbreaks of this 'Weed of National Significance' were discovered at several places on and surrounding the Wagiman lands and have been treated with the weed spray chemical Access since 2004.

The Neighbouring property of Claravale also had an infestation of Parkinsonia and the existing good relations between the owner Eddie Ah Toy and the Wagiman rangers led to the Wagiman rangers treating this infestation in the hope of preventing further spread into the Daly River system and surrounding lands.

Seeds of Parkinsonia are easily transported by water and on the coats of feral pigs, buffalo, cattle, horses and donkeys, all of which are common in this area. By controlling the mature plants it will reduce the risk of new seeds and new infestations developing.

Areas on Wagiman lands such as 'Dry billabong' had some of the heaviest infestations and have been a focus for eradication. This has allowed practical training in weed spray safety and methods for ranger trainees provided by lecturers in Resource Management from Charles Darwin University. The best news is that the mature Parkinsonia is rapidly dying off in the areas where control has taken place with more than two thirds of mature Parkinsonia killed off from Dry billabong in the last two years. This year with the late wet, season, Dry billabong is still a bit too wet to spray safely and this is a chance to look at alternative methods to control which can be used while the ground is still wet. The 'Cut Stump' and paintbrush method of applying poison is more labour intensive than spraying but does not make 'spray drift' which is such a threat to sensitive wetlands.

Once all the mature plants are killed there is a store of seeds left in the soil which can remain a problem for up to 7 years. This means constant monitoring as a Parkinsonia can produce seed at 3 years of age.

Focus on eradicating mature plants has now shifted to Bradshaw Creek where many large (over 8 metres tall!) Parkinsonia were found recently. It seems like Wagiman rangers got on to Parkinsonia control just in time because when this weed gets out of control it is nearly impossible to deal with. The Neighbouring Dorisvale station includes much of the upper stream of Bradshaw creek and is the most likely source of the seeds of the weed. Wagiman Rangers are planning to have talks with the owners of this station to allow them to go and treat the weed on this country and halt the flow of seeds down the creek and into the Daly River.

Having been on last years eradication efforts it was so good to see the work the rangers doing paying off in a big way. So many of the problems in land management faced by Aboriginal Rangers take so long to have an effect it can be demoralising to keep doing the same job and see very little progress. With Parkinsonia on Wagiman land in the upper Daly it seems like the progress is being made. This is important as survey of Bradshaw Creek on Wagiman country indicates the extent of the Parkinsonia is really big, even bigger than at Dry Billabong. This is being met with quiet determination by many of the Rangers who now see that the work done on Dry Billabong which didn't show much progress in the first year is paying off in the end.

While the Guwardagun Rangers still have many weeds to deal with, the successful track record with Parkinsonia is a very positive outcome from the Ranger program and gives a lot of hope that weeds can be brought under control on Wagiman Lands. ■

# Mimal Rangers

By David Wise

From 28th August to September 2nd 2006, Mimal Rangers of Weemol and Bulman in central Arnhem Land worked together with fire research scientists on measuring the effects of traditional burning using western scientific methods.

Researchers from the Bushfires Council of the NT, the CSIRO and NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts provided training in measuring fuel loads in different Top End environments. Survey areas were assessed for the kinds of plants present and the amount of burnable material available. A trainer from the Charles Darwin University who has worked with Mimal rangers was also there to help out and credit relevant training toward ranger's study in Resource Management and Conservation and Land Management Certificates.

Before conducting the research, a meeting was held with the Mimal rangers where local Elders were consulted and the reason why the research was important for the future of the Top End environment was explained. Local elders Philip Ashley and George Jungawanga said how they were pleased young rangers had an opportunity

to learn about caring for country using both traditional knowledge and western scientific methods. Both men accompanied the research field trip over the next two days of nearby site assessment to see how the job is done. This initial assessment work provided lead up training for the rangers before a long bush trip along the old Maningrida road travelling through the localities of Momob, Malakadjoltno, Yamanyi and Korlobidahdah.

The measuring is part of the Arnhem Land Fire Abatement program (ALFA), which is trying to find out just how the grasses, shrubs and trees respond to Aboriginal burning methods. It is thought that the traditional methods of burning with small, patchy 'cool' burns leave a much larger amount of vegetation unburnt than later hot season wild fires. This is important to reduce the amount of Carbon Dioxide that is being put into the air. Carbon Dioxide is made in large amounts by burning fuels. Carbon Dioxide is one of the main gases thought to be changing the climate as so much fuel has been burnt over the past few hundred years. Over the past few years this traditional burning has been done around Weemol and Bulman with help from the rangers and a Northern Land Council Land Management Facilitator.

The latest training worked well as there were men and women scientists who allowed women rangers and men rangers to learn in separate groups. This kind of survey work can be available in the future for rangers to do by themselves for ALFA and gives another choice for rangers in working out just how their ranger program operates and how it gets funding. Industry partners in the ALFA like large energy companies who mine natural gas are very interested in helping Aboriginal landholders burn their land to reduce Carbon Dioxide as this goes some way to make up the enormous amounts of Carbon Dioxide made when the natural gas gets burnt.

