

Cape York

Healthy Country Newsletter

Season's Greetings

Issue 16 - December 2013

It has been another busy year for natural resource management (NRM) on Cape York, with the release of draft local and state strategies for water management, the draft Cape York Regional Plan, announcements of new mines going ahead, changes to the Vegetation Management Act, ongoing live export issues, continuing negotiations on World Heritage, government changes and new cycles for natural resource management funding.

Cape York NRM is still waiting on the release of state and federal regional allocation funds, which is anticipated any day now. Delays in receiving these funds have had big impacts on the ground, with many organisations having to put off works, or ask contractors to do work in credit - far from ideal after another tough year on the Cape. Our contracts are ready to go, so we will be able to get them in place quickly once the state and federal funds are released to us.

Thank you to our members, partners and funders for your support over the year, and for your commitment in working together for sustainable NRM on Cape York. We wish you all a safe and happy festive season and look forward to great year in NRM for 2014.

Welcome to the new Cape York NRM Board

Five new Directors were inducted onto the Cape York NRM Board at the company's annual general meeting held in Cooktown on 29 October.

Sandra Woosup, Penny Johnson, Shelley Lyon, Emma Jackson and John Charlton join veteran board members, John Giese, Gavin Bassani and David Claudie.

Nominations have been received for the two vacant board positions, and are under consideration by the new board.

Full story on pages 6-7.



In this edition . . .

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 World Heritage agenda for Chuulangun | 9 Mapoon Rangers: Looking after our coastline |
| 3 Draft State plans released; Western Cape College awards night | 10 Around Cape York |
| 4 Lama Lama research Inshore Dolphins | 11 Young Landcarer heads to Warwick;
Strong voice for the Wenlock |
| 5 TUMRA celebrations for Lama Lama | 12 Rock art tours at Melsonby; Cape York Calendar |
| 6-7 Meet the new Cape York NRM Board | |
| 8 Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve decision; A Hub for Researchers | |



Within this newsletter Cape York Natural Resource Management is shortened to Cape York NRM

World Heritage still on the agenda for Chuulangun

While World Heritage nomination for areas of Cape York remains a contentious issue for some, for David Claudie and the Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju people, it is simply one of the steps in looking after Country.

What is contentious though, is the process by which consultation occurs. David Claudie is concerned that consultations across Cape York about World Heritage and other issues do not always occur in the right way.

"There are two types of land tenure in Australia" says Mr Claudie. "There's government land tenure and Indigenous land tenure".

"Indigenous land tenure is based on traditional clan group structures which in most instances do not match with government land tenures such as native title claims".

"Under Indigenous land tenure, there are only certain people who are allowed to speak for their Clan Estate. But the government tenure process has not always recognised who those people are, and has made decisions based on consultations with the wrong people."

David Claudie says that it is extremely important for all levels of government involved in consultations with Indigenous people, such as for the World Heritage process, to ensure they consult with the right people.

"Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Ngaachi has outstanding natural and cultural values. We have undertaken extensive mapping of our country for cultural and scientific value, and want to be able to provide opportunities for people to return to our homelands and care for this land.

"World Heritage is one way to help protect these values and will attract investment which will help us to realise our aspirations for sustainable management, economic development and homelands development for our Ngaachi."

David Claudie has extended cultural mapping of country to the wider Lockhart River region (or Payamu) which includes the area of the Mangkuma Land Trust. With the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation he is coordinating a consultation project funded by the Commonwealth government which will investigate whether Traditional Custodians wish

