



NEWSLETTER



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• GETTING BACK COUNTRY • CARING FOR COUNTRY • SECURING THE FUTURE

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Is Australia serious about closing the gap?

Australia has promised to close the gap between Indigenous and other Australians on health, education and employment. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the Closing the Gap report is a chance to "recommit to equality". But is Australia meeting its goals? The Kimberley Land Council is challenging the government on the Closing the Gap report and feels that although it is reassuring to have the progress measured and reported to Parliament, the progress remains slow.

"We feel the main reason for the slow progress is Governments not engaging effectively with Indigenous people on the ground. We have many ideas on how to improve the lives of our people including employment, economic, education, health and housing initiatives." Anthony says the KLC's involvement in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York was necessary to have our voices heard on a global level and to summon international support.

"If Australia is serious about Closing the Gap, then there must be direct engagement between indigenous people and Governments. This needs to start happening now."

Looking back on the KLC



2009 - 7 YEARS AGO

Aboriginal leaders tackled climate change in Copenhagen

Aboriginal leaders attended a United Nations Conference on climate change in Copenhagen in 2007 to make sure Indigenous rights were represented. At the time, climate change was a 'new' phenomenon. Since the conference in Copenhagen, the KLC has continued to be active in

discussing the role of Aboriginal people and climate change. We have continued to actively work together with other world leaders and commit to a plan that will reduce the impact of climate change on both our environment and human civilisation. The KLC has since travelled to the UN climate change conference in Paris to continue to promote our North Kimberley Fire Abatement Project and carbon trading through controlled fire management practices and carbon abatement,



2011 - 5 YEARS AGO

The KLC launched Ambooriny Burru Foundation and KRED Enterprises

In April 2015, The Kimberley Land Council launched the Ambooriny Burru Foundation – a charitable venture to facilitate Kimberley Aboriginal people's engagement in the expanding regional economy.

The KLC, in establishing this Foundation, aimed to provide long-term vision of Kimberley Aboriginal people to get control of their future through increased opportunities and economic independence. The KLC also established KRED Enterprises to seek out and develop business and job opportunities for Kimberley Aboriginal people, on behalf of the Foundation.



Message from the Chairman



As we welcome a new year I would like to acknowledge our leaders, some who are no longer with us, and take the time to thank them for their service, for the struggle for rights they have led within our region, and for their leadership in cultural and family values.

It is pleasing to see a number of new leaders stepping up to have their voices heard on issues including community closures, youth, land tenure, and much more. Our new leaders are providing valuable guidance on issues affecting our communities. This is a pathway the KLC will continue to support, both within the KLC, and through KLC initiatives like the Kimberley Futures Program. This program is managed by Aarnja, a corporation established by the Kimberley Land Council in 2012.

Last year the Kimberley Land Council helped deliver four new Native Title determinations, and did a lot of work on existing claims. The KLC's work over the years has seen Native Title recognized over more than 80% of the Kimberley.

Looking at the hard work that our elders did before us, fighting for many years to get back country through native title work, we have to be careful not to rush and settle on weak deals that hand back our hard won rights. And we need to be wary of accepting outside advice and assistance.

We have strong concerns that some Native Title claim groups are seeking costly legal and strategic advice from outside of the Kimberley, and from people and organisations that do not have the local knowledge and expertise that we

have been providing for many years.

Relying on outside organisations with weak skills, experience, and knowledge is very risky, and can lead to poor outcomes for our mob.

2016 is a year for Board elections, and we would like to thank the current directors for their input into the organisation. We have a good blend of young directors from our communities, as well as older leaders that bring history, guidance and leadership which we strongly value.

Our organisation is moving into a new phase where we are assisting our members to move forward after Native Title has been recognised. We are getting prepared to deliver support and assistance to our members and their PBCs to build social and economic change. The transition that is taking place is still in line with our core Vision: get back country, look after country, and get control of our future.

We will support our Kimberley members and our PBC's into the future and will find innovative and new ways to provide assistance. And we will continue with the ongoing work to secure Native Title, with some outstanding claims still estimated to take 10-15 years.

In closing we need to continue standing strong to build our nation, our children, our families, our communities and our region.

ANTHONY WATSON

Bindunbur, Jabirr Jabirr and Goolarabooloo Native Title Trial continues

Between 21 September – 9 October 2015 Justice North of the Federal Court of Australia heard evidence from Jabirr Jabirr, Nimanbur and Nyul Nyul witnesses at locations around the Peninsula and also at Notre Dame in Broome. He also heard evidence from one Goolarabooloo witness.