Because of the late wet season this year, rangers were still conducting burning during the research trip. This burning in southern Arnhem Land is particularly important because many of the late uncontrolled and damaging bushfires start in the south and then burn for months as they move toward the northwest. Mimal rangers have been talking with local neighbouring cattle properties to do control burn work there as well so to protect Arnhem Land from fires starting in these areas burning through.



Scientists, Elders, landholders, trainers and rangers working together is a great example of how many different interests can combine to help each other out. At the same time it shows how cooperation can provide new and different options for real jobs out in the bush for people who want to stay on the land and care for it using traditional knowledge and modern science methods.

Many thanks to the Elders and Landholders of Weemol who were involved: Maggie Tukumba, George Jungawanga and Philip Ashley.

Thanks to the Mimal Rangers participating: Adrian Ashley, Aaron Rickson, Anastasia (Anna) Rickson, Tanya Manyita, Wondrick Redford, Rosita Tukumba, Danny Bununjoa, Emmanuel Alangale (on secondment from Manwurrk Rangers of Kabulwanamy) and Brendan Muldabul.

Thanks to the Northern Land Council Land Management coordinator for the Mimal Rangers, Ben Lewis (who throws a spear better than most) and knows how to corn buffalo meat really well. ■



**Thanks to Science mob;**

**from Bushfires Council:**

Felicity Watt, Cameron Yates and Julia Schult.

**from CSIRO:** John Schatz.

**From NT Dept of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts:** Peter (Doc) Brocklehurst

Article by Dave Wise, lecturer for Charles Darwin Uni who was there at the time.



# Initiatives which have worked well

at Yirrkala Landcare

By Toni Marsh

Some of the **everyday challenges** at our Landcare Department are beyond the usual project scopes...

## Issue 1. UNIFORMS.

We found that we were spending a lot of money on uniforms, mainly because our staff were being humbugged at home and after work for their boots, clothes and safety gear which we provide to them. A set of lockers was installed in the workshop area and the keys kept in a key box inside the office. The staff were each allocated a locker, then instructed to store their work gear in their locker, returning the key to the key box each time. Some reinforcement of the training was occasionally needed when keys were left in pockets at the end of the day, but we are all improving.

## Issue 2. NUTRITION.

With the physical nature of our work, we have found that providing a small breakfast of toast and jam gives everyone some energy to start the day. Our Women's Resource Centre, who cook meals for the Aged Care clients in the community, provide a hot lunch each day for our team, with \$25 per week being deducted from their pay to go towards the cost. In this way we can ensure that everyone has a nutritional meal at lunch time. A check sheet has been developed and each person must make sure that their name is checked off in the morning, the order is faxed to Women's Resource Centre and lunches picked up at noon.

## Issue 3. WASHING.

Many of the staff did not have washing machines at home, so it was decided to install a communal washing machine at work which everyone could use to wash their work clothes. Training on the use of the machine, with special care about how many clothes to wash together, how much powder to add and how to clean the filter, has enabled the staff to put clothes on to wash before work or at lunch time, then hang them out on lines strung up in our old workshop area, allowing for all season washing and drying.

## Issue 4. DRIVING.

Staff that don't drive often live in small outlying communities which have no public transport. At Landcare we allow the reliable drivers to take a vehicle home on condition that they pick up those who don't have a driver's licence. These pick up routes are organised on a daily basis, as people often stay in different places through the week. Each driver may pick up 3 or 4 workers and the Troopies can pick up larger groups. We discourage the picking up of "bludger mob", giving preference to our Landcare mob.

There are always different and unusual issues to tackle in our work place, but if each issue is treated as a challenge, we can always find a solution.

**For more information contact: Toni Marsh, Project Officer, Gamarrwa Nuwul Yirrkala Landcare  
Phone (08) 8987 3237 or Email [tonimarsh@iinet.net.au](mailto:tonimarsh@iinet.net.au)**

**Photos:** Left-Right, Bruno Mukatpuy Marika, Eddie Wulwat Marika and Johnny Wurrnga Yunupingu demonstrating the lockers; Cameron Maymuru showing how to keep locker keys safe in the office; Incorporating safety signs in the workplace in Yolngu Matha and English; Yalwundi Marika and Joanne Mununggurr using the washing machine.





# Flora and Fauna Surveys in Gregory National Park

By Kerri Watkins

Two flora and fauna survey camps held at Gregory National Park in June and July last year served the dual purpose of obtaining data for the Park's biodiversity strategy and gathering Traditional Ecological Knowledge as well as giving the local Traditional Owners an insight into what NT Parks and Wildlife Service do at these survey camps.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) scientist Kym Brennan said the five-day Paperbark Yard camp included NRETA scientific and ranger staff, Northern Land Council Caring for Country Rangers from Timber Creek and the area's Traditional Owners.

He said the 10-day Spring Creek camp included NRETA's Parks and Wildlife Service rangers from throughout the NT, scientists from Darwin, Geographic Information Service staff and Traditional Owners from the area.