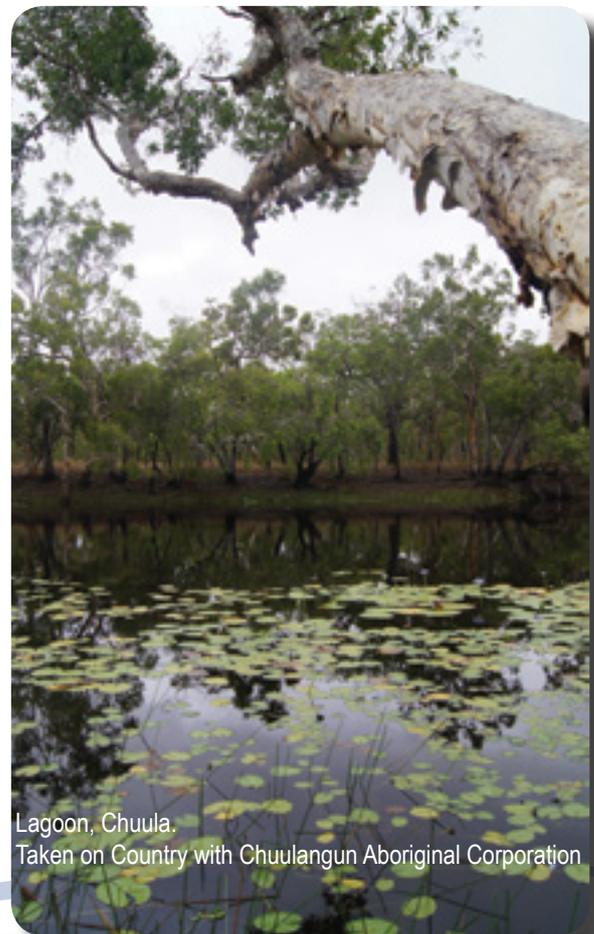
to consider a World Heritage nomination for their land.

"What is significant about this project is its 'bottom-up' approach, that is, Traditional Custodians are undertaking the consultation themselves in a process which will help the community build up its capacity to deal with developments on their land" Mr Claudie said.

"We will continue to support a World Heritage nomination process, so long as the consultation is done with people who are able to speak for their country according to Indigenous land tenure, rather than under government land tenure processes" he said.

Anyone wishing to find out more can contact David at chuula@bigpond.com

David Claudie is the CEO and Chairperson of Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation and is a Traditional Custodian for Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Ngaachi. The Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was declared in 2008 and covers 197 000 hectares of the 840 000 hectares of Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Country.



Lagoon, Chuula.
Taken on Country with Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation



Congratulations to Year 10 Western Cape College student, Kiani Kris, awarded the school's inaugural Conservation and Land Management Award for commitment to environmental conservation and community. The prize is sponsored by Cape York NRM and our Conservation Sector Director, Shelley Lyon presented the award at the recent College Awards night.

Photo supplied by Western Cape College

Have your say on plans for Cape York's future

There have been some significant announcements made over the past few months including changes to the Vegetation Management Act, and the release of the draft Cape York Regional Plan and draft Cape York Water Resource Management Strategy. The Queensland Government are currently touring the state holding information sessions about the Vegetation Management Act changes, with dates planned for Cape York centres yet to be confirmed.

Drafts of the Cape York Regional Plan and the Cape York Water Resource Management Strategy are now available and public comment is invited until 25 March 2014. The water strategy can be found on-line at <http://goo.gl/ydVAIV> and the regional plan is available at <http://goo.gl/ZRULr9>

Information on the changes to the Vegetation Management Act is available at <http://goo.gl/AeufT> and Cape York NRM will circulate Cape York information session dates when they come to hand.

Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) Update

A partnership between Ghostnets Australia, WCTTAA Councils and Cape York NRM will see the group moving ahead in 2014, with some funding committed for coordination, monitoring and data management for the group.

The group (pictured right, with Cape York NRM) formed earlier in the year with the goal of reducing threats to threatened marine turtles. They have continued to meet throughout the year, and are currently coordinating feral pig abatement on the Western Cape.



Lama Lama and JCU Inshore Dolphin Research

A ground breaking partnership between Lama Lama Rangers and James Cook University (JCU) has recorded Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins individuals for the first time in Princess Charlotte Bay.

'Annie', a female adult, 'Rindoparr', a juvenile and 'River Dog' an adult male, were all photo-identified by Isabel Beasley, post-doctoral research fellow with JCU. The dolphins were named by Lama Lama rangers following four days of monitoring of the inshore waters of Princess Charlotte Bay in late August and early September.

With the assistance of Senior Research Officer, Helen Penrose, Isabel initially spent two days at the Lama Lama Ranger Base in Port Stewart providing training to fourteen rangers on dolphin identification and monitoring. The rangers trained the researchers with language names, cultural sites, protocols and cultural mapping.



Lama Lama Rangers, JCU and GBRMPA research crew

The rangers and the researchers then headed to Marina Plains, accessing the Bay via the tidal waters of the Annie River and the North Kennedy River.

Although the trip was cut short by windy conditions, Lama Lama Senior Ranger, Peter Liddy was pleased with the results. "It's been great for our rangers to get out on our sea country and learn different monitoring skills. It's particularly good for our young people" he said.