The arrangements for the hearing went extremely well and the KLC expresses its thanks once again to all witnesses, family members, the Nyul Nyul rangers, and members of the community who contributed to make the hearing run as smoothly as possible.

In the final days of the hearing, Justice North

indicated that he wanted to hear evidence from more Goolarabooloo witnesses to get a better understanding of their case, and he stated that he would hear that evidence for the week beginning 9 November 2015. That week of hearing was then cancelled at Goolarabooloo's request, for reasons including concerns about funding and a lack of adequate preparation time.

The next round of hearing is from 29 March 2016 to 15 April 2016. It starts on the Tuesday after Easter and goes for 3 weeks. The hearing will mostly be conducted in Broome. During these three weeks the evidence from all remaining Jabirr Jabirr, Nimanbur and Nyul Nyul witnesses



will be heard, and also all the evidence from the Goolarabooloo witnesses. If you are a witness, please keep these dates clear! The KLC lawyers will meet with all Bindunbur witnesses in February and March 2016 in preparation, and in some cases to prepare supplementary statements to address particular points of the claim.

All going to plan, after April 2016, the hard work of the witnesses will be finished. A separate hearing will be held for the expert anthropologists to be questioned about their views about the claims over the area. There will also be a considerable amount of work done to identify the particular type of native title rights and interests to be recognised (exclusive, non-exclusive or extinguished).

The Judge will hear the final submissions from the lawyers on all points of the claim in the week of 26 September 2016. He will then consider his decision.



Innovative Kimberley seed bank project

Traditional knowledge being used to protect biodiversity

A seed bank project is underway in the Kimberley and Nyul Nyul, Karajarri and Bardi Jawi Oorany woman ranger groups are being taught how to collect, store and propagate culturally significant seeds and endangered plants.

The importance of collecting seeds has become more urgent as biodiversity in the Kimberley has struggled with pests, fire and development and also climate change.

In February 2016, Nyul Nyul and Bardi Jawi Oorany rangers travelled to Fremantle to participate in training in seed collection. The seminar was facilitated by Apace WA and held at the Apace Swan Regional Seed Bank. The training was also attended by conservation organisation Environs Kimberley staff.

The training was aimed at providing rangers with the skills to create a bank of seeds from Kimberley plants. The rangers learnt skills which will help them to assist with the maintenance of two plant nurseries involves the collection, storage and propagation of native seeds for re-vegetation and includes preparing seeds to sell to the nursery industry.

Apace WA, the organisation who facilitated the training, is a self-supporting, not-for-profit community group running a native plant nursery and providing environmental services such as regeneration work, weed eradication and training to local councils, community groups and private companies within the Swan Coastal Plain and Darling Range, Perth.

Nyul Nyul and Bardi Jawi Oorany rangers also met Agriculture and Food Minister Ken Baston in Kings

Park botanic gardens during the training.

The training and on-going project is being funded by the Belgiorno-Nettis Foundation and WWF-Australia and was part of the new Kimberley Seedback Cooperative facilitated by Environs Kimberley and funded by a WA State NRM Community action Grant and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

The project has attracted national attention and has received coverage by ABC Kimberley and ABC1. You can view project footage by the ABC at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWHH7vaqsKQ>. The images used have been supplied by DAFWA.



Kimberley Land Council takes 'Community Driven solutions to Canberra

The Kimberley Land Council went to Canberra in March 2016, armed with evidence of highly successful programs that deliver real change to the lives of Aboriginal people, while at the same time delivering valuable outcomes to the nation.

Speaking at the Pew Foundation's Outback Forum, KLC CEO Nolan Hunter stressed the need for community driven solutions to the issues facing Indigenous people.

"We come to Canberra a week after the tragic suicide of one of our young people," said Mr Hunter.

"But we want to bring a message of the renewed hope and positive change that is being delivered by community driven solutions in our region.

"We have seen great successes from the innovative partnership projects we have developed and implemented. Through our partnerships with governments and the philanthropic and private sectors, we have been able to focus on delivering social and economic outcomes to our people and our communities.

"As we mark the 10th year of Closing the Gap reports, it is a matter of national importance that we leverage these opportunities to realise sustained economic and social development for our people," said Mr Hunter.