"Both surveys were undertaken within the Park boundary to monitor and evaluate the biodiversity of the areas. The aim of both camps was to collect data that will add to Gregory National Park's biodiversity strategy which will provide valuable information for the future and on-going management of the Park" Mr Brennan said.

Mr Brennan said traditional scientific methods were used to obtain the data, which included selecting actual

trapping sites, setting up 50X50m transects, laying out 20 Elliott traps, digging in four pit fall traps and setting up two funnel traps.

"Birds were counted and plants and landform descriptions were done, as well as trapping animals," Mr Brennan said.

"There was much excitement at the Paperbark Yard camp where good numbers of the Kimberley Pebble Mound Mouse were caught because this animal was previously thought to exist only in 'Bungle Bungle' country but we later found these mice at the Spring Creek camp so this was a tremendous result."

Mr Brennan said the legless lizard, *Delma nasuta*, was also recorded for the first time in Gregory National Park at the Paperbark Yard camp.

"This was one of just a handful of records of the species from the northern part of the NT, with most others being from central Australia," Mr Brennan said.

"In terms of plant life the highlight of the Paperbark Yard camp was finding a previously unknown patch of the rare wattle *Acacia stipulosa*."

Participants at both camps were involved in all aspects of the site establishment, capture, identification and release of the animals. ■

# Winners Are Grinners the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme: From Strength To Strength

By Riki Gunn

Congratulations to the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme recently awarded the 2006 Banksia Environmental Award, Water category. The Banksia award is a prestigious Australia-wide award recognizing excellence, dedication and leadership in contributing to Australia's sustainable environment.

The Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme is an alliance of Indigenous ranger groups, non-government organisations and government agencies in northern Australian. They work with communities around the Gulf to clean up discarded fishing nets and marine debris that cause serious damage to sea country and marine life. The issue of ghost nets, specifically their impact on dugong and marine turtles, is a common concern amongst many Indigenous communities and so the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme works in partnership with NAILSMA's Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, working towards similar objectives with the involvement of many similar communities.

Djawa Yunupingu - Chairperson of ghost nets committee and Director of Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation explains: *"The Ghost Nets project is for people from (Indigenous) communities all around the Gulf of Carpentaria to find ways to work together to get rid of marine debris in their sea country. It is great to see people for Northern Territory, Queensland and the Torres Straits working together to fix this problem"*.

You can log onto <http://www.ghostnets.com.au/data/> to see live updated data on the amount of ghost nets collected so far, origins of nets and the other most-found objects on Gulf beaches!

Ghost Nets Coordinator, Riki Gunn is celebrating their Banksia award win with participating ranger groups – taking the trophy on tour throughout

September to Numbulwar, Borroloola, Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, and Groote Island.

*"Can't wait till we get to see our great big flash award"* says Monica Kumangai of the Nanum Wungthim Land & Sea Management Centre

Another recent winner is Chantal Cordey of Sydney, who won the Ghost Nets "Design for a Sea Change Competition". This competition aimed to generate innovative designs out of recycled ghost nets, creating practical everyday objects for Indigenous communities to manufacture and sell. Displayed in August this year at the Garma Festival in NE Arnhem Land, Chantal's entry of a fashionable guitar strap was woven from ghost nets, plastic bags, tyre tubes and beach debris. Judges Mandawuy Yunupingu (Yothu Yindi Foundation), Barbara McCarthy (Member for Arnhem) and Mitra Gashes (Ilk Media) were impressed with the weaving aspect of the product which makes use of extensive weaving skills available in communities around the gulf. The judges also felt that the design could easily be creatively adapted to make belts, mats and many more ideas.

Chantal's guitar strap, and the other entries which included hammocks, shopping bags, chairs and fruit bowls, all turned garbage and found objects that wash up onto northern beaches into valuable and useful resources. *"There were many good ideas that came out of the competition. We look forward to seeing the communities producing some of these products"*, says Djawa Yunupingu.

Chantal will now be travelling to communities around the Gulf to workshop her design. This competition demonstrated the potential for Indigenous innovation and positive entrepreneurial opportunities from unexpected resources and waste objects in our environment. ■



# The Thuwathu/ Bujimulla Sea Country Plan

## for Traditional Owners Management of the Wellesley Islands

After the successful Native Title determination over the Wellesley Islands in 2004, the Traditional Owners, with the assistance of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, embarked on developing a management plan for their sea country. The plan, funded by the National Oceans Office, is designed to incorporate traditional laws and customs into the existing management arrangements handled by several State and Federal Government agencies.

After two years hard work (and almost two decades of partitioning for inclusion in natural resource management processes) by Traditional Owner groups that make-up the area, the plan was recently launched in Cairns with many of the government agencies currently responsible for management of their sea country in attendance.

Thuwathu is the Lardil, Yangkaal and Kaiadilt language name for the Rainbow Serpent that lives in the sea and holds the law of the Sea Country. Bujimulla is the Gangalidda language word for the Rainbow Serpent. The name Thuwathu/Bujimulla Sea Country Plan is used to convey the importance of the Rainbow Serpent in linking together the four saltwater language groups and in the management of their sea country.