Isabel and Peter recording data

Isabel said that it was only the second research of its kind in Princess Charlotte Bay. "Back in 2001

Dr. Guido Parra conducted the only other known inshore dolphin survey of Princess Charlotte Bay, where both snubfin dolphins and humpback dolphins were observed" said Isabel.



Annie in North Kennedy River

"We didn't see any snubfin dolphins this trip, and there is a concern that numbers are in fact much lower than what management agencies think.

"The snubfin dolphin is endemic to northern Australia, and little is known about the species, so we hope ongoing monitoring by the Lama Lama rangers can help provide us with base-line data for the species" she said.

Lama Lama Rangers Operation Manager, Gavin Bassani said that research such as the Inshore Dolphin research project highlighted the importance of partnerships with Traditional Owners and Rangers.

"We are out on our Country everyday, managing threats, monitoring flora and fauna and recording information" he said. "Partnerships like this one with JCU are mutually beneficial - our rangers increase their skills and knowledge, and JCU have people collecting data all year round for their research.

"And in this case, hopefully we can collect enough data on inshore dolphins in Princess Charlotte Bay to contribute to and improve management practices for humpbacks and snubfins across the country" he said.

The project is funded under the National Environmental Research Program and the trip was conducted in partnership with Yintjingga Aboriginal Corporation and Lama Lama Rangers, James Cook University and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Cape York NRM also assisted with surveys on the final day.



Peter and Gavin looking for dolphins



Lama Lama TUMRA celebration launches sea country agreement

The Lama Lama Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) was accredited on 8 July and the Lama Lama Traditional Owners together with the Steering Committee and invited guests celebrated the milestone on 25 September at Port Stewart.

A TUMRA is an agreement between Traditional Owners and State and Federal Governments, and outlines how the groups will work together to look after sea country. The Lama Lama agreement extends from the Massey River in the north, through Princess Charlotte Bay to the Normanby River in the south, including inshore islands..

The five year agreement covers research, training, education, compliance and junior rangers activities.

Lama Lama Ranger Program: Developing future leaders on Country



Above: Peter Liddy and Gavin Bassani discuss the days activities with rangers Walter Peter and Kathleen Peter. Below: Marking the fenceline with Tony Cockburn from Rinyirru National Park.



Top: Lama Lama Traditional Owners and TUMRA committee celebrate the launch of the agreement. Above: Traceylee Forester, TUMRA Coordinator, discusses Lama Lama's TUMRA journey.

There is a huge satisfaction in being involved in a ranger program - especially if you are working on your traditional lands, according to rangers from the Lama Lama Working on Country Ranger Program.

Walter Peter, a Lama Lama ranger for over three years, became a ranger so he could work on his homelands. At the age of 20, he is now an experienced worker with skills in fencing, chainsaws, monitoring, weeds and feral animal management and patrolling the country, some of which is jointly managed with National Parks.

"I love the job" says Walter, "especially camping out and being on Country".

Kathleen Peter, a ranger for almost two years, says a highlight of the job has been meeting new rangers from other places, learning what they do and telling people what Lama Lama rangers do.

"It's been great to come here (Marina Plains) and learning about dolphins, and where our Grandfathers used to muster cattle to ship out" she says. "I love working on Country".





Meet the Board

**Penny Johnson, Director
Local Government Sector**

Penny is the Deputy Mayor of Cook Shire Council and sits on many boards across the region including Cape York Sustainable Futures, South Cape York Catchments and Cape York Local Marine Advisory Committee.



<http://www.cook.qld.gov.au/>

**John Charlton, Director
Tourism, Small Business,
Mining and Other
Industries Sector**

John lives at Seisia and has run Cape York Adventures since 1996. He has vast business knowledge mainly in the fishing and tourism industries, has studied applied biology and he's also a carpenter.



**Emma Jackson, Director
Primary Industry Sector**

Emma is a qualified teacher, and is on a scholarship studying Agriculture. She has been co-managing Wolverton Station with her husband Neville for 10 years. The Jackson family have 46 years on Wolverton.



**Sandra Woosup, Director
Indigenous Zone One**

Sandra lives in Injinoo and is a director on Angkamuthi Tribal Aboriginal Corporation. She is a coordinator of the Injinoo Indigenous Knowledge Centre.



**Shelley Lyon, Director
Conservation Sector**

Shelley is a ranger at the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and has lived and worked in Cape York for 35 years in Lakefield, Jardine River and Cape Melville National Parks and also in Cooktown. She is a well-known advocate for conservation in Cape York.