"The best way to do this is by supporting our communities to deliver on the ground solutions.

"In partnership with the Commonwealth, we have run a number of very successful Working On Country, and Indigenous Protected Area programs, which have delivered real jobs and training, economic and social improvements, and valuable benefits to individuals, communities, and the nation.

"Their success comes from the level of local community engagement in design, staffing, operation, and oversight. We need to build on and expand this model, and the KLC has undertaken extensive research and project development work to inform the decisions of governments and communities," said Mr Hunter.

"Our planning clearly identifies the many opportunities available to Traditional Owners to develop enterprises based on the cultural and environmental value of their country, and these can be maximised through long term partnerships with governments and the philanthropic and private sectors.

"We are serious about empowering Aboriginal people to address the issues facing themselves and their communities, and call on Australia to back our people to drive solutions at the community level.

Media release by Joe Fox



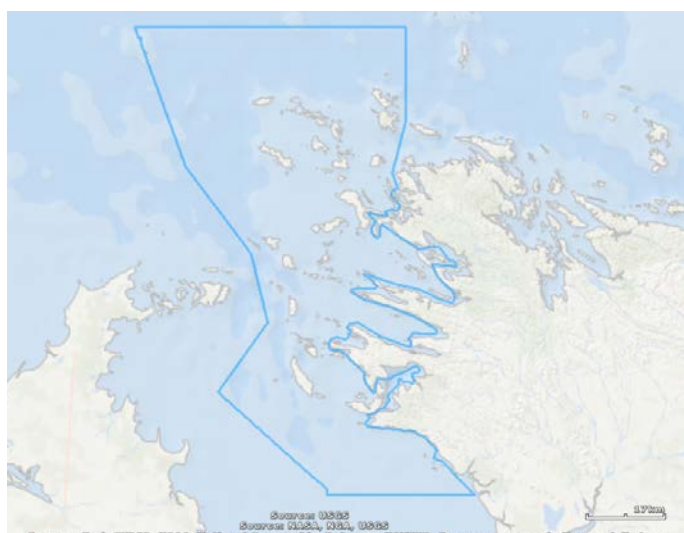
1. Mayala Native Title Claim Update

During 2015, the KLC continued to engage consultant anthropologist Kingsley Palmer to work on writing a connection report in order to progress the Mayala claim towards a native title determination. Kingsley did on-the-ground research with claimants in early June and October in 2015. The June research was a trip to Hedland and the October trip was meeting with claimants on the Peninsula. In 2014, Kingsley went on a boat trip around the Mayala islands with claimants. The KLC is considering more fieldwork for Kingsley – possibly in 2016.

The KLC received a ‘heads up’ notice that a future act notice will be received once the application has been considered by the Department of Lands. Once the notice is issued, this further act will give Mayala claimants a right to negotiate.

KLC contacted the Department of Lands with initial comments in response to that letter, including that an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) would be required to apply the non-extinguishment principle. We have not heard anything further from Department of Lands about that comment.

The lease applicant, Marine Produce Australia, have contacted KLC and will meet with the Mayala applicant in the future to discuss their proposal.



2. Important Dates

To support the progress of the research, the KLC is calling a series of family group meetings throughout February and early March 2016 to talk about how the progress the Mayala Native Title claim. The purpose of all this work is to try to improve the claim’s progress and success in achieving a native title determination.

3. Barnicoat Island

Department of Lands is currently considering an application for the grant of a lease over Bandicoat Island in the Buccaneer Archipelago for the establishment of a land base to support existing barramundi farming in Cone Bay.



Cultural Enterprise Hub Update

Over the past 10 years the KLC has been focused on building opportunities for traditional owners to live and work on country in enterprises that are founded on the cultural and natural values of the region.

The journey started back in 2005 with the appropriate economies round table forum in Fitzroy Crossing. At the time there was a proposal for broad scale cotton farming using water from dams on the Fitzroy River.

Senior cultural advisors said they didn't want development that was going to have a big impact on country and not deliver jobs or other business opportunities for Traditional Owners.

Since that time the KLC has focused on building the Kimberley Ranger Network which has grown into one of the largest Indigenous networks in Australia and is known internationally for leading best practice. The Network of Indigenous Protected Areas facilitated by KLC and managed by PBC's is the largest interconnected, actively managed, cultural conservation corridor in Northern Australia.

However, the biggest barrier to increasing the number of ranger jobs and delivering more land and

sea management activities is the limit to funding available from government.