The plan outlines the traditional laws and customs of the four groups, including the need to ask permission to access sea country and cultural heritage management, and how other stakeholders in the region can work with the Traditional Owners to assist in the inclusion of these recognised rights and interests into the current management process, while also being mindful of these other stakeholder interests. Key aspects of the plan include the establishment of a ranger service; sea country zoning; sharing of resources; and the sustainable management of important resources such as turtle, dugong, and developmental fisheries.

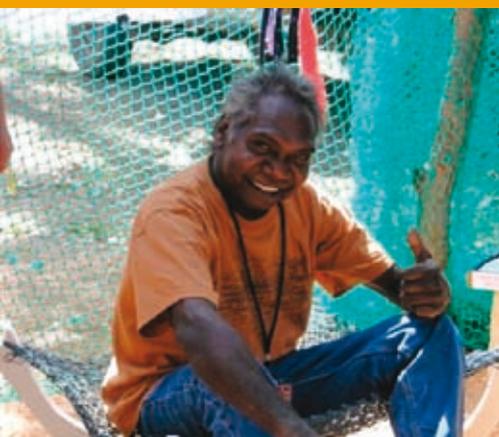
*"That sea that is part of our land. Our ancestors lived off it and so do we. It's no stranger to us. We can talk the language that belongs there. When you talk that language, the sea will look after you."* (Name not included for cultural reasons)

If you would like any further information in regards to the plan please contact Bradley Wilson, Dugong & Marine Turtle Coordinator on Mornington Island on 0427 112 035, or Lisa Castanelli, Senior Gulf Regional Legal Officer on 07 4041 3833. For copies of the plan please contact the CLCAC Cairns Office on 07 4041 3833. ■

Riki Gunn and Djawa Yunupingu with Banksia Award. (Photograph courtesy of the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme)



1st prize winning Guitar strap made by Chantal Cordey. (Photograph courtesy of the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme)



Manduwuy Yunupingu sitting on 2nd prize made by John Vanzella. (Photograph courtesy of the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme)



Barbara McCarthy, Member for Arnhem, NT displaying the Third prize of a bag by Krystine Love. (Photograph courtesy of the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme)

# WIMMARANGA MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

In 2006 the Nanum Wungthim Land and Management Centre, with the support of Traditional Owners and the Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council, commenced their marine turtle conservation project for the *Wimmaranga* area (or the Pennefather Beaches), northwest of Weipa. This project includes multi-disciplinary on-the-ground conservation and research work undertaken by staff from the Nanum Wungthim ranger centre, Carpentaria Ghostnets Project, Qld National Parks and Wildlife, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Project.

There are two problems that are trying to be address with this project. The first is the killing of adult turtles. This is frequently caused by turtles being tangled in ghostnets (discarded fishing nets) but non-Traditional hunting is also another issue many Traditional Owner groups are concerned about. The second major problem that needs addressing is the damage caused to turtle nesting sites and here pigs are the biggest problem, although uncontrolled vehicle access on the beaches is another worry.

These problems are being addressing in several ways. Firstly, by cutting down impacts on adult turtles by removing and recording ghostnets washed up on beaches, researching the origins of individual nets and reporting this to the Carpentaria Ghostnets database. There is also support for Traditional Owners who are working with the EPA to introduce turtle and dugong hunting agreements to better control the numbers of turtles and dugongs being taken for food in the area. "Traditional Owners don't want to stop Traditional Hunting, but they do want to be able to set their own catch limits and have the ability to enforce this through sea patrols" said Senior Ranger Jerry Wapau.

The second area Nanum Wungthim is working is to reduce the impacts of pigs and vehicles on turtle nesting sites. They will do this by more tightly controlling access to the beaches, which are 'no go' areas under their permit system and permission to access the area must be gained from Traditional Owners through the Nanum Wungthim office.

The ghostnets cleanup work is supported by the Carpentaria Ghostnets Project who has provided equipment and funding for vehicles and staff to undertake the work. This will see rangers on beaches doing ghostnet cleanups and wildlife patrols one day per week, and the work will be incorporated into their normal patrolling schedules. The nets will be removed and dumped at landfill sites and samples taken back to our offices. The origin of each net is then researched to pinpoint its exact country of origin, and the information is submitted to a central database. This database stores information on similar work by other ranger groups right around the Gulf, and information on net removal work will be available to the public through a map-based website.

Senior Cultural Advisor at Nanum Wungthim, Mr Richard Barkley, said that "we first started clean-up work on the beaches 3 years ago but a lack of funding for equipment, vehicles and wages meant that we have had to keep delaying this work. It is great to finally get out there on a regular basis to clean up these nets and keep an eye on the place." He added that "we know turtles get trapped in the nets out at sea, so it is important to get the nets off the beach as they appear so that they don't get back into the water"

On another front, Traditional Owners and Nanum Wungthim rangers have been supporting the research work of the Weipa based Queensland Parks and Wildlife ranger Mr John Doherty who has recently completed a 12 month ecological assessment study into the impacts of feral pig egg predation in marine turtle nesting habitats in the area. The resulting statistics are astounding: 70% of turtle nests on the beaches at Pennefather were destroyed by pigs within 10 weeks of nests being laid, with dingos and goannas accounting for less than 8% of nest damage. Further work is planned during 2007 turtle nesting seasons in researching and developing a target-specific baiting method for the feral pigs on these nesting beaches.