Full biographies of our directors can be found on our website <http://www.capeyorknrm.com.au/our-directors.html>

Cape York NRM welcomed in a new board on 29 October.

There are some well known and experienced people joining the board, and we were also grateful to retain the wealth of experience and knowledge brought to the board by John Giese, David Claudie and Gavin Bassani.

Please welcome **Sandra Woosup, Penny Johnson, Shelley Lyon, Emma Jackson and John Charlton.**

John Giese, Chairperson, Director Community Sector

John has been involved in NRM on Cape York for decades, and has lived in Cooktown for 40 years. He is also the Chair of South Cape York Catchments and Cape York Peninsula Pest Management Advisory Group.



Gavin Bassani, Director Indigenous Zone Three

Gavin is a Lama Lama Traditional Owner and is the Operations Manager for the Lama Lama Rangers based at Port Stewart. He has extensive experience in business management, land management and compliance.



David Claudie, Deputy Chairperson, Director Indigenous Zone Two

David is a Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju traditional owner. At Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation, he facilitates homelands development, sustainable NRM and economic development.



Positions in **Indigenous Zones One and Four** are yet to be filled, and it is anticipated that this will be done at the next Board meeting in February.

Cape York NRM farewells **Peter Inderbitzen, Dick Foster, Richard Tamwoy, Reginald Williams and Desmond Tayley.**

We thank them for their service and contributions to their community and sectors as Cape York NRM Directors over the past three years.

Reserve saved for future generations

People concerned about conservation from across Australia have welcomed the announcement that the Queensland Government will protect the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve in recognition of the reserve's outstanding natural values.

Barry and Shelley Lyon, who manage the reserve say the Newman government should be applauded for their decision.

"The reserve is home to a vast diversity of endemic species and ecosystems. We are overwhelmed that the unique bauxite springs, which feed the Wenlock River will now be protected forever" said Barry.



These magnificent bauxite springs feed the Wenlock River and create unique gallery rainforest habitat for many species like the Palm Cockatoo.

Approximately 65 kilometres of Wenlock River frontage runs through the reserve, and members of Wenlock River Catchment Group are very pleased.

"The Wenlock is one of the healthiest, most beautiful rivers in the country. At our recent meeting all were united about the protection of the river, and its catchment" said Jane Blackwood from the group.

"This announcement is a strong start to the overall conservation of the river into the future" she said.

A hub for Cape York researchers

Researchers from many Australian universities find themselves based at the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve.

Cape York NRM visited the reserve in September and found it buzzing with activity. Australia Zoo and the University of Queensland (UQ) were wrapping

up a six week stint, undertaking their final days of trapping, tagging and releasing crocodiles to monitor behaviours.

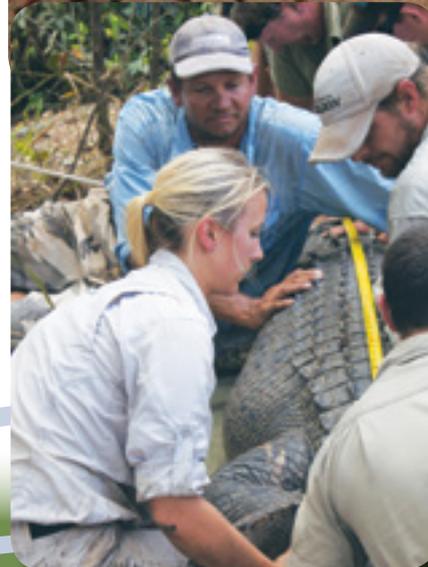
Indigenous rangers from across Cape York had visited the reserve during this time, learning about crocodiles and sharing their knowledge with the Australia Zoo team.

UQ's, Dr Ross Dwyer, said that 20 crocs were captured in 2013, six were fitted with satellite trackers and 12 with acoustic pingers. The trackers help with crocodile research on movements, feeding, mating and nesting. The work is a collaboration between UQ School of Biological Sciences with Australia Zoo. The tagged crocodiles can be followed at <http://oztrack.org/projects/125/analysis>

Peta and Lyndal from Cape York NRM were over the moon to be on the 'traps run' when "Nate" (pictured above) was discovered in the last trap of the day. They got to see how the croc team worked together to tag and release Nate, who was, needless to say, a bit cranky for being caught!



Above: Jump team GO!!!



Left: Yes, that's 11ft 11" of male croc - hang on, he's also missing about one foot of tail...

