



# DHIMURRU

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

## 2016 - 2017



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## FOREWORD



Rartjiwuy Melanie Herdman  
**CHAIR 2016-2017**

Nhamirri bukmak!

With great pleasure we can look back at another very successful year for Dhimurru and its board.

I would like to begin by thanking the Dhimurru staff and board members for their continuing efforts and ongoing hard work. Each of you play an important part in the development and success of Dhimurru, and in working towards outcomes that are beneficial to the community and looking after our country. Our past and current leaders certainly would be, and are, proud of your achievements and of how you value and closely follow their vision for Dhimurru.

Sadly, this year saw the passing of our former Senior Administration Officer Ms E. Rayner. We remember her as an important member of our Dhimurru family, who provided help and support for Rangers whenever they needed, someone who went above and beyond in filling her role. Ms Rayner was with Dhimurru for nearly eight years. In such challenging times, we stand together and find strength in our elders' call for us to look after and preserve our land and sea country for all generations to come.

Throughout the year, Dhimurru has carried out a range of ongoing activities to maintain and manage the Dhimurru IPA, and has taken on several new exciting projects.

Highlights of our work this year include the completion of on ground work and consultation

for our five-year long Fire Biodiversity Project, major infrastructure upgrades to the Latram River and Goanna Lagoon Designated Recreation Areas, and the Learning on Country (LoC) program Merri Gatha workshop. The Gatha was also linked to a monitoring program for the culturally and ecologically significant tern populations on Yilipa (Higginson) Island which was initiated this year. The launch of Dhimurru's new vessel Sea Ranger III marked an important milestone in increasing our capabilities for working on sea country and looking after our remote coastal areas.

For many of our activities, collaborations are essential, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all of our valued partners who have helped us to meet and deliver on Dhimurru's objectives.

The success of our operations is also ensured by providing staff with regular opportunities for training and professional development, and we are proud of the ongoing efforts of our staff in working towards Certificates II and III in Conservation and Land Management and in Fisheries Compliance.

We continued working with local students delivering the Learning on Country (LoC) program, with several students joining us for work experience as well. The collaboration with Yirrkala School as part of the LoC program is an invaluable initiative, encouraging students to complete schooling and pursue further studies, not only improving their chances of gaining employment, but just as importantly providing a foundation for nurturing Indigenous knowledge and honouring their elders and traditions.

With the continuing support of the Commonwealth's Indigenous Protected Area Program and the Working on Country Program, we will continue to build on our capacity and capability providing high quality management in the Dhimurru IPA for the benefit of Yolŋu and indeed for all Australians.

I am enthusiastically looking forward to the opportunities and challenges ahead, and wish you an enjoyable and interesting read!

Njilmurru bukmak djäka wäŋawu.  
All of us together looking after country.

*Rartjiwuy Melanie Herdman*

## YOLŲU MATHA ORTHOGRAPHY AND PRONUNCIATION

Yolŋu matha translates literally as 'the tongue of the Yolŋu people'. It is a generic term describing the sixteen mutually intelligible clan languages of the Laynhapuy region of NE Arnhemland.

The orthography used to write Yolŋu matha differs from the orthography used for English since many of the sounds found in Yolŋu matha are not found in English. In pronouncing words in Yolŋu matha the emphasis is always on the first syllable. The following sounds are represented by letters in Yolŋu matha.

VOWEL SOUNDS	
a – as in mud	i – as in tin
ä – as in far	o – as in pore
e – as in feet	u – as in put
CONSONANT SOUNDS	
b – as in boy	nh – 'n' with tongue between teeth
d – as in dog	ny – 'n' with tongue curled behind lower teeth
<u>ḍ</u> – retroflexed: retroflexed sounds are pronounced while the tip of the tongue curls back to roof of mouth	ŋ – as in singing
dh – pronounced with the tip of the tongue between the teeth	p – as in rapid
dj – pronounced with tip of tongue curled behind lower teeth and top of tongue touching palate	r – as in the American pronunciation of car with tongue retroflexed
g – as in ragged	rr – rolled sound common in Scottish pronunciation
k – as in bucket	t – as in tar
l – as in lump	ṭ – retroflexed
<u>ḷ</u> – retroflexed	th – 't' with tip of tongue between teeth
m – as in man	tj – 't' with tip of tongue curled around behind lower teeth
n – as in net	w – as in way
<u>ṇ</u> – retroflexed	y – as in yellow
	' – apostrophe: indicates a stop in a word

This reference is taken from Raymatja Mununggiritj & Trevor Stockly, *Yolŋu matha: an introduction to Gumatj and related languages in NE Arnhemland*, Yirrkala Community School Literature Production Centre, Yirrkala, NT, 1985.

## DHIMURRU VISION STATEMENT

*Dhimurru's vision statement honours the memory and wisdom of those elders who inspired and founded Dhimurru.*

*Dhimurru continues to be motivated by the commitment and passion of its leaders and elders.*



### VISION STATEMENT IN YOLŊU MATHA BY THE LATE ROY DADAYŊA MARIKA MBE

From dhawuru dhanu naya yaka wāra ga hundred or more than one hundred years dhanu dhāruk naru dhāya wekarram. Mā nhān yaka naru yolŋuyu bāki, banhaya naya generation ga generation ga generation. Naya yaka naru dhāya, mā dhanal naru nhāma banhaya naya, banha yakan nhalpiyan dhanal nyenan nātjil dilak. Ga nhalpiyan dhanal yakan gatjpu'yuwān nātjil dilak. Yo - Dhuwa Yirritja, Yothu ga Yindi.

Bukmak naya malanyha yaka dhāya manikaymi, rommi, dhulanmi, dhāwu'mi. Banhalan nayaŋa, dhanalingu nuku djalkiri. Bitjan nhan yaka nayim malanya dhāya ganunha Land Rights naru dhāruk bilanya bili. Yo, decision maker nhanbayi yana landowner.

Naru nhan naru, naruŋam goŋmurrum nhumalin gurumuru, Conservation Commission or Rangerwurumuru, Dhimurruwurumuru. Bukmak naya malanyha djākawu goŋna Dhimurruwura. Yirritja ga Dhuwa naru warkthun dhanal further development bilanya bitjan Conservation ga dhal yun naru protecting nhānuru developmentjuru.

Dhanu naya yolŋuwu yana, Yolŋuyu naru warkthun dhāruk nhanbayi Yolŋuyu yana. Djinaŋu nayiwu narakawu, yaka Gapmandhu wo bilan yolthu waripunyu nayinharrayū yolŋuyu. Nhanbayi yana naya-watanuyu, rom-watanuyu, wanarr- watanuyu, gamunungu-watanuyu wo madayin-watanuyu.

Naru dhārukma dhanu gunyanda bayikuŋ nhalalmiyu banha naruŋan ga dhanu badak nyena yaka. naru dhārukma dhanalingu ga gatjpu badak wānha. Djinaŋu Dhimurruwum self developmentkum, ga self-managementkum.

### VISION STATEMENT IN ENGLISH

Dhimurru's vision is guided by the wisdom of our elders who founded Dhimurru. They have inspired us in our work. They exhorted us to look after the land for those who will follow, to protect and maintain it. In 1990 on behalf of the elders Roy Dadayna Marika said, "Be firm and strong for the land, and the strength of your solidarity will sustain you in your cause."

"Our country (land and sea) will exist forever. It must be protected so that it will remain the same, so that it can be seen in the same way that the elders saw it in the past. Our vision and hope is that Yolŋu will continue to use our country for all the generations to come."

The elders said, "We the old people hope that Dhuwa and Yirritja country will continue to be looked after through the connection of yothu yindi."

"All our country is Yirritja and Dhuwa. Our songs, our law, our sacred art, our stories are embedded in our country, which is the foundation of our knowledge. That's how we see our country; that is what our Land Rights Act says."

"The decision-makers are the landowners, the clans that are connected through yothu yindi and māri-gutharra kinship. They have placed certain areas of our land in the hands of the Dhimurru Committee, which authorises the Dhimurru Rangers to manage and preserve, maintain and protect the areas designated for recreation use."

"The landowners put the recreation areas in Dhimurru's hands to manage. They envisage one committee, one voice, and one body under one umbrella, Dhimurru."

"Only Yolŋu will make decisions for this land, not government officials or any other person who is not a landowner."

"We envisage working together with the Parks and Wildlife Commission and other IPA collaborators; we need their help in making our vision a reality. With respect to the sea country in the IPA, we are committed to work together with all relevant agencies to ensure that our sea country remains healthy, our sites and their stories are protected, and our marine resources are used sustainably. But the only people who make decisions about the land are those who own the law, the people who own the creation stories, the people whose lives are governed by Yolŋu law and belief."