For this reason the KLC has been looking at how best to secure the long term future of the Land and Sea activities and considering how this aligns with the PBC's aspirations to build strong vibrant organisations.

To guide this initiative the KLC established a Board sub-committee which has developed a business plan for the Cultural Enterprise Hub.

The plan draws on knowledge gained over the past 3 years from business workshops with rangers and PBC directors, regional forums, consultations with land and Sea staff and expert advice from Social ventures Australia.

We're now focused on raising seed funds so KLC Directors and staff can come and meet with your PBC or claim group about the Hub model and talk about how we can work together to secure the long-term future of the Kimberley Ranger Network.

KLC calls on Prime Minister to lead mature conversation around Indigenous issues

Following 'noble savage' comments from a Federal Member of Parliament, the Kimberley Land Council has asked Prime Minister Turnbull to encourage his party's Members to engage in a mature conversation around Indigenous issues.

KLC Chairman Anthony Watson reacted with frustration and disappointment over recent comments made by Federal Liberal MP Dennis Jensen, in which he re-opened divisive and unhelpful comments about the 'lifestyle choices' of remote Aboriginal people, invoking the image of the 'noble savage'.

"We are appalled that any Member of Parliament in the 21st century should hold the misplaced and uninformed views expressed by Mr Jensen," said Anthony Watson.

"We have to constantly fight against the negative images of Aboriginal people that some choose to promote in order to pursue their own agendas," he said.

"Mr Jensen's use of the term 'noble savage' is deeply offensive, and shows that he knows little about the so called lifestyle choices of remote Indigenous people.

Indigenous people identify as part of modern Australia, and expect the same rights, the same supports, the same opportunities, and the same responsibilities as all Australians.

"People want to live on their country, where

they were born, and where their ancestors came from. It is their home," said Mr Watson.

"Far from being a lifestyle choice, let alone a choice to live as a 'noble savage', it's about retaining connections to country and to the past – something earlier colonisers, and now Mr Jensen, seem determined to belittle and dismiss."

It is this dispossession and relocation that has led directly to the issues facing Indigenous Australians today.

"I'm heartened that most politicians, and most Australians, understand that the problems Indigenous people face in their daily lives need very specific and targeted solutions, and that Aboriginal people must be at the heart of those solutions," said Mr Watson.

"So today I have written to Prime Minister Turnbull, about his Government's commitment to the many positive initiatives improving the lives of our people, including the Empowered Communities program.

"But I've also had to ask the Prime Minister to lead members of his party, including Mr Jensen, in a mature conversation about Indigenous issues," said Mr Watson.

"We want a conversation that takes us forward, not one that takes us back to the simplistic, outdated, and just plain wrong myths from the past.

Aboriginal heritage bill back on the table

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) is extremely concerned that the Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill has been placed back on the notice paper for the consideration of Parliament.

NNTC's Chairman, Nolan Hunter said that the Government continues to ignore the concerns of Traditional Owners across the State. "It appears that the Government is stubbornly pushing ahead with the proposed amendments to the legislation despite the many objections and the protests of Traditional owners.

"The Bill leaves the protection of significant Aboriginal heritage in the hands of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs," said Mr Hunter. "However the extent of the powers that the CEO of the Department will have is left to Regulations that haven't even been drafted yet.

"Despite the concerns raised by numerous stakeholders, the Bill remains detrimental to the protection of Aboriginal heritage," said Mr Hunter. "The level of protection under the amended legislation remains woefully

inadequate, particularly if you compare it to the levels of protection to European built heritage. Aboriginal heritage is just as important to the broad community as European heritage.

"We believe that if the Act passes through Parliament in its current form, the ability of Traditional Owners to fulfill their cultural obligations in the protection of their Aboriginal heritage will be diminished.

"We do not have any confidence in the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to adequately protect our cultural heritage nor do we trust the Department to act responsibly in light of the fact that many significant sites having already been removed from the State register," said Mr Hunter.

"This Government has not given any hint that they wish to protect the cultural history of Aboriginal people in this State and the NNTC again calls on the Government to remove the Bill from Parliament and engage properly with Traditional Owners on the best way to protect and manage Aboriginal heritage".

The NNTC is the peak body for native title representative bodies and service providers.