Terri's top tips for crocodile management



Above: Terri Irwin explains how crocodiles are monitored at the reserve to Cape York NRM's Peta-Marie Standley

1. Deal with the PROBLEM crocodiles - not all crocodiles are 'problem' crocs. If a 'known' croc is removed from a waterway, it's possible a rogue will move in and could cause more problems.
2. Deal with the problem - if access to water is a problem, build a well. If getting to the other side is a problem, build a bridge.
3. Erect signage - erecting signage in different languages (and with pictures), will tell people that crocodiles live at that particular place.
4. Educate people - school presentations, and community education about crocodiles (and all megafauna) can help with understanding of different species and how we can safely share our waterways.

Looking after our coastline

There is 25 kilometres of beach between Janie Creek and Pennyfather, and for two months of the year Mapoon's Land and Sea Rangers undertake daily patrols to rid the beach of threats to nesting turtles.

Olive Ridleys and Flatbacks nest along this stretch and threats to turtles range from raids on nests by ferals pigs, dogs and goannas to predation on hatchlings by birds and crocodiles.

Researcher Janine Ferguson from Department of Environment and Heritage Protection says this year most predation was by dogs and overall hatchling success for both species was down on previous years.

Mapoon's Land and Sea Coordinator, Jane Blackwood says this is particularly concerning for Olive Ridleys, whose future looks grim.

Ranger work programs across Cape York during the turtle nesting season have a big focus on managing threats to marine turtles.

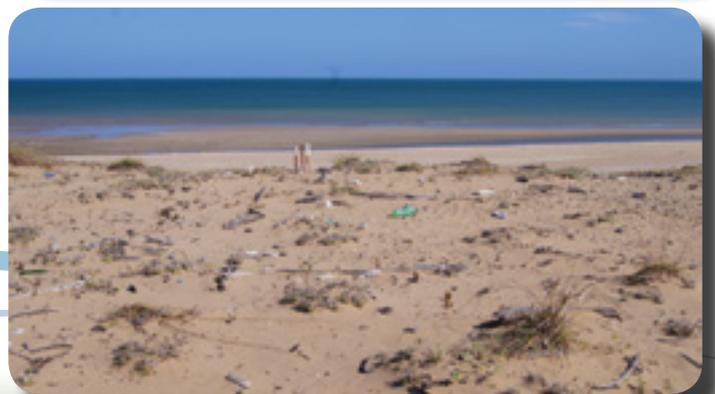
The work that rangers undertake during this time is hard and hot, with hours spent on beaches removing nets, ropes and fishing line and other items of marine debris which could kill or injure turtles and other marine species.

In early September, Cape York NRM experienced this work first hand, spending a day on the beach with Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers removing burnt ghostnets and monitoring nests.

Right top: Mapoon Ranger, Judy Sagigi removes ropes during beach monitoring

Right middle: Cecil Woodley, Judy Sagigi and Jocelyn de Jersey offload burnt nets collected from the beach

Right bottom: A flatback turtle nest is marked amongst a beach full of marine debris.



Around Cape York



Above: Ranger and NRM groups from across Cape York converged in Cairns for the launch of the Balkanu Turtle and Dugong Regional Plan. Here, Raymond McIvor from Cape York Weeds and Feral Animal Program (CYWAFAP) discusses the threats to turtles from feral pigs.

Right: Agforce held meetings in Weipa, Coen and Cooktown during October. Here, Cooktown attendees are shown the best and safest ways of trapping wild dogs.



Below: Joan from CYWAFAP mans the combined NRM stall at the North Queensland Local Government Conference held in Cooktown during October.



Above: Mike Hintz from Moreton Telegraph Station with CYWAFAP's Raymond McIvor and Ian McConnell at the Wenlock River Catchment Group meeting in October.

Below: Former Cape York NRM Director Desmond Tayley now leads Cape York NRM's *Your Climate* project. Pictured here overlooking the beautiful Bloomfield River.



Below: South Cape York Catchments' (SCYC) re-elected Chairperson, John Giese bids Marilyn Clarke farewell at the SCYC AGM in October. After close to 20 years on the committee, Marilyn has handed over the accounts ledger, and looks forward to spending some time travelling around the country.



Young Landcarer leads to Warwick

Earlier this year Cape York NRM put out a call for a young Cape Yorker with an interest in natural resource management to put up their hand to attend the Queensland Landcare conference.