Another important program that Nanum Wungthim is involved in is aerial pig shooting. Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Program Technical Officer Mr Jamie Molyneaux said that "feral pig control had been undertaken in the Pennefather area since 2003 with support from Nanum Wungthim and Ports Corporation of Queensland. Recent shoots suggested that pig numbers were well down on previous years. This is a good indication that these control measures are starting to have an impact on feral pig numbers in the area." Mr Molyneaux also said that "further shooting programs were currently being planned for later in the year with timing to coincide with the start of the turtle nesting season to ensure that the turtle nests had every chance of remaining undisturbed by feral pigs"

Previous Nanum Wungthim Coordinator Michael Morrison said that "the entire program is a classic example in how Land and Sea Centres can make good progress with environmental management by working together with other interest groups. It shows that Nanum Wungthim and Traditional Owners don't want to exclude groups who want to help with these problems, provided people realise that it is important to ask permission before starting this type of work. It is Aboriginal land after all" ■

## **For more information, please contact**

Richard Barkley, Senior Cultural Advisor, Nanum Wungthim Land and Sea Management Centre, (07) 4069 9477

# Kuku Yalanji

*agreements signed and sealed*



Some of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji & Land Council Negotiating (photo provided by Christine Howes)

After 13 years of meetings and negotiations, one of the most significant and complex set of Indigenous Land Use Agreements in the history of Queensland were signed off on by stakeholders at an emotional celebration in Wujal Wujal in April this year.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie paid tribute to everyone who was involved in what he said was a “complex and at times very difficult process”.

“Today, as a result of so many people’s hard work and commitment, we are gathered to celebrate the most significant ILUA ever struck in Queensland, it is the most significant and to all of you, you should be congratulated,” he said.

“It covers some 230, 000 hectares of, as you know better than I do, beautiful, unique and precious Cape York land and this is, as I said, a milestone in all our histories.

“We’ll be recognising the rights and ownership of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people, we’ll also be protecting 79,000 hectares of land in new national parks and we’ll be putting Traditional Owners in control of their land.

CYLC chair Michael Ross said the Cape York Land Council would continue to support the Eastern Yalanji people.

They’ve got a long journey ahead of them yet but the Land Council will support them,” he said.

“The people of Cape York have been standing behind Kuku Yalanji people for the last 13 years since they lodged their native title claim, especially the members of the executive committee, and on their behalf I first congratulate Yalanji people on their success.

“This agreement represents a change in the minds and hearts of all Australians ... (and) means Kuku Yalanji children can look forward to their future with confidence, strength and excitement.”

Speakers and guests at the celebration included Yalanji traditional owners from as far away as Mackay, as well as Minister for Indigenous Affairs Warren Pitt, Minister for the Environment Lindy Nelson-Carr, Member for Cook Jason O’Brien, Wujal Wujal Mayor Desmond Tayley, Cook Shire Mayor Bob Sullivan, Douglas Shire Mayor Mike Berwick and representatives from the North Queensland Land Council, National Native Title Tribunal, Wet Tropics Management Authority, graziers, miners and representatives from various government departments who have been involved in the negotiations. Kuku Yalanji elder Eileen Walker said they had “lots of support from everyone”.

“We want to go back to our country and do what we want to do.”

Many of the speakers, including spokesperson Peter Wallace, acknowledged elders who had guided them through the process as well as those who had passed on

“It was a bit emotional but a really good day, I looked back and thought of the elders, my uncle and so many other elders I’ve been with who taught me everything so it’s good to come to this point,” Mr Wallace said.

“We want to get out and care for country now, get out and try and create jobs and empower the younger generation so they can come behind us and learn the process, learn more about their culture and take more care of it”.

Wujal Wujal Mayor Desmond Tayley said the Agreements marked a new era in the history of the Yalanji people.

“The achievement we celebrate here today represents a collective effort, vision, hard work, total commitment of many people, young and old,” he said.

The agreements deliver:

- native title recognition;
- transfer of freehold land; and
- a greater role in land management including within national parks.

Mr Ross said the deal showed Aboriginal people were able to achieve good negotiated native title outcomes despite the drawbacks of the Native Title Act.

CYLC legal officer Michelle Cohen said once the Agreements were registered with the National Native Title Tribunal a Federal Court judge would make a determination that Yalanji people held native title.

“The land transfer process will start now with land title ultimately transferred to a Yalanji corporation over the next three years,” she said. “Yalanji people still have a lot of community development planning and national park management planning ahead of them”.

She said the first and most immediate step for Yalanji People was to set up the new corporations to hold the freehold land and native title. ■

**For more information on the Agreements** you can contact CYLC lawyers Cordell Scaife or Michelle Cohen on free call 1800 623 548.