Gooniyandi Ranger Roneil Skeen succeeds at university in Perth

As a boy, Roneil Skeen loved spending time with his family, out in the bush hunting and fishing. From a young age, the proud Gooniyandi man knew he wanted to look after and manage country. At sixteen years of age, with the help of his grandfather, Roneil scored a volunteer position with the Kimberley Ranger Network.

It wasn't long before Roneil's supervisor noticed his passion and work ethic and he gained a full time position as a ranger. Through the program he completed a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management and has since been accepted into the University of Western Australia to continue his studies.

Roneil says the Kimberley Ranger Network provided a solid foundation for further study in Conservation and Land Management and says encouragement from his old people motivated him to pursue further study.

"My family, my aunties and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers always told us (youth) that we are the next generation and we must look after the land."

"Their words have encouraged me to get where I am today. I want to be a role model for the next generation. One day I'd like to be a ranger coordinator, or run my own program. I love working for my people and for my country."

"My own role model is Peter Murray, I'd like to

be like him one day. I'd say within the next 5-6 years."

Roneil says that although he is away from family to attend university in Perth, he still talks to them regularly and their support keeps him motivated.

"I lost my big brother last year. Even though he's not with me I always feel his presence, like a positive voice on my shoulder. I have his encouragement and he pushes me to keep going."

As for university, living at St Catherine's College and studying full time, Roneil says it has been a great experience so far.

"I'm really enjoying it so far. I have a lot of knowledge from my previous work as a ranger, which is helping me to get through the work."

"In July this year, during uni holidays, I'll come home and work casually for the Ranger program again."

Roneil says that for other young people wanting to attend university, if you have a passion, or love what you do, go for it.

"If you want to study, to become more educated – go for it. If you're passionate about something – go for it, give it a shot."



Karajarri Rangers: The bidgy puppet project



Theatre Kimberley has helped Karajarri Rangers and Bidyadanga community members to create an imaginative work of public art.

Life-sized puppets hand-painted by Karajarri Rangers and Bidyadanga community members will be used as educational tools and town mascots at local events in Bidyadanga including football games, open days and festivals such as Shinju.

Karajarri Ranger Wynston Shovellor says one of the first steps toward creating the puppets was to identify two of the most prominent animals in the Bidyadanga area.

"The emu and the salmon are

the two main animals in the Bidyadanga area. We created two emu puppets, named Susie and Sylvia. The puppets are big enough to have two people fit inside. We also made a large and a small salmon."

"We will soon be finished the project thanks to Theatre Kimberley artists and designers Bernedette and Gwen. Thank you for helping us to complete the big Bidgy puppets! We are looking forward to showing them off."

This project was funded by the KLC Land and Sea Management Unit.



Images courtesy of Julia Rau.

Ranger News

1. International Women's Day was on the 8th of March, a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women.

The KLC acknowledges Indigenous women across Australia who have been looking after country for thousands of years. Caring for country is a cultural responsibility passed down by elders and Indigenous women continue to have an important role in this today.

The KLC would like to acknowledge our fantastic Indigenous women rangers who play a vital part in environmental management and cultural heritage in the Kimberley.



2. Many congratulations to Nyul Nyul and Bardi Jawi rangers who have been successfully completing and passing their coxwain certifications. The coxwain course equips rangers with skills to command with safety and efficiency a commercial vessel of less than 12m and is crucial for rangers undertaking whale watching, crocodile patrols, turtle monitoring and other related activities that compliment their work.



3. Gooniyandi Rangers filling the water tanks after battling the blaze all day at Bayulu community in February, 2016.



4. Nyikina Mangala Rangers have been involved in a number of activities in 2016 including fire management planning meetings, a fire fighting training course and plenty of field exercises!



5. KLC Fire Officer Rhys Swain, TO John Watson, Frank Watson, Cyril Watson and Brad Johnson use kestrels to determine wind, temperature and relative humidity in the field exercises.



6. Nyikina Mangala and Dambimangari Rangers doing a bush fire fighting training course run by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. exercises!



7. Karajarri Rangers installing new signs in the Port Smith Gordon Bay area in March,



8. Ngurrara ranger Karlas Shandley teaches Elijah Murray how to monitor the health of valuable fresh water in the Great Sandy Desert. A reminder of how important it is to pass knowledge on to our future generations.



Green Army training, February 2016



The Kimberley Land Council welcomes donations to support our activities – donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. The Kimberley Land Council acknowledges the financial support provided by the Commonwealth of Australia and the Government of Western Australia.



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