*Adapted in 2013 following the declaration of extensive sea country estates to be included in the Dhimurru IPA*



## DHIMURRU STAFF

**MANAGING DIRECTOR**  
Mandaka Marika

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
Steve Roeger

**SENIOR CULTURAL ADVISOR**  
Djalinda Ulamari Yunupingu

**EXECUTIVE SUPPORT OFFICER**  
Thomas Amagula  
Gurumin Marika

**BUSINESS SERVICES MANAGER**  
Maureen Neil

**BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER**  
Tiffany Crane

**PROJECT FACILITATORS**  
Lisa Roeger  
Paul Augustin  
Luke Playford

**LOC COORDINATOR**  
Jonathan Wearne

**SENIOR RANGERS**  
Yupunu Marika  
Gathapura Mununggurr  
Terence Wunungmurra  
Anthony Crafter

**RANGERS**  
Banula Marika  
Wulwat Marika  
Hamish Gondarra  
Brendan Yunupingu  
Grace Wunungmurra  
Rakrakpuy Marika  
Mundatjingu Mununggurr  
Winston Yunupingu  
David Guymalili Bidingal  
Datji Yunupingu

**LOC RANGERS**  
Madawurrk Marawili  
Bayini Yunupingu  
Billy Wanambi  
Gudatjpirr Yunupingu

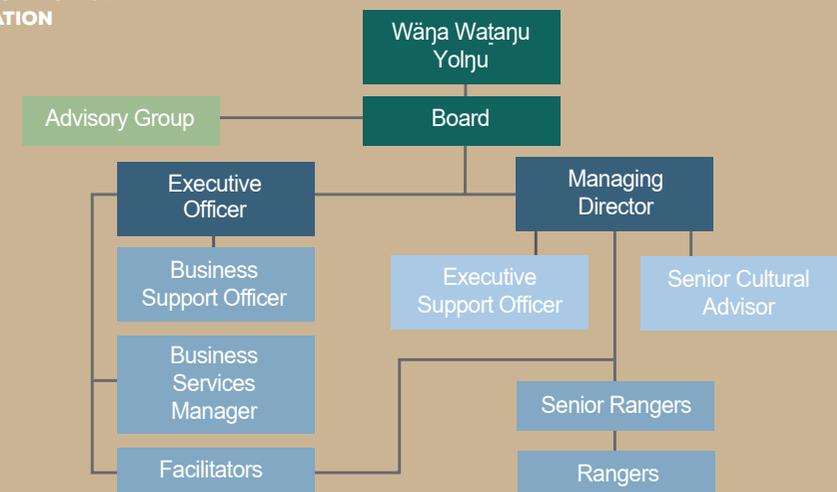
## DHIMURRU BOARD 2016 - 2017

**CHAIRPERSON**  
Rartjiwuy Herdman

**DEPUTY CHAIR**  
Djawa Yunupingu

**BOARD MEMBERS**  
Rarriwuy Marika  
Djarrambal Marika  
Bawuli Marika  
Natjingu Marika  
Boyan1 Yunupingu  
Nayarli Marika (nee Yunupingu)  
Dopiya Gurrawiwi  
Velda Winunguj  
Caroline Dhamarrandji (to September 29, 2016)  
Daylulu Yunupingu (to September 29, 2016)

**FIGURE 1. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF DHIMURRU ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DHIMURRU IPA

*Through the wisdom of our Elders, the direction set by the Dhimurru Board and Executive and through the planning and management of our Rangers in collaboration with relevant agencies we are committed to the following principles in managing our land and sea country within the Dhimurru IPA:*



### Yolŋu control and empowerment

Yolŋu make decisions for their own country. Activities should maximise opportunities for Yolŋu as active participants in the management of their country in the IPA

### Respect for Yolŋu values

There are extensive and all-embracing values of all sites in the IPA for Yolŋu and the preservation of these sites is a primary focus of management

### Conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural values of the IPA

The use and management of the IPA must be sustainable and must protect the ecological and heritage values that are the result of generations of Yolŋu management

### Both-ways management

Maximising opportunities for Yolŋu to devise strategies through a mutual investigation of Njapaki (non-Indigenous people) and Yolŋu systems of knowledge

### Collaborative relationships

Continued development of collaborative relationships with government agencies and other organisations in programs and research to support sustainable use and management of Yolŋu land and seas

### Njapaki recreation values

The goal of visitor management will be to encourage an appreciation of the cultural and natural values of the IPA by Njapaki to promote an enjoyable experience and to ensure minimal environmental impact

### Caring for Dhuwa and Yirritja clan estates

Holistically in Dhimurru land and sea country consistent with our cultural values, rights, practices, and obligations

### Sacred sites protection

Protecting sacred sites and song cycles that contain our creation stories and which link our land and sea environments together

### Ecosystem maintenance

Maintaining healthy terrestrial and marine ecosystems in which all species and associated cultural values can thrive

### Sustainability

Ensuring that dugong, turtle, fish, and other culturally and economically important species are harvested sustainably for the generations to come

### Recognition of Yolŋu rights, interests and responsibilities

Ensuring that Yolŋu rights, interests and responsibilities in land and sea country are recognised and respected, together with the rights and responsibilities of other groups and organisations with a legitimate interest in our land and sea country and its resources

### Maintenance of Yolŋu knowledge

Ensuring that Yolŋu knowledge and practices are maintained and transmitted from one generation to the next

### Application of Yolŋu knowledge and practices

Applying Yolŋu knowledge and practices to the management of our land and sea country

### Best practice management

Ensuring best practice management of our land and sea country long into the future

### Development of Yolŋu Enterprises

Support for environmentally and culturally sustainable enterprises

## **DHIMURRU INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA (IPA)**

An IPA is an area of land and/or sea country voluntarily dedicated by Traditional Owners as a non-legislated protected area. The terrestrial component of an IPA is recognised by the Australian government as being part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas (NRSPA).

In 2000, Yolŋu Traditional Owners made a voluntary IPA declaration over approximately 101,000 ha of their traditional country. This included 92,000 ha of their land and about 9,000 ha of their sea country, incorporating previously registered marine sacred sites. This declaration established the first IPA in the Northern Territory and the first IPA in Australia to include both terrestrial and marine areas.

At a memorial ceremony in Arnhem Land in April 2013, Yolŋu Wanga Watangu (Traditional Owners) formally dedicated additional areas of their land and sea country to the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area. This increased Dhimurru's IPA to approximately 550,000 ha and extended the IPA's sea country boundary a further 40 km from the coastline.

An Indigenous Protected Area is managed by Indigenous Rangers and partner organisations according to protected area guidelines set by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Dhimurru's Vision Statement sets out Dhimurru's commitment to:

- Support Yolŋu Traditional Owners in the management of their land and sea country;
- Manage recreation areas designated for visitor use;

In collaboration with partner agencies, our Rangers are responsible for the day-to-day management of the IPA, supported by the continued hands-on involvement of the Yolŋu community taking care of their traditional country. Traditional resource management practices such as the use of fire are critical to the maintenance of the natural and cultural values of the IPA.

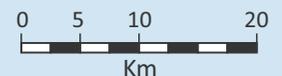
The Dhimurru IPA is supported by the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous Protected Areas Program and the Working on Country Program, which provide assistance in funding, planning, and management in return for environmental and cultural heritage management services.

Many other government and non-government partners share their expertise and resources to help us achieve the conservation and sustainability goals of the IPA.

Our IPA is one of 60 Indigenous Protected Areas across Australia. Together they contribute about forty percent of the total area of the NRSPA, which also includes all of Australia's national parks and conservation reserves.



-  Original IPA
-  Terrestrial Zone (Aboriginal Land)
-  Sea Country Zone (Collaborative Management)



## WORKING TOGETHER: DHIMURRU'S PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Dhimurru has developed and sustained partnerships with a wide variety of organisations over the years. We work together with Yolŋu organisations, government agencies, educational institutions, researchers, NGOs and corporate businesses on a range of programs, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, investing in activities, and providing training. By extending and strengthening these partnerships Dhimurru seeks to develop mutual understanding and commitment in looking after country; Njilimurru bukmaŋ djäka wäŋawu – All of us together looking after country. This is often referred to as Dhimurru's "both-ways" approach where contemporary Njapaki expertise is sought to help inform Yolŋu decision making.