So in late September, young Ryan Jackson from Wolverton Station, who would like to be a zoo-keeper when he grows up, headed off to Warwick with his mum Emma.

Ryan spent three days with rural kids from all over Queensland learning about natural systems and how they work.

"We planted 100 trees down there" said Ryan. "There were 50 kids and we planted two trees each."

"My favourite bit though - well, I learnt two things. I learnt that trees make oxygen, and I also learnt about bacteria".

"I also learnt about bats. Microbats eat mozzies, and bigger bats spread pollen and seeds.

"We have fruit bats and microbats on Wolverton" said Ryan.

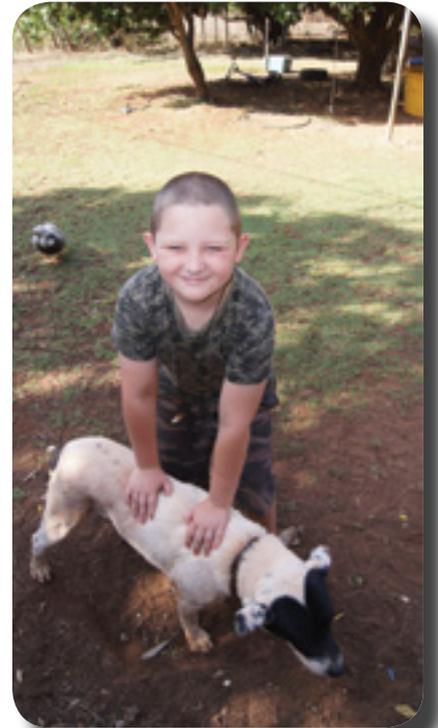
Ryan attends School of the Air, with the help of Emma, who is a qualified teacher, from their home on Wolverton Station.

"I love living here" he said. "We have lots of space and I can run around and play on the hay bales".

And Ryan's dog, Zorro (pictured right with Ryan), is also pretty happy about that.

2013 is the second year Cape York NRM have sponsored someone to travel to the conference.

Last year, David Ainscough from Lakeland attended, bringing back his learnings to share with his community and implementing sustainable farming practices.



Strong voice for the Wenlock River

More than 40 people congregated at Moreton Telegraph Station in mid-October to show their commitment to the formation of the Wenlock River Catchment Group.

Traditional Owners from the lower, middle and upper reaches of the river, together with pastoralists, conservation groups, local government and tourism unanimously agreed to the importance of providing a collective voice for the river, by forming the group.

Edwin Ling, a ranger from Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers, is also a Traditional Custodian for a lower part of the Wenlock River. He said the catchment group formation was important to keep the river and surrounding country safe and clean for the animals who live there.



"It's future is our future" the young Mapoon rangers who attended the meeting agreed. Kathleen Wilson, senior Traditional Owner for the Peppan Land Trust attended the two day meeting for her father George Wilson, who is one of the senior Elders for Northern Kaanju.

"I am very happy that this meeting is happening" she said. "We need healthy water for our future generations. We need caring and sharing for Country."

December

- 12 Lower Wenlock Catchment meeting
- 23 Cape York NRM Office closure

January

- 2 Cape York NRM Office reopens
- TBA Vegetation Management Act Info sessions

Rock Art Tours at Melsonby

by Deni Kelly, South Cape York Catchments

Over the last two years the Melsonby Land Trust and South Cape York Catchments have worked to develop the potential for a Rock Art tourism operation at Melsonby.

To help make this dream a reality the Melsonby team completed a Certificate III in guiding. Rangers are now fully qualified tour guides thanks to training provided with Industry Accreditation. Skills gained through this course allow Rangers to guide safely, lead tour groups and impart traditional knowledge and activities of their country to visitors.

It is believed that the Melsonby Rangers are the first mob in Australia to complete their guiding training on country. Industry Accreditation has a strong background in tourism and education and delivered the majority of the training on Country. Rangers were able to develop their own tours over the course, improving the delivery, with a number of mock tours for friends and family.

A number of rock art sites have already been identified by the Rangers for tourism potential and work has started on walking track construction to allow ease of access by tourists. With four wheel drive access only to the sites, visitors can expect a true adventure. In the future it is hoped a camping area will be set up for those who wish to extend their stay.



Above: Melsonby Ranger, Joseph McIvor, delivers a mock tour
Below: Industry Accreditation trainer gives some pointers to Melsonby Rangers on tour-guiding.

Images: South Cape York Catchments



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