# Torres Strait Rangers

## Set to Safeguard their Marine Environment

The Kaiwalagal and Hammond Island Rangers of the Torres Strait have embarked on a new and important \$319,000 pilot project to monitor, clean-up and protect their islands' shorelines and marine environment.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Portfolio Member for the Environment and Health, Mr Walter Mackie, said he commends the Traditional Owners and communities of Ngurupai (Horn) and Kirirrie (Hammond), Giralag (Friday), Mawai (Wednesday), Muralag (Prince of Wales) and Zuna (Entrance) Islands for their commitment to safeguard their islands coasts and surrounding waters from the harmful effects of marine debris.

"The TSRA will work in partnership with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Program, as well as Hammond Island Council and the Kaiwalagal Aboriginal Corporation to assist the Rangers to implement this Natural Heritage Trust funded project," said Mr Mackie.



Alice Garnier, Stephen Ambar and Francis Dorante removing a ghost net (photo by Judith Thaiday).

"TSRA recognises that our natural environment, ecosystems and marine life are vital in maintaining our people's culture and traditional way of life, and they also represent what is unique to the Torres Strait.

"Currently, marine debris poses a real threat to our unique fishery resources, wildlife and habitat, as well as

to the safety and health our families who base their lives around the sea.

"Communities are finding derelict fishing gear, in particular large sections of fishing nets, washed up on their shores and entangled on their reefs.

"With Ranger programs already in place to carry out land and sea management activities, these communities are now taking another step forward by participating in this project.

"Rangers will be trained and provided with necessary skills, information and support in data collection and clean-up methodologies that meet national standards, and will be engaged in two main activities:

- monitoring seagrass habitats and marine debris in intertidal areas in the Kaiwalagal Region; and
- cleaning up shorelines by removing marine debris and nets.

"Aerial surveys of the islands involved and along the Great North-East Shipping Channel, will also be conducted to gather much needed data on the distribution and extent of marine debris and ghost nets in relation to seagrass beds, algae, reefs and shipping lanes.

"In addition, the Rangers will also work in conjunction with other government agencies and groups to help identify the origins of nets washing in to our shorelines and to try to prevent nets being discarded in the ocean.

"I understand that the Rangers are also keen to work with other community organisations to recycle nets into useful products like floor mats, hammocks, and fishing bags, under an approach currently being trialled at Hammond Island's Community Arts Centre.

"I would like to acknowledge the support of the agencies and groups who have worked in partnership with the TSRA to develop and bring this project to the region and I congratulate the Traditional Owners, Communities and Kaiwalagal and Hammond Island Rangers who have taken on the initiative to begin this important work," said Mr Mackie. ■

### For more information contact:

Miya Isherwood, Regional Natural Resource Management Facilitator, Torres Strait Regional Authority  
Phone (07) 4069 2957 or  
Email [Miya.Isherwood@tsra.gov.au](mailto:Miya.Isherwood@tsra.gov.au)

# Maluiligal Nation (Western Island) Dugong and Turtle Management

By Terrence Whap, Horace Nona and David Bousen



Photos: Left - Right, Community Meeting; Mabuiag; Mabuiag community meeting.

Traditional owners from 8 Torres Strait communities are currently involved in the NAILSMA turtle and dugong project. The project is being regionally coordinated by the Torres Strait Regional Authority Land & Sea Management Unit. The main aim of the project is to work with communities to develop community-based management plans. The project provides Torres Strait communities the opportunity to determine management needs and actions for dugong and turtle in their traditional sea country. It also allows these communities to get involved in dugong and turtle catch monitoring which is an essential tool to assist communities to make sure their management actions are having a positive effect.

The project is looking to pave the way to ensure that a community-based approach is developed for the overall dugong and turtle fisheries management. This would mean that Torres Strait islanders would have the mandate to manage these species according to their community-based management plans.

The project currently employs officers on 7 islands including Badu, Mabuiag, Iama, Boigu, Erub (Darnley), Mer (Murray) and Ngurupai (Horn) islands. The role of these officers is to assist their community to develop the plans and organise to commence catch monitoring.

The TSRA also employs two (2) officers, Frank Loban as project liaison officer and Lachlan Sutherland as project facilitator.

During the week of 1st to 3rd of May the TSRA officers were hosted by the Badu project officer, Horace Nona and representatives from the Mura Badulgal PBC. Over the 3 days the results of months of community consultation were entered into a dugong and turtle management plan template. The draft plan titled "Mura Badulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan" includes a number of rules and regulations related to dugong and turtle harvest rules, egg harvest rules, traditional

inhabitant visitation guidelines for dugong and turtle harvest and rules for the use of dugong and turtle meat and eggs. The plan also identifies the need for a specified butchering area and facility, ranger program and school program on the island.

Project officer, Horace Nona said the "Badu community feel there is a need for the management plan. Dugong and turtle are culturally significant to the people of Badu and Mabuiag. Badulgal are worried about hunting because it's easier with the introduction of new methods not used in the past. My people are concerned about the depletion of dugong and turtle stocks as well as hunter safety".