### DURING 2016–17 DHIMURRU'S COLLABORATIONS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS:

Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA)  
Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA)  
Arafura Marine  
Australian Border Force (ABF)  
Australian Defence Force - Norforce  
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)  
Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)  
Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education (BITE)  
BirdLife Australia  
Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art and Multi Media Centre  
Centre for Aboriginal Economic and Policy Research – Australian National University  
Charles Darwin University (CDU)  
Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Working on Country Program (PM&C - WOC)  
Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy - IPA Program (DoE - IPA)  
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)  
Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA)  
Cotton on Foundation  
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources - Bio-Security  
Department of Primary Industry and Resources - Fisheries  
Develop East Arnhem Land Limited (DEAL)  
East Arnhem Land Tourist Association (EALTA)  
East Arnhem Shire  
Ghost Nets Australia  
Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation (GAC)

Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC)  
Jawun Corporate Partnerships  
Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation and Yirralka Rangers  
Lirriwi Aboriginal Corporation  
LJ Hooker Foundation - Culture College  
Marine and Coastal Community Network (NT)  
Melbourne University  
Miwatj Employment Program (MEP)  
National Heritage Trust (NHT)  
Nhulunbuy Corporation Limited (NCL)  
Nhulunbuy Volunteers  
North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)  
Northern Land Council (NLC)  
NT Correctional Services - Datjula Work Camp  
NT Dept of Planning and Infrastructure  
NT Dept of Primary Industry and Resources - Biosecurity  
NT Dept of Tourism and Culture - Parks and Wildlife Commission (P&WC)  
NT Police and Marine Enforcement Unit  
NT Tourist Commission  
People on Country - PEW Foundation  
Regional Ranger Groups  
Rio Tinto Alcan Gove Pty Limited<sup>1</sup> (Rio Tinto)  
Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation (RAC)  
Seafood Council NT  
Seagrass-Watch  
Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM)  
Threatened Species Network (NT)  
University of New South Wales (UNSW)  
Yirrkala Business Enterprises 2 (YBE2)  
Yirrkala School  
Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF)

1. Rio Tinto Gove Operations signed an MOU in 2015 confirming and formalising our partnership to promote the collaborative enhancement of biodiversity and cultural values on the Gove Peninsula in accordance with the wishes of Traditional Owners. The partnership has a particular focus on the protection of natural and cultural environment management, mentoring and leadership development as well as the management of recreational areas across the Gove Peninsula. Rio Tinto is pleased to continue this partnership with Dhimurru.



## MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



**RECREATIONAL AREA MANAGEMENT**

As the number of visitors to the Gove Peninsula region continues to rise, Designated Recreation Areas are under increasing pressure.

The frequent use of facilities and tracks requires careful management to ensure that both locals and tourists can continue to enjoy recreational areas, while impacts on the environment and culturally significant sites are kept to a minimum.

In addition to routine maintenance operations, Dhimurru has carried out several upgrades and improvements to infrastructure and Designated Recreation Areas this year, for example:

- The Latram River and Goanna Lagoon were connected by a level river crossing as part of the Wathawuy Merge Project (see page 19). Both recreational areas and the now common access track received substantial infrastructural redevelopments and improvements to accommodate rising visitor numbers, and minimise erosion and maintenance requirements.
- New marine debris stations were installed at several coastal Designated Recreation Areas, including the town beaches. Here, visitors find small re-usable bags for the collection of rubbish from the beaches that can be easily returned to the station and emptied. Large collection bags are regularly picked up and replaced by Rangers.

- In response to severe damage due to flooding and erosion during the wet season, the access track to Guwatjurmuru was restored and graded.
- Revegetation of native plants was carried out at Lombuy and town beaches.

Ongoing and frequent works are necessary to look after recreational areas as our landscape is dynamic and contains several sensitive ecosystems. At Wanuwuy, for example, a large part of our work involves the development and maintenance of the vehicular access system, which allows visitors to traverse this area of limited accessibility with minimal environmental damage.



**FIRE MANAGEMENT**

Fire is a powerful management tool which can profoundly influence the extent, occurrence and diversity of plant and animal life in a given area. Well-timed, targeted and clever use of fire has notable ecological benefits, often significantly increasing biological productivity and biodiversity.

With these outcomes in mind, Dhimurru launched into a fire and biodiversity research project with partners CSIRO in 2012, to discover the 'best' way to burn country. This five-year project involved two sets of flora and fauna surveys at 27 selected sites, mapping a six-year fire history, photo monitoring, and many workshops and interviews with Yolju owners and custodians for our IPA.

The results of this work have been compiled and used to develop a Fire Management Plan for the Dhimurru IPA, which not only documents past and current techniques, practices and views on the use of fire, but also provides a framework and prescriptive plan for the use of fire for future work in our IPA.

Whilst responsibility for country remains with Traditional Owners and custodians, it is clear that Dhimurru has an important role to play in promoting and supporting a fire regime which builds resilience and biodiversity and

working with traditional owners. We will continue to provide protection burns around Designated Recreation Areas infrastructure also reducing fire risks to visitors. Importantly we will also maintain a program of early dry season fuel reduction burns, to break the country up into smaller fire management areas and lower the risk of large, hot and destructive, late dry season fires. These lower intensity fires also serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Research has provided us with a better understanding of the types of country including flora and fauna in our IPA. Both fire intensity and fire intervals are important factors in the survival of some fire sensitive plants and animals. With a better understanding of where these occur we can now tailor our fire program to protect these areas. We also have a greater understanding of how the country dries out after the wet season and can time our burns to better accommodate this. The Dhimurru Fire Biodiversity Project collaboration has resulted in the development of an effective fire management strategy with positive outcomes for both biodiversity and the Yolju community.

**FIRE BIODIVERSITY WORKSHOP**



June 2017 marked the end of the five-year Dhimurru Fire Biodiversity Project which aimed to explore the nature and impact of fire on our natural and cultural landscape. A two-day final workshop was organised and hosted by Dhimurru in May 2017 to present and discuss the outcomes of this long-term project.

Project manager Lisa Roeger began by providing a historical account of burning in our area including traditional techniques and practices and went on to discuss how social and economic changes have altered fire regimes and had a negative impact on biodiversity of plants and animals in our region. Our CSIRO partners gave summaries of the 2012 and 2016 flora and fauna surveys, including the impact of the two major cyclone events that occurred in 2015 and highlighted trends in species and communities of significance. Rohan Fisher from the Darwin Centre for Bushfire Research (DCBR, Charles Darwin University) demonstrated a 3D fire simulation model specifically tailored to the Dhimurru IPA, which proved to be an excellent way to understand the complexity of fire in the landscape. A six-year fire history developed from Landsat 8 satellite imagery was shown and there were discussions around fire sensitive species and ideal fire regimes for those communities.

The second day of the workshop provided an opportunity for land owners and custodians to discuss what parameters they thought were important in planning for fire; how the consultative protocols should operate; what resources they thought important and how to go about burning to preserve them; and helped to clarify the ongoing relationship between Yolŋu land managers and Dhimurru for future burning in our IPA.

The analysis of different findings and approaches at the workshop sparked very productive discussions on optimal ways of burning for beneficial biodiversity and cultural outcomes.



**BÄRU (CROCODILE) MANAGEMENT**

Dhimurru continues to support Traditional Owners and the community with the management of bäru, and helps raise awareness in order to minimise bäru and human interactions. General and current information are provided through Dhimurru's website and Facebook page, Parks & Wildlife Commission's (P & WC) CrocWise signs at recreational areas in both English and Yolŋu matha, and the local community radio station Gove FM.

Dhimurru's Board recognises that threat management services are essential to ensure community safety and to help in the protection and care of this important species. Following Gumatj Traditional Owners' decision to close the Bäru Farm, we no longer have an option for relocating bäru once they have been trapped.

In light of these developments and given our limited resources, Dhimurru has adapted its approach to the ongoing threat management, committing to only trapping bäru that pose an eminent threat to the community. The new threat management plan which includes refined policies and protocols for the identification of high risk animals was developed with advice from P & WC.

During the reporting period, Dhimurru was further supported by P & WC through training and guidance regarding bäru handling, while Rio Tinto provided some financial assistance based on their partnership with Dhimurru. Trapping of bäru in and adjacent to the town lease was also assisted and supported by the Nhulunbuy Corporation.





**TRACK IMPROVEMENTS**

Improving the recreational track network within the IPA has been a major challenge for many years, and continues to be a key aspect of Dhimurru’s ongoing works. Most of the tracks we manage date back several decades, and were created by Nabalco exploration and mining personnel with heavy machinery, or by residents making their own way to water holes and beaches.

With few regulations in place, early track networks were insufficiently planned and largely lacked important considerations of terrain and seasonal weather patterns. As a consequence, high water run-off during the wet season periodically causes major erosion to large parts of the access tracks to Designated Recreation Areas within the Dhimurru IPA. Dhimurru has long been struggling to manage and improve the existing tracks, and to mitigate structural damage to the network through careful planning and comprehensive management strategies.

Access roads to some areas in the IPA, however, are situated on the Rio Tinto Gove Operations special mine lease (SML 11), and establishing responsibility for these roads requires negotiation.

In order for our Rangers to work safely, efficiently, and effectively, Dhimurru has made it a priority to manage the track network to a state where maintenance requirements are minimal. Stakeholders with interests in access to Designated Recreation Areas continue

to strongly support Dhimurru in these tasks, including the Northern Territory Government Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Department of the Environment, Rio Tinto, Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation, Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation, Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation, Develop East Arnhem Land Limited, and Lirwi Aboriginal Corporation.

A basis for our track repair, re-alignment and construction program is given by the track management strategy developed together with a Jawun seconded (www.jawun.org.au) from Leighton Constructions in 2013.

