

Communique
Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area Advisory Group Meeting
Convened Tuesday and Wednesday March 21/22, 2017

The Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was declared in October 2000 and formally extended in May 2013. The Dhimurru IPA is approximately 550,000ha in area, including 450,000ha of marine estate. There are 15 Yolngu clans with estates and interests in the Dhimurru IPA. It covers most of the Gove Peninsula and extends approximately 40km seaward. Rio Tinto’s mine and associated special purpose leases are outside of the IPA. The marine component is referred to as a collaborative management zone, whilst the terrestrial component is entirely Aboriginal Land. The marine component overlaps significantly with the Commonwealth Wessel Marine Reserve. There is a shared management zone overlapping with the Yirralka IPA along part of the western boundary. Dhimurru is an Aboriginal Corporation who are advised and supported by an Advisory Group established to bring together the agencies and organisations with responsibilities and interests in the Dhimurru IPA enabling them to collaborate on and assist each other in fulfilling their respective roles. The Advisory Group meets once or twice a year.

On March 21 and 22 Dhimurru convened the fourth meeting of the Dhimurru Advisory Group. For the first time aspects of the Dhimurru and Yirralka Advisory Group meetings were combined with Dhimurru presenting on the first day, combined presentations and discussion on the second day and then Yirralka presenting on the third. This communique provides a summary of meeting outcomes for the Dhimurru Advisory component.

The fourth meeting was well attended with representatives from the following organisations:

Cth Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet representing Indigenous Affairs and Environment portfolios	Nhulunbuy Fishing Club also affiliated with the Amateur Fishermens Association NT Apology
Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries	Northern Prawn Fishery – NPF - Represented through AMSA
Cth Dept of Agriculture - Biosecurity	Australian Fisheries Management Authority - AMSA
Bushfires NT	NT Department of Environment and Natural Resources – NTDENR
Northern Land Council	NT Seafood Council Apology
Yirralka – Laynhapuy Aboriginal Corporation	Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation
Australian Institute of Marine Science, guest - AIMS	

Apologies from the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT, East Arnhem Land Tourism Association, the Amateur Fishermen’s Association of the NT, NT Seafood Council, and CSIRO, Cth Dept of Environment and the Marine Reserves division, and Charles Darwin University.

Members reported on their activities over the past 12 months and on their plans affecting the management of the Dhimurru IPA for the coming 12 months. The following are highlights of the presentations and discussions:

- Dhimurru’s report highlighted significant achievements across its programs including a successful Ranger Forum hosted in June 2016, important cultural events, one which celebrated the listing of the Wurrwurrwuy stone pictures on the National Heritage List coupled to heritage survey training and assessments, and a second involving cultural landscape mapping coupled to learning on country activities with Yirrkala school students;

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- Dhimurru noted the importance of the Learning on Country Program not only benefitting Yolŋu school students but also providing a rich platform for engagement with Yolŋu leaders and cultural experts helping to guide Dhimurru management activities and empowering Yolŋu Rangers. The meeting noted that this program is only funded to the end of 2017.
- The meeting was advised by a representative for PM&C and the Cth Dept of Environment and Energy that contract extensions for the Working on Country Program and the Indigenous Protected Area program have been endorsed and will continue beyond 2018 to 2020;
- AIMS reported on work they are doing in the Gulf of Carpentaria and collaborations with Anandilyakwa. Members were interested in ideas that could be pursued in the Dhimurru IPA and including the overlap with the Wessel Marine Park;
- NT Fisheries reported on their programs and the meeting noted their significant contribution to structured training and the development of Ranger capacity in the management of Fisheries;
- AMSA, also speaking on behalf of the NPF, reported on the management of the prawn fleet and discussed significant initiatives in improved turtle and bycatch exclusion devices;
- NTDENR reported on new Northern Territory Government initiatives to extend capital and operational funding to Indigenous Ranger groups following on from election commitments. The development of a Coastal and Marine Management Strategy was also reported and members were encouraged to contribute as the strategy is developed;
- Cth Dept of Agriculture discussed their priorities for engagement with Indigenous Ranger groups for 2017 alerting members to an important Ranger Forum to be convened in the Kimberleys in July 2017 and on training support they will be providing in conjunction with their programs;
- Bushfires NT gave a report on changes to the Bushfires Act in the NT and how this will affect fire management in the regions;
- The NLC reported on consultation arrangements for managing coastal access and on activities being undertaken through their hosted Ranger groups;
- The Cth Marine Parks group tabled advice that the planning process for Cth Marine Parks has commenced including for the Wessel Marine Park and that the Cth have developed a framework for Indigenous Engagement in this process.

Overall members expressed continuing strong support for the Advisory Group noting that this is one important aspect of promoting and supporting Indigenous led land and sea management. Dr Tony Griffiths from NTDENR speaking for the members, noted the quantity, quality, and diversity of work reported by Dhimurru saying that “this is a great example for the overall Indigenous Ranger program and a model for regional planning”.

Members also expressed support for the combined Yirralka - Dhimurru format.