The next step is to promote the plan at community meetings on Badu Island to seek the endorsement from the community. Once the plan has been endorsed

TSRA and project officers involved are planning to engage government agencies to discuss how they can assist the implementation of the management plans. Some planning suggests a permit system being monitored and managed by community rangers. Agencies may also be requested to assist communities in enforcing their management plan arrangements.

During the week of 8th and 9th of May Mabuiag hosted the TSRA staff, with chair of the Goemulgaw PBC, Terrence Whap, playing a central role in organising community meetings to document their communities' management aspirations. Up to 25 traditional owners from Mabuiag and Badu islands participated in the community-based management plan meetings. The meetings were held in the evening with a large number of Badu Island hunters fishing for kaiar and staying on the island.

The meetings resulted in the draft Goemulgal Dugong and Turtle Management Plan, titled "Mabuyagiw Maluu

Ayngu Danan Pathay Thusi": A report document that protects the sea based traditional resource for the people of Mabuyag.

As indicated by the title this plan looks to conserving and managing all of the sea resources of the Goemulgal. The overall vision of this plan is "Sustainability of Sea Based Resources and the Reinforcement of Traditional Values, Cultural Protocols and Ethics for the traditional people of Mabuyag". The plan reflects the vision with an aspiration to manage both dugong and turtle using cultural as well as biological management actions.

Terrence Whap says of the Maluiligal meeting "The overall Western Cluster dugong and turtle management meeting was a successful one which gave the opportunity for traditional owners and Hunters to contribute to the plan. People had came out with clear idea and understanding on the importance of community input into the process. People were more in support and working towards reinforcing of cultural practices and protocol and not loosing of cultural knowledge from Elders.

Thanks for the Reps who came from neighbouring community to participate in the 3day meeting at Mabuiaig Island.

As with the Mura Badulgal plan, the Mabuyag management plan is still to go through further community consultation and endorsement.

On the 10th of May members of the Kubin community joined Mabuiaig and Badu representatives to discuss dugong and turtle management for the Maluiligal nation (western island cluster). Members of the St Paul's community provided their apologies for not attending the meeting but faxed a number of comments for the meeting.

David Bousen of Kubin community and Chair of Mualgal native title corporation said the meeting on Mabuiaig was positively building the foundation for managing our resources from the community or grass-roots level.

The project officers see that each community will need to drive the plans from their own community level. But they are looking to work together as the Maluiligal nation (western islands of Badu, Mabuiaig, Moa) because of the close family ties and resource sharing between communities. Standing together as Maluiligal may also strengthen the community positions to obtain government support to implement their plans and proposed ranger programs.

It is aimed to have the plans completed by July and out for community comment and endorsement by September. ■



### For more information contact

Riki Gunn 04 2747 6500 or [riki@ghostnets.com.au](mailto:riki@ghostnets.com.au)



Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme Co-ordinator, Riki Gunn (pictured here with John Bethel, President of Northern Gulf Resource Management Group & Stuart Menzies) was delighted to accept delivery of 3 of the 6 second-hand 4WD Landcruisers purchased from Stuart Menzie of Townsville 4WD Centre. All six vehicles were funded through a grant from the Indigenous Land Corporation.

Many thanks to Stuart and his team for providing the vehicles at such good prices and donating their time to fit and drive the vehicles to Cairns & Karumba. Each vehicle is fitted with a hoist provided by Lindsell Hoists and a small winch provided by TJM off road accessories.

These vehicles are designed to help indigenous rangers in their efforts to collect marine debris and in particular, the silent killers which are the ghost nets. One of these

# Ghost Nets Banksia Award Category Finalist – Not Once but Twice

The Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme is proud that for the second year in a row we are nominated for the prestigious Banksia Awards. Not once but twice. The first Category is the new Indigenous one, Caring for Country, which recognises the important work that the rangers are doing on country.

In the Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Straits, rangers from 18 indigenous communities participating in the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme have removed over 60,000 metres of net from a coastline as vast as the distance between Adelaide and Perth.

“Some of these Ranger teams are trained professionals with the latest equipment, while others are father and son teams equipped mainly with passion and determination”, said Riki Gunn, Project Coordinator,

The second category is the Peoples Choice Award. This is the most exciting of all as YOU get to vote for US to win. (& could win yourself a prize in the process) All you need to do is log onto [http://www.banksiafdn.com/peopleschoice/2007\\_peoples\\_choice.php](http://www.banksiafdn.com/peopleschoice/2007_peoples_choice.php) and vote.

Ghost nets are fishing nets that don't belong to anyone. They are nets that have been lost either accidentally or deliberately & drift with the ocean currents for decades, continually fishing but not caring what they are catching. Pulling nets out of the

sea, or off the beaches, and onto landfill sites is currently the most effective way to deal with the problem.

The largest net found so far was a 19 km long gill net found off the coast of Arnhem Land late 2006. This huge net with a drop of 12 metres and weight approximately six tonnes is not uncommon. It has a capacity to catch a huge amount of fish and marine animals including the 3 metre hammerhead shark shown in the picture. Only five percent of nets collected over the last 20 months originate in Australia which makes it an even harder issue to deal with.