Our project areas have thus far been independently assessed by local Yolŋu-based civil works contractor YBE (2) Pty Ltd. Their support in the field provides Rangers with valuable civil works experience, and practice in rehabilitation and ongoing management approaches. This experience further contributes to the completion of units in Certificates II and III in Conservation and Land Management.

Dhimurru are always looking for opportunities to build the capacity of our Rangers, and we now own plant equipment, such as a skidsteer funded by the Indigenous Land Corporation, which helps with ongoing scheduled maintenance before and after the annual wet season. We have come a long way improving and modernising our facilities and equipment, and are looking with great optimism at the future management of our IPA track network!



**WATHAWUY (LATRAM/GOANNA) MERGE PROJECT**

This financial year saw the undertaking of major infrastructure works on the Latram River and Goanna Lagoon Designated Recreation Areas, the area collectively referred to by Yolŋu as Wathawuy.

The comprehensive and highly anticipated Merge Project involved improvements to the existing access track to the Latram, building a level river crossing that connects the Goanna and the Latram areas, substantial erosion control works, and the development of several new camp and day-use sites. The new access to Goanna via the track to Latram makes it considerably easier and faster to reach the lagoon, rendering the existing long and arduous access corridor redundant. Relatively close to Nhulunbuy, the Latram and Goanna Designated Recreation Areas are extremely popular and consequently subject to intense pressure. The Merge Project was planned in response to this high usage, and was designed to benefit visitors whilst protecting the environmental and cultural values of this area in the long-term.

At both Designated Recreation Areas, extensive re-developments were carried out to provide generous parking and camp grounds that help to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to the region, while sufficient space and natural bushland between different camp sites ensure that privacy of users is given. Camp grounds are located off the river terraces in order to mitigate erosion of the river banks, and provide child-friendly, safe, and spacious recreational areas,

while a network of designated walking tracks provides easy access to the river.

Latram facilities were re-opened to the public in June 2017, while further works were required to complete the upgrade at Goanna Lagoon. At the completion of the project, recreational facilities at Goanna are to include several new tracks, parking space, dedicated day-use and camping areas with BBQs and tables, signage, and a newly installed composting pit toilet.

This project was made possible thanks to grants from the Federal Government Department of the Chief Minister drawing from the Tropical Cyclone Nathan and Lam Recovery Fund, as well as the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Transport Regional Economic Infrastructure Fund for the civil works carried out by YBE (2) Pty Ltd. Dhimurru and Rio Tinto Gove contributed materials to the overall project, while Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation donated quarry rock for the crossing. The project has also received significant community support with assistance from NORFORCE, the Datjala Work Camp, Learning on Country students from Yirkala School, and Traditional Owners.





**WEED MANAGEMENT**

Invasive plant species (weeds) pose a considerable threat to vegetation and animal communities in the Dhimurru IPA, and have the potential to substantially impact and modify native ecosystems. The management of weeds is therefore of high priority to Dhimurru and entails a range of regular surveys, on-ground treatment of weeds, and the ongoing refinement of the management strategy for effective long-term management of pests throughout the IPA.

Weeds with particularly pronounced environmental impacts, such as Coffee Bush, Perennial Mission Grass, and Gamba Grass, are specifically targeted by Dhimurru’s eradication efforts in order to prevent potential landscape-scale ecological degradation. Moderate priority weeds to be controlled include Annual Mission Grass, Caltrop, Snakeweed, Sida sp., Flannel Weed, Gambia Pea, Hyptis, and Mossman River Grass.

This year, initial surveys of known weed infestations at the start of the season were followed by a series of treatment activities around the IPA, including control measures around Yirrkala with the help of Learning on Country students. Various treatment methods were applied to suit the particular species and the extent of infestations.

The recently developed weed action plan ensures that each weed species is controlled using best practice methods. This has resulted in a wider range of herbicides being employed to improve effectiveness and efficiency in control activities. While herbicides are widely used for weed control, techniques vary depending on

species, form and density. Foliar spraying, cut stump treatment and hand pulling are all methods used to control weeds in the IPA.

As part of the ongoing long-term Coffee Bush eradication project on Dhambaliya (Bremer Island), some identified sites were re-visited and treated in June 2017. While most sites exhibited significant improvements and required minimal efforts this year, some areas contained numerous large trees and dense undergrowth, and will unfortunately require continuous treatment for many years to come.



**ACCESS PERMITS AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT**

The IPA contains 19 Designated Recreation Areas that are managed and maintained by Dhimurru. The management of visitors to these areas represents one of Dhimurru’s top priorities, and serves to protect culturally and environmentally significant sites from potential threats associated with recreational use. This is to a large extent achieved through an access permit system. Visitors must obtain an access permit and agree to a set of terms and conditions before being given permission to enter. Traditional Owners through the Northern Land Council have delegated authority to Dhimurru to issue access permits and manage visitor activity on their behalf.

Non-Yolŋu (Njāpaki) residents and visitors who want to enter Designated Recreation Areas within the Dhimurru IPA first need to obtain a General Permit. There are four Designated Recreation Areas where visitors also need an additional Special Permit in order to enter. The Special Permit areas are treated separately as they are of particular cultural significance, are sensitive to environmental damage, and/or provide privacy as an exclusive destination for one group of visitors at a time.

At the end of the last financial year, a new one-day permit option was introduced to reduce costs of the use of Designated Recreation Areas for short-term visitors to the region, and has since proven to be a popular choice.

In total, 2,541 people obtained General Permits (annual and six-month) this year, while short-term Visitor Permits (one-day, seven-day, and two-month) were purchased by 1,826 people. In addition, 2,916 people were issued a Special Permit for access to one of the four identified Special Permit Designated Recreation Areas.

With typically dry and sunny conditions prevailing, and coinciding with school holidays, the months of June to August generally see the highest numbers of permit purchases throughout the year, while Designated Recreation Areas are typically less busy during the wet season.

Recent years see an overall rise in the number of visitors, reflecting the ongoing development of tourism across NE Arnhem Land. Increasingly promoted and marketed as a prime tourist destination, the region attracts not only more independent travellers each year, but we are



also experiencing a rising popularity among commercial tour operations.

While tourism may have various benefits for the community and the local economy, Designated Recreation Areas in the Dhimurru IPA are under increasing pressure and require extensive management and maintenance efforts. More frequent professionally organised tours, in particular, pose considerable challenges to both management and infrastructure, but simultaneously provide stakeholders with new opportunities. Our Management Plan serves as guidance in this regard, and spells out Dhimurru’s visitor management strategy. Although accounting for a comparably small fraction of Dhimurru’s total turnover, all funds raised from Access Permits are generously returned to Dhimurru for operational support by the Traditional Owners. This is important discretionary income which Dhimurru uses to lever and value add to its initiatives.

The online permit system remains a highly efficient and popular form of service delivery, providing users with constant access to General and Special Permits through the Dhimurru website – [www.dhimurru.com.au](http://www.dhimurru.com.au).

Experiencing more than 2,500 visits a month, the website is regularly maintained and together with our Facebook page and announcements on local radio allows us to keep everyone up-to-date on matters such as bāru sightings, our management program, Ranger activities, and the status of Designated Recreation Areas.

The Visitor’s Guide, published in late 2015 and available at the Dhimurru office, continues to be a popular resource in conjunction with our new “Fishing the Northeast Arnhem Land” brochure, sponsored by NT Fisheries. Both resources provide tourists and locals with an overview of our activities, some background to Yolŋu culture and practice, and information on the IPA and its Designated Recreation Areas.

**STAFF PROFILE**

**LISA ROEGER**

**MIYALK (WOMEN'S) RANGER  
FACILITATOR**

Lisa has been working with Miyalk (women) Rangers for over 10 years. Before joining Dhimurru in November 2009, she was the first Miyalk Ranger Facilitator in the neighbouring Laynhapuy IPA and has since seen support and funding for the Ranger programs grow, including expansions to prioritise Miyalk Ranger roles. Throughout this time, she has played a major role in empowering miyalk, facilitating their involvement in managing country and meeting their cultural responsibilities and obligations as part of the Ranger program.

At Dhimurru, Lisa has worked hard positioning Rangers to discover their own strengths and talents, encouraging Miyalk Rangers to have a professional approach to their job and develop skills in every aspect of their role. Lisa recognises the special cultural knowledge Miyalk Rangers bring and the important role they play in our workplace.

As well as being directly involved in the delivery of everyday tasks, Lisa has also been responsible for several major projects.

Since 2012, Lisa has been project manager of Dhimurru's Fire Biodiversity Project. A primary objective of this project was to produce a detailed and prescriptive fire management plan for the Dhimurru IPA. The plan that Lisa has coordinated brings together traditional and mainstream knowledge of fire in our region. A detailed analysis of the flora and fauna, fire patterns, community attitudes to and knowledge of, burning in our IPA has been documented. Working with CSIRO, a partnership of science and traditional knowledge has resulted in an excellent example of Dhimurru's "both-ways" approach to management.



Lisa has also been responsible for coordinating a number of successful cultural landscape mapping exercises. Traditional Owners, custodians, anthropologists, and Dhimurru staff combined their knowledge to document and record place names, dhäwu (stories), manikay (songlines) and burjul (dancing); defining the cultural landscape of the Dhimurru IPA.

Lisa's GIS and graphic skills have been an asset for Dhimurru. She has delivered high quality mapping and geographic analysis supporting all of Dhimurru's projects throughout her time. Her ability to work well across different cultures, time constraints and interests, is a tribute to her enthusiasm, creativity and determination which have greatly benefitted Dhimurru. With the finalisation of the Fire Biodiversity Project in September this year, Lisa will be leaving Dhimurru after nearly 9 years to pursue other career and farming interests. The Dhimurru family will miss her but we wish her the best of luck in these new ventures.



**SEA COUNTRY**





**MARINE DEBRIS MANAGEMENT**

Marine debris consists of any man-made material discarded in the ocean, and ranges in size from tiny pieces of plastic, broken down over time, to huge ghost nets and aggregations of rubbish, some of which may have been drifting for years. Throughout the year, Rangers and Facilitators remove debris from beaches and coastal waters within the IPA on a regular basis in beach clean-ups and on sea patrols, as well as with the aid of the public and environmental groups at organised events.

Since the early 2000s, Dhimurru has conducted an annual marine debris clean-up survey at Wanuwuy (Cape Arnhem) covering approximately three and a half kilometres of beach. In addition to the removal of substantial amounts of debris from the beach, the survey also serves to record the volume of washed up material, as well as the proportions of different constituents making up the total volume of debris. In 2016, approximately 440 kg of marine debris were collected as part of the Marine Debris Survey Project during the Wanuwuy clean-up between the 29th of August and the 1st of September. Similar to the survey in 2015, the volume of debris collected this year was once again lower than in previous clean-ups, representing less than half, and merely a quarter of the total weight of debris recovered during surveys in 2014 and 2013, respectively.

Although this may be considered a declining trend in the volume of debris, variations in wind and ocean currents largely determine whether

material is washed up on shore or retained in the sea, making it hard to assess the overall state of marine debris. In this respect, 2016 was an interesting year with regards to weather, with an unusually dry wet season, few low pressure systems, and consequently unfavourable conditions for the transport of debris into the Gulf of Carpentaria from the north. Furthermore, regular light rain and a notable inconsistency in the occurrence of strong south-easterly “Dhimurru” winds made for an unusual dry season, which may have further contributed to the low volumes of marine debris beached at Wanuwuy this year.

Despite the comparably low abundance of debris, the time-consuming task of collecting the vast amounts of fine pieces, such as broken plastic or bottle tops, resulted in the clean-up taking two and a half days to complete. The 2016 Marine Debris Survey was resourced with nine Dhimurru staff members, seven volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), and two local Border Force members.



**LAUNCH OF SEA RANGER III**

In November 2016, the new Dhimurru vessel Sea Ranger III was launched to replace Dhimurru’s main vessel to date, the Sea Ranger I. The new 7.2 m boat with a robust aluminium hull was found especially suitable for the range of operations carried out by Dhimurru, featuring a practical bow door for loading equipment and space for the transport of heavy equipment or machinery. In particular, Rangers can now easily load and unload a quad bike, making maintenance and other management activities on the islands throughout the Dhimurru IPA significantly more efficient. In addition to transporting equipment and crew, Sea Ranger III also undertakes sea patrols and research activities. She is surveyed to operate up to 15 nautical miles from shore.



**SEAGRASS MAPPING**

Seagrass meadows are very important aquatic ecosystems which function as key habitats for marine turtles and the dugongs. In addition, they provide valuable ecosystem services, such as coastal protection through the stabilisation of sediments, nutrient cycling, and supporting fisheries. As seagrass fauna marks a critical source of subsistence for the Yolju people, monitoring the extent and condition of seagrass meadows is a major priority for Dhimurru.

Within the Dhimurru IPA, Melville Bay and Port Bradshaw have been identified as primary areas of interest for the development of regular seagrass surveys. Interestingly, seagrass meadows in Melville Bay are quite distinct from those in other locations around Australia, and rather resemble meadows found in Papua New Guinea or Indonesia. Extensive industrial operations and an international port in close proximity to such sensitive ecosystems additionally emphasise the need for long-term observations and mapping of meadows in the Dhimurru IPA, as well as their inclusion in Dhimurru’s and local stakeholders’ management plans.

Since the initiation of the project in partnership with the then NRETAS in 2009 (now the Department of Environment and Natural Resources), Dhimurru has carried out multiple surveys around Melville



Bay and Port Bradshaw in order to create baseline maps, and facilitate ongoing monitoring campaigns to detect changes in spatial extent or condition of seagrass habitats within the IPA over time. Initial helicopter surveys were conducted for broad-scale identifications of the extent of seagrass meadows, while ground-based operations serve to assess the species composition, coverage, and to make biomass estimates.

For the effective performance of surveys, Dhimurru staff receive training in all aspects of seagrass mapping by scientists and partner organisations, and carry out surveys following protocols recommended by the Northern Territory Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The data obtained and photographic documentation are forwarded to DENR for analysis and inclusion in their database.

**FISHERIES OYSTER SAMPLING**

In June 2017, Dhimurru Rangers helped out researcher Samantha Nowland from the Darwin Aquaculture Centre and NT Fisheries with the sampling of native blacklip oysters in Melville Bay. Rangers organised the boating operations, helped to collect oysters in the field, and were taught processing techniques required for further analysis in the laboratory. After the collection of samples, the Rangers and some of the LoC students were shown how to dissect, weigh, and photograph the oysters, and document the relevant information on data sheets.

The oysters collected will be assessed in terms of their genetic material, and help Samantha and colleagues to better understand the genetic variety of oyster populations, and to what extent oysters across the Northern Territory are related to each other. Ultimately, the research aims to support the establishment of sustainable and reliable oyster aquacultures in remote Indigenous communities, in order to provide social benefits and promote Indigenous economic development.



**TERN MONITORING PROGRAM**

In May 2017, Dhimurru joined BirdLife Australia for the first of an ongoing series of surveys of tern populations on Yilipa (Higginson) Island.

Owing to its internationally significant populations of Bridled and Roseate Terns, Yilipa has been identified as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) according to the global standards established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

This high, rocky island sits in a chain of small islets northeast of Bremer Island (East Bremer islets). Yilipa remains one of a very few known breeding sites for Crested Terns and Common Noddies across the Northern Territory. The Island also harbours significant numbers of other species of terns and seabirds that regularly visit or nest there. Importantly, tern colonies frequenting the East

Bremer islets are a significant totem and resource for Yolju people and are highly valued.

This collaborative Tern Monitoring Program has been supported by BirdLife Australia's Indigenous Grant for 2016. BirdLife Australia have delivered training in bird identification and survey techniques, for Dhimurru staff who are now equipped to perform monitoring work. Following the training, Dhimurru Rangers recorded the species, abundances, and nesting habits of birds on Yilipa Island, counting more than 3000 individuals of eight different bird species, four of which belong to the family of terns.

The monitoring is designed to contribute to BirdLife Australia's KBA Easter health check program, and aims to gather further information on these important bird colonies while providing Dhimurru with guidance for future management.



**FISHERIES COMPLIANCE TRAINING: GATHAPURA MUNUNGGURR**

Over the past years, Senior Ranger Gathapura Mununggurr has participated in the Certificate III Fisheries Compliance course, which he successfully completed in April 2017.

The course, organised by the NT Government Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, teaches valuable skills in communication, planning and organisation, management and technological applications, and enables graduates to promote compliance with fisheries legislation for both recreational and commercial fishers. Gathapura is now entitled to become a trainee Fisheries Inspector. Fisheries Inspectors are authorised to exercise compliance powers and this would be a valuable addition to capacity and delivery during Dhimurru sea patrols.





**HAMISH (WAKURATJPI)  
GONDARRA**

**RANGER**

Hamish belongs to the Golumala clan and grew up on his country at BARRKIA, north of Melville Bay. He started with Dhimurru in mid 2014. Prior to this, Hamish was a Ranger with Yirralka working out on the Layhapuy homelands.

Hamish's position as a Ranger at Dhimurru involves a wide range of tasks, including permit checks, general recreation area maintenance, vegetation rehabilitation djama, and marine debris clean-ups.

During his time at Dhimurru, Hamish has obtained certifications and received training in Coastal Fire Fighting – Elements of Shipboard Safety, Certificate II Coxswain, Senior First Aid, and Certificate II in Conservation Land Management. He is currently studying towards his Certificate III in Conservation Land Management and would like to obtain Heavy Rigid, skid steer, fork lift, and firearms licenses in due course.