Since their inception in 1989, the Banksia Environmental Awards have earned the reputation as the most prestigious environmental awards in Australia. The awards acknowledge excellence, dedication and leadership in various areas that contribute to the environment and a sustainable future.

Last year the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme was acknowledged, winning the Water Category Award, for its contribution in lessening the impact on marine turtles by ghost nets.

All the people associated with the Ghost Net project can be justifiably proud of the results of their hard work and one day we may see the Gulf free of these lethal floating environmental disasters. ■

## GHOST NETS SCORE 6 VEHICLES

nets recently was measured at 19km. needless to say, no vehicle could winch or hoist that monster up the beach but many of the smaller ones need the muscle of the 4WD power to get them clear of the shoreline.

Ghost nets are fishing nets lost accidentally or deliberately discarded by fishing vessels. The nets have become a growing environmental concern in north of Australia with over 60,000 metres of nets collected over the last 20 months by the rangers from 18 indigenous communities in the Gulf of Carpentaria & Torres Straits.

These first three vehicles, destined for Laynhapuy & Marthakal Rangers in the NT & the Napranum Rangers near Weipa, are on their way to Karumba from where they will go by barge to these communities. There are 3 more heading for Badu and Hammond Islands and Injinoo via Barge from Cairns.

As a spin off from these negotiations; Murray Lindsell Turner of Lindsell Hoists has arranged for an art exchange between his children's local school in Victoria and the students of Numbulwar, NT – it is amazing how things extend out far beyond the original programme.

All the people associated with the Ghost Net project can be justifiably proud of the results of their hard work and one day we may see the Gulf free of these lethal floating environmental disasters. ■

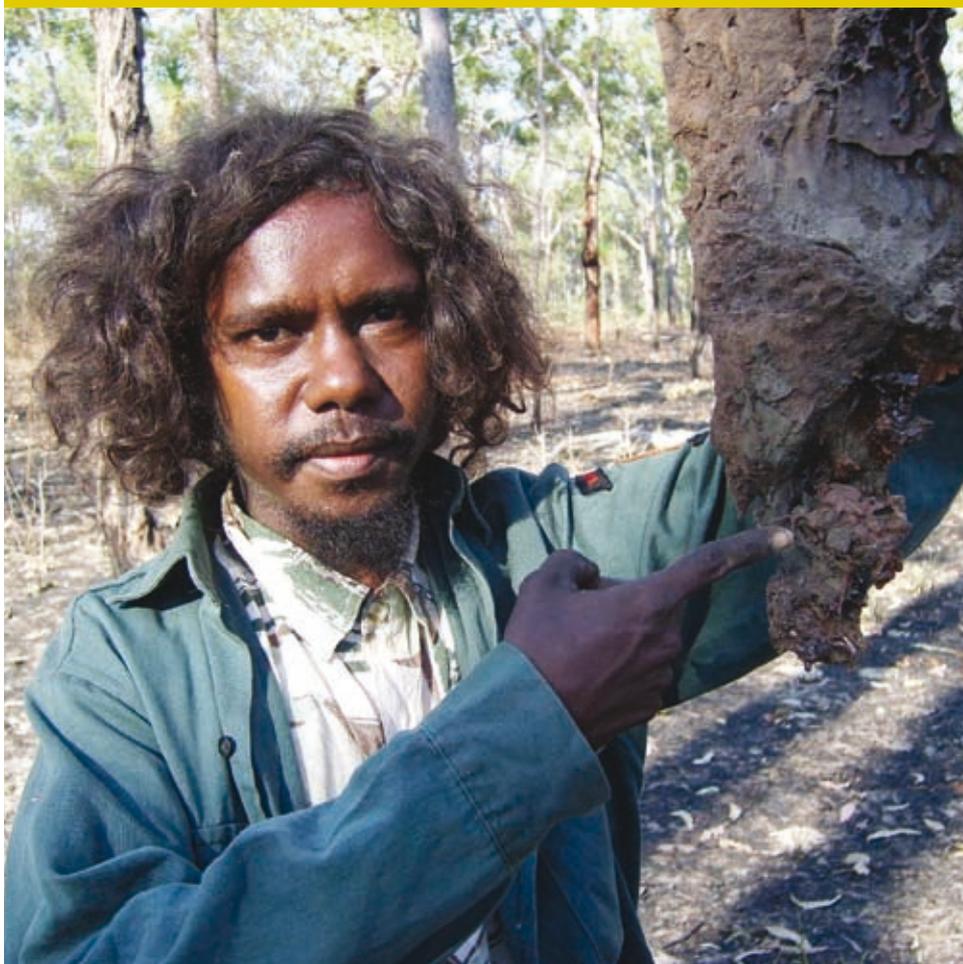
### For more information contact

Riki Gunn 07 2747 6500 or  
[riki@ghostnets.com.au](mailto:riki@ghostnets.com.au)





Top Left: Anna getting colour root for pandanus  
Above: NAILSMA Forum 2006  
Top Right: Wondrick and Ben getting meat  
Bottom Left: NAILSMA Forum  
Below: Emmanuel Alangale showing sugarbag  
Bottom Right: Wondrick Redford weighing grass fuels



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