Hamish values his role at Dhimurru as it allows him to gain knowledge from his elders and a better understanding on how to care for both land and sea. *"It's exciting work, being on country and learning everyday"*. Hamish aspires to be a strong role model in his community and sees the importance in the work that Dhimurru does in planning for the future, making sure that *"this land is here for generations to come"*.



**WULWAT MARIKA**

**RANGER**

Wulwat is a local Yolŋu man and belongs to the Rirratjingu clan with his homelands located south of Nhulunbuy, along the coast at Gulurruŋa (Port Bradshaw).

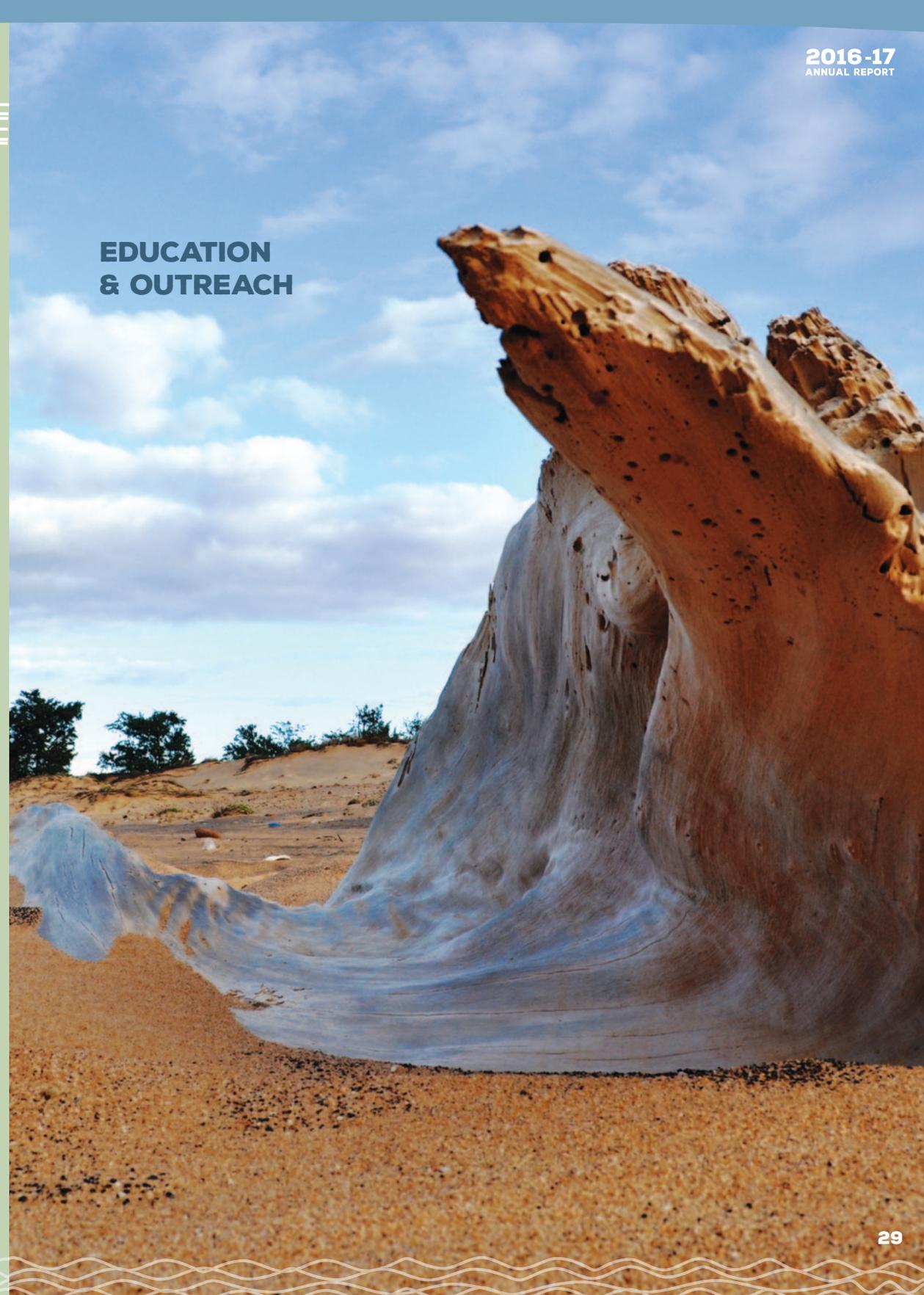
Before Wulwat started with Dhimurru in late 2013, he worked at Nuwul Nursery at Yirrkala, planting and landscaping, as well as teaching students about native plants.

Preserving, maintaining, and looking after country is the main aim for Wulwat's role as a Ranger at Dhimurru. This he achieves through a variety of recreational area maintenance djama (jobs), with a special preference for the sea country djama, such as marine debris, ghost net recovery, and monitoring sea life like dolphins and turtles. *"Cleaning up the environment is important for the future, for my kids"*.

Wulwat enjoys the training opportunities available to him at Dhimurru and values the support and encouragement in furthering his education and skills. He is currently working towards his Certificate II in Conversation Land Management. Once that is complete, his goal is to obtain his Certificate III and would also like to gain skills in welding, and work towards his skid steer and forklift licences.

Dhimurru means *"family"* to Wulwat - he is hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father, the current Managing Director, and to pass on his knowledge to the next generation, who already enjoy working with him on their school holidays. Wulwat's vision for the future is to stay at Dhimurru long-term, and work his way up to Senior Ranger next.

**EDUCATION  
& OUTREACH**





**LEARNING ON COUNTRY**

The Learning on Country (LoC) educational partnership with Yirrkala School has proven a highly effective initiative since its launch in 2013. LoC supports and encourages Indigenous students to engage deeply in their education and complete senior secondary school and/or vocational certificates in Conservation Land Management (CLM). The program also supports intergenerational transfer of Yolŋu knowledge about country, and formally integrates this knowledge in the delivery of Northern Territory and Australian curricula.

Yolŋu senior secondary students at Yirrkala School continued to benefit from a regular program of rich country-based and country-inspired learning this year. Dhimurru Rangers co-delivered Certificate II in CLM study units and contributed applicable Yolŋu knowledge and practice to the learning. Transition pathways to further education and employment have been regularly emphasised to students. Rangers who once participated in the LoC program themselves

provide invaluable motivation to students by sharing their personal experiences, and acting as powerful reminders of the importance of completing school. In order to reinforce concepts and the students' connection to country and culture, classroom studies were once again complemented by field trips on country, and Yolŋu-directed Galtha Rom, both-ways workshops, based on fundamental Yolŋu knowledge, skills and traditions.



**Workshops carried out this year included, for example:**

- The 'Gapu (Water) and Wellbeing Galtha Workshop' for secondary school students from Yirrkala and Homelands Schools. The workshop was at Daliwuy Bay and the Yothu Yindi Foundation's Learning Centre at the Garma site. The workshop centred on the significance of Daliwuy Bay and the surrounding waters (gapu), and the way the various states of gapu resemble emotions or feelings. This formed the basis and inspiration for expanding students' vocabulary and understanding of their own emotional wellbeing. The workshop was organised by Dhimurru and Yirrkala Rangers, senior Yolŋu knowledge experts/elders and community members with culturally specific roles. The event was also an opportunity for NORFORCE and Rangers to provide training to students on topographic map reading and navigation, and various other elements of CLM Certificate II studies.
- The 'Wuyal and Landforms Galtha Workshop' for Yirrkala School students in years 7 to 9 at various locations centred on Gäluru. These workshops were a resource for delivering the geography curricula.
- The 'Well-being Galtha Workshop' for Yirrkala School students in years 7 to 9 at Manangaymi, at which Clontarf Academy and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency presented about family violence, law, and justice.
- The 'Merri Galtha Workshop' at Nuwul for Yirrkala School secondary senior students. The workshop centred on the songlines and dances of the Merri string and the Njurula (tern). Njurula features in the Dhimurru and Birdlife Australia's collaborative Tern Monitoring Program. The aligning of the Galtha workshop and the tern monitoring in the same quarter of 2017 generated a very high level of momentum for Dhimurru staff and the broader Yolŋu community.

Several LoC students had opportunities to work alongside Rangers this year and were introduced to the range of different Dhimurru operations. As part of their work experience, students were involved in on-ground activities such as weed management, maintenance of Designated Recreation Areas, and marine debris clean-ups. Their participation in the final Dhimurru Fire Biodiversity Workshop provided insights into additional aspects of Dhimurru's work.

On top of the benefits provided to the Yolŋu community and students, the LoC program also greatly contributes to the personal and professional development of Dhimurru Rangers. Rangers are provided with opportunities to adopt leadership and mentoring roles, practice public speaking in both English and Yolŋu languages, obtain experience in project management, and are able to meet their obligation for knowledge transfer to the next and future generations.

The LoC program is supported by the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Australian Government's Working on Country Program (WOC), and the Northern Territory Government's Department of Education. The Cotton On Foundation provided additional support to the Galtha teaching and learning workshops.





**MERRI GALTHA ROM WORKSHOP**

In early March 2017, the Yirrkala School secondary students, Rangers, elders, teachers and community members came together at Nuwul near Yirrkala to welcome the students into terms one and two, and officially open the surrounding country for teaching and learning. The students began to receive their first instruction on Merri, the sacred string that binds together the Rirratjinu, Djambarrpuyngu and several other clans.

At Nuwal there was a ceremony with speeches of encouragement from elders followed by painting up with gapan (white clay), manikay (songs), and buṅgul (dance) to show respect for country. This ceremony symbolised the spear piercing the earth, the Galtha, to create a starting point and direction for the learning and partnerships to come.

In May, after extensive consultation and preparation led by elder Langani Marika, Mandaka Marika (Dhimurru's Managing Director), Djalinda Yunupingu (Dhimurru's Senior Cultural Advisor) and Jonathan Wearne (Learning on Country Coordinator); the country and people were ready for the full Merri Galtha Workshop. The workshop and ceremony lasted 3 days and elaborated on many themes such as the unity of the Rirratjinu

people through the strong braided Merri (string), the interconnections of the Djambarrpuyngu people near and far, and the journeys of the ancestral Njurula (tern) that carried the ancestral string to place the right people on the right country.

The dust rising during a ceremony involving almost 300 participants and guests at the workshop mirrored another great ceremony in history that occurred on the once dry bed of the Gunyipinya lagoon adjacent to the workshop grounds. Manikay (songs) reminded participants that water once rushed into the dry Gunyipinya in what may be an historical record of a tsunami encoded in ancient manikay (song). All of this provided immensely rich material for teachers and the Yirrkala School to build interest and explore environmental and geography themes in the weeks and months ahead.

The Merri Galtha workshop was an outstanding success. While the planning, organisation and coordination involved were extensive, the benefits and community spirit generated have strengthened Dhimurru significantly.

Additional support, beyond the regular sponsors of the Learning on Country program, was gratefully received from the Rirratjinu Corporation, Nuwal Environmental Services, Cotton On Foundation, Datjala Work Camp and Sodexo Australia.



**TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Dhimurru continues to be strongly committed to the professional development of each staff member according to their specific interests and abilities. In line with a framework developed in 2015 to match these personal aspirations with Dhimurru's priorities and obligations, Rangers were provided with various opportunities to improve their skill sets and work towards relevant qualifications.

Training was centred on units of study that are key to the successful implementation of Dhimurru's primary objectives, and Rangers could personalise their participation based on personal preferences and strengths. Early career Rangers continued to receive intensive workplace training and attend workshops as part of the Certificate II in CLM, while several mid-career Rangers and Senior Rangers completed units toward their CLM Certificate III.

As part of the ongoing dedication of the Northern Territory Government to equip Indigenous Rangers with the skills to exercise inspection powers under the NT Fisheries Act (1988), two Rangers have undertaken coursework for the completion of a Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance. Senior Ranger Gathapura Mununggurr attained his Certificate III in Fisheries Compliance after several years of steady effort. Training in the classroom and on the water is supported by NT Government Fisheries Officers and Water Police.

Professional development at Dhimurru, however, is not limited to formal training and qualifications, but greatly exceeds the delivery of basic skills for everyday Ranger operations. Both-ways learning forms an intricate part of Dhimurru's agenda. All staff learn about Yolŋu traditions for caring and managing country, and how Yolŋu culture, kinship, and country are fundamental to Yolŋu well-being and identity. The Learning on Country program and Yolŋu-directed *Galtha Rom* workshops have proven to be particularly valuable in supporting and deepening both-ways learning, and contribute to a highly beneficial and rich environment for professional development at Dhimurru.



## GARMA FESTIVAL

The Yothu Yindi Foundation has been an important partner to Dhimurru and we have helped to support their Garma Festival since the first now annual event was held in 1999.

In order to present Dhimurru's vision, goals, and work, we provided an interactive display of the range of our activities, with Dhimurru staff present to discuss our operations. This Garma, in light of the festival theme - the 40th anniversary of Australia's Aboriginal Land Rights Act - we reflected on our own history and the development of the IPA in form of a photographic journey, from the establishment of Dhimurru in 1992 to the workplace we see today.

As part of our Learning on Country program, we once again carried out guided interpretive walks together with Yirralka Rangers to introduce Garma guests to cultural and environmental knowledge. We also participated in key forums on conservation, land and sea matters, and contributed to the youth program.



## STUDENTS FROM NEAR AND FAR

Dhimurru Rangers continued their involvement with schools and early learning centres in Nhulunbuy throughout the year. Rangers gave talks to students, covering topics such as marine debris and wildlife, visitor management and bush medicine. They also assisted the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service to deliver their Crocwise program at schools in Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, and Gunyangara. Dhimurru also supported the ceremonial opening of the Northern Territory Government's boarding facility in Nhulunbuy.

The Hooker Foundation's residential 'Culture College' in Nhulunbuy brings groups of secondary students from schools in southern states for a two-week cultural, environmental and outdoor education program. It aims to contribute to Yolŋu well-being and the local economy, and promote both-ways learning. Dhimurru Rangers welcomed each group of visitors to country and led them on the Gaynarju lagoon walk.



## VOLUNTEERS, VISITS AND EXCHANGES

In October 2016, Dhimurru was visited by Executives of the Cotton On Foundation retail chain. Cotton On Foundation is a significant contributor to the Learning on Country initiative, and visiting Dhimurru was an excellent way to gain insights into the program's activities first hand. The visitors were received with a 'Welcome to Country', and spent the day with Rangers and staff members at Galuru. The visit helped to show the benefits of the LoC program, and resulted in Cotton On pledging their continued support of the initiative.

In January 2017, four members of the Kenbi Ranger Group of the Northern Land Council visited Nhulunbuy for the exchange of experiences and knowledge with Dhimurru Rangers. Over the course of their visit, the group from the Darwin region was shown around the Dhimurru IPA and joined our Rangers in the field. Both Dhimurru and the Kenbi Rangers gave presentations on their country, and the range of activities they carry out. The visitors were taken to Waŋuway for some joint works on tree planting, weed management, and camp ground maintenance, and were also given a tour around Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, coastal Designated Recreation Areas, and the Garanhan stone picture site. The Kenbi Rangers visit allowed for the discussion of on-ground Ranger operations and IPA management strategies, and proved to be highly beneficial for both groups.

In March 2017, Jawun Secondee Graham Kramer from the Australian Taxation Office, worked together with Rangers and senior staff members to develop Occupational Health

and Safety (OHS) standards for Dhimurru. Throughout the stay, Graham and Dhimurru staff assessed OHS standards in place, reconfigured the workshop and other working areas, and developed and reviewed guidelines that promote health and safety in all aspects of Dhimurru's operations.

May 2017 saw the visit of Nigel Scullion, Senator for Northern Territory and Minister for Indigenous Affairs. During his visit, Senator Scullion confirmed ongoing support for Indigenous Ranger training through a \$30 million contribution of federal funding as part of the Capacity Building for Indigenous Rangers strategy. The strategy will particularly help in providing Indigenous Rangers with training in compliance (primarily in fisheries) and leadership, supporting their study of accredited basic and advanced units towards relevant qualifications. Importantly, this will facilitate the assignment of enforcement powers to trained Rangers eligible to take on Compliance Officer roles.



## STAFF PROFILE

### JONATHAN WEARNE

#### LEARNING ON COUNTRY COORDINATOR

Jonathan grew up in Yirrkala, a Yolŋu community squarely within the Dhimurru IPA. Prior to taking up his current role at Dhimurru, he worked in Victoria as a project manager for a Catchment Management Authority, as a forest planner and senior officer in the Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and as a Director at Federation University. He has an Honours Degree in Forest Science and a PhD from Melbourne University.

In 2013 Jonathan jumped at the opportunity to return home to Yolŋu country and people and take up the newly created position of Learning on Country Coordinator. Jonathan and his wife, Kelly, were especially pleased to be able to give their boys an experience of Northeast Arnhem Land.

The Learning on Country partnership between Yirrkala School and Dhimurru was established to enrich Yolŋu student's education by connecting their formal secondary studies to the expertise of Yolŋu Rangers and elders. Jonathan has worked tirelessly with colleagues at Dhimurru and Yirrkala School to reinforce Yolŋu student identity and purpose, increase school attendance and engagement, and to equip students to proceed to further study and take up satisfying and rewarding careers. He has also been instrumental in bringing Learning on Country into the heart of Dhimurru; so it adds value rather than competes with Dhimurru's operations, and thereby directly supports the professional development of staff.

Jonathan and our Senior Cultural Advisor, Djalinda Yunupingu, have been responsible for the consultation, planning, and delivery



of numerous Yolŋu-directed teaching and learning events called Galtha Rom workshops. Yolŋu experts and Rangers provide on country instruction through language, story, ceremony and art at these workshops. Teachers connect this detailed knowledge, skills and understandings to the mainstream secondary and VET curricula. Galtha Rom is a tried and true method of 'both-ways' teaching and learning pioneered in the Yirrkala School that has overwhelming support from Yolŋu parents and community leaders. Often large numbers of Yolŋu clan members attend these workshops thereby strengthening that essential partnership between school, parents and community. All Galtha Rom workshops aim to inspire students to take up education and pathways to employment and leadership roles in their community.

Jonathan also finds time to coordinate the training and professional development of Dhimurru staff. He helped review Dhimurru's training needs and develop a clear framework for the planning and tracking of role relevant training and professional development. The tools are used to track skills acquired and individual progress towards the completion of qualifications. With each person's progress mapped out, it is now possible to create tailored plans for training and development that benefit both the organisation and individual staff.

Jonathan brings a calm and reasoned approach to his work. He is a valued member of our team, committed to working together in cooperative and respectful ways. He is well known for his high-level communication, organisational and cross-cultural skills, and his commitment to Yolŋu well-being and empowerment.

## GOVERNANCE



### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT**

Dhimurru aims to provide affordable accommodation alternatives to its staff, and thereby reduce stress associated with living conditions in community housing that is overcrowded, unsuitable, or ill-maintained.

Following last year's purchases and renovations, Dhimurru currently owns and sustains a three bedroom property, a four bedroom property, as well as a two by two bedroom duplex. Purchases and renovations were largely financed using funding from the Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) although some of Dhimurru's funds were used to finalise the purchase of the duplex.

Dhimurru's Affordable Housing Project combines Dhimurru's properties with continuing

financial support from the Rirratjirru Aboriginal Corporation, and together with Dhimurru's own funds has enabled Dhimurru to provide support for eight staff members with their accommodation requirements. Under current arrangements, our partnership agreement with Rio Tinto further helps to provide accommodation for an additional two staff members.

To date, the Affordable Housing initiative has proven to be highly beneficial and effective, resulting in a noticeable improvement of performance and personal well-being. Unfortunately, however, housing and accommodation are still in chronic short supply for Yolŋu in our region, and will continue to pose a major challenge in the future.

### **A NEW ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT**

Early in 2017, Dhimurru management and staff finalised a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) negotiated in accordance with the *Fair Work Act 2009*. The EBA 2017 is a significant step forward for Dhimurru providing a tailored platform for Dhimurru staff and our unique program delivery.

The EBA is a competitive foundation for staff recognising the importance of professional development, structured career pathways, and rewarding responsibility and effort.

The new EBA came into effect March and was endorsed by the Commission for a full 4 year term.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **COLLABORATION WITH AIMS**

Collaboration with the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) began early in 2017 when Dhimurru hosted a visit from their CEO John Dunn and Senior Scientist Dr. Ed Butler, who also participated in the February Dhimurru Advisory Group meeting. Dhimurru hopes to work with AIMS to improve the currently sparse network of ocean observations around NE Arnhem Land. AIMS researcher Dr. Jessica Benthuyzen is planning to work closely together with both Dhimurru and the Yirralka Rangers to deploy water temperature loggers at several Sea Country locations throughout the Dhimurru and Laynhapuy IPAs. Moored to the seafloor, these instruments will produce continuous records of water temperature that will help to identify long-term trends, as well as extreme temperature events, which may have significant ecological consequences, including wide-spread coral bleaching and mangrove die-backs. Dhimurru will be involved in the initial deployment, as well as the regular recovery and exchange of instruments for the delivery of data to AIMS.

### **SEA PATROLS**

In order to minimise impacts of illegal and harmful activities, sea patrols are planned to be carried out more frequently in the future in line with Dhimurru's increasing commitment to promote compliance with fisheries legislation within the Dhimurru IPA. The patrols are performed to monitor both recreational and commercial fishing activities as well as to report the operation of any foreign fishing vessels. Sea patrols also serve to record marine megafauna sightings, detect and remove ghost nets, maintain recreational areas on the islands, or access islands for land management operations. Building on past collaborations, Dhimurru aims to continue to work in joint operations, together with partners such as Reef Watch, Australian Border Force, NT Marine Enforcement Police, NT Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, and Yirralka Rangers.

### **MORE COMPLIANCE TRAINING**

Dhimurru recognises the importance of Indigenous Rangers having the authority to act on legislation breaches, destructive activities, or disrespectful behaviour around their country when required. Rangers often lack enforcement powers and need the assistance of authorities in handling such situations. Dhimurru working with NT Fisheries and NT Marine Enforcement Police, aims to provide its Indigenous Rangers with training towards advanced certificates in fisheries compliance that will allow Rangers to directly intervene with illegal and

harmful fishing practices around sea country. As announced by Senator Scullion in the beginning of 2017, a \$30 million federal funding program in line with the Capacity Building for Indigenous Ranger's Strategy. The Strategy particularly promotes compliance training for Indigenous Rangers, and is expected to greatly facilitate these objectives.

### **TRACK IMPROVEMENTS**

Dhimurru have had a busy 2016 / 2017 in regards to track improvements with the completion of the Wathawuy Merge Project. However, our job is not finished there. It is our plan for 2017 and beyond to continue to make the Dhimurru IPA track network easily accessible, safer, and maintained for the long term benefitting Traditional Owners, Rangers, locals, and visitors alike.

Dhimurru will continue to seek funding for the expensive task of contracting civil operators as well as continuing to maintain and manage the existing network. We aim to build on the past successful track projects like the Daliwuy coastal access tracks, Banambarrŋa access track and now the Wathawuy access tracks encompassing Latram River and Goanna Lagoon recreational areas.

The next track upgrade, re-alignment and repair scope of works is the Giddies access track into the Guwatjorumurru recreational areas, which is also the access corridor for the Special Permit Ganami (Wonga) recreational area.

It is hoped that Dhimurru will continue to be successful with grant funding in the future so the last of our Designated Recreation Areas, Wanuwuy (Cape Arnhem), Gapuru (Memorial Park) and Ganami (Wonga) access tracks can be upgraded, repaired and re-aligned to complete all of the Dhimurru IPA track network to a safe, manageable standard. This is our priority and this is our goal. Once all scopes are complete, Dhimurru can reduce ongoing maintenance costs with the use of its own plant and equipment into the future.

### **RULE BOOK REVIEW**

Dhimurru's Board are reviewing the Dhimurru Rule Book in conjunction with the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations. This review will look at ways to make the Rule Book easier to use and more accessible to members. In conjunction with this review the Board are also considering amendments that may be required in order to qualify Dhimurru for consideration as a Public Benevolent Institution. The Board hope to convene a meeting of members in the coming year to consider outcomes from the review.



## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS SUMMARY

### DHIMURRU ABORIGINAL CORPORATION INCOME 2016-2017

INCOME SOURCE	PROJECT	AMOUNT
Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Working on Country Program	\$929,560
Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy	Indigenous Protected Areas Program (Administered by PM&C)	\$328,300
Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy	Biodiversity Fire Management Project	\$104,600
Territory Natural Resource Management	Marine Debris Program	\$7,309
Landowner's Sea Country Management Contribution	Sea Ranger Program	\$196,435
Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation	Ranger Affordable Housing Project	\$35,000
Rio Tinto Alcan		\$100,000
Aboriginal Benefits Account	Sea Ranger 3 Purchase	\$20,000
Cotton on Foundation	Learning on Country Program Support	\$130,000
Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Learning on Country Program (Auspiced through NT Dept of Education)	\$240,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,091,204</b>

## YOLŪ MATHA – ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

YOLŪ MATHA	ENGLISH
bäru	crocodile
miyalk	women
buŋgul	dance
manikay	songs
dhäwu	story
ŋäpaki	people other than Yolŋu
merri	string
galtha	both-ways learning workshop
rom	law and/or belief
ŋatha	food

### DESIGNATED RECREATION AREAS AND PLACE NAMES

Baŋambarrŋa	Rainbow Cliffs
Waŋuwuy	Cape Arnhem
Lombuy	Crocodile Creek
Nhulun	Mount Saunders
Gälaru	East Woody
Gapuru	Memorial Park
Gaŋami	Wonga Creek
Maŋaŋgaymi	Scout Camp
Guwatjurmurru	Giddy River
Wathawuy	Latram River and Goanna Lagoon
Yarrapay	Rocky Point
Bariŋura	Little Bondi
Dumuy (Dumuwuy)	Turtle Beach
Garanhan	Macassan(Makassar) Beach
Binydjarrŋa	Daliwuy
Ganinyara	Granite Islands
Wirrawuy	Cape Wirawoi
Gaŋalathami	Town Beach
Gumuniya	Buffalo Creek
Yiljipa	Higginson Island



# DHIMURRU

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