



NEWSLETTER



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

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BILBY NEWS

RANGERS TACKLE BILBY CONSERVATION

FULL STORY PAGE 16

Kimberley Aboriginal people have say on Constitutional reform

Kimberley and Pilbara Aboriginal people came together in Broome on the 10th, 11th and 12th of February for an important meeting discussing Constitutional reform.

Hosted by the Kimberley Land Council, the meeting was the second of 12 First Nations Regional Dialogues being held around the country to help Referendum Council members hear Indigenous views on changing the Australian Constitution. **Read more on page 6.**

Looking back on the KLC

2007 - 10 YEARS AGO

Noonkanbah native title recognised

After nine years of proceedings, native title was recognised for Noonkanbah on 27 April 2007.

The decision gave Indigenous people rights over 1,811 square kilometres.

The decision was handed down on country in the bush setting of the Yungngora community, on Noonkanbah Station.



2002 - 15 YEARS AGO

Karajarri determination

Karajarri people marked the 15th anniversary of their native title determination on March 12.

The Karajarri consent determination was the second to be recognised in the Kimberley with native title granted across 24, 275 square kilometers of country.

The Federal Court determination recognised the Karajarri people as the rightful owners of their traditional lands. The remainder of the Karajarri native title claim was determined in 2004.



Message from the Chairman



Welcome to the first Kimberley Land Council newsletter for the year. It is amazing to think that we are a quarter of the way through 2017, with many exciting projects and developments already underway.

As you will be aware Western Australia held its State Election on Saturday, 11 March 2017. The Labor Party won enough votes to take power, so we now have a new government in place. Congratulations to our own Josie Farrer who was re-elected to Parliament and also to Ben Wyatt who has been appointed Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Treasurer, and the Minister for Finance and Energy.

The Labor Party made some strong commitments to the people of the Kimberley in the lead up to the election. As the Aboriginal representative body for the Kimberley, the KLC will continue to monitor new policies closely to ensure they are in the best interests of our mob. We know that changes to the Heritage Act, funding for remote communities and regional projects like Water for Food will continue to be issues and we will keep you updated with any developments.

The start of the year has already been very busy at the KLC with a big focus on building the capacity of Kimberley Aboriginal organisations. The KLC has an important role to play in helping PBC directors gain new skills and manage business as their organisations continue on their journey to independence. We see the KLC as an organisation that can provide support and leadership to PBCs so that we can all work together to overcome common issues. We have also been sharing with PBCs what the KLC has been doing to advocate for our region at local,

state, national and international levels, and how PBCs and the Kimberley Indigenous community can benefit from this advocacy.

I was happy to join friends from across the Kimberley and the Pilbara at the Referendum Council's Broome dialogue held in February. Almost 100 people attended the meeting which was about changing the Australian Constitution to better reflect modern day Aboriginal people. The gathering showed just what can be possible when we all come together for a common goal, just like when the State Government was threatening to close our communities.

The Referendum Council is continuing to consult with Indigenous people around the country before a big meeting in Uluru in May. The Kimberley will be well represented at this meeting, ensuring our voice on Constitutional reform is heard.

Looking ahead, we have a busy few months with the National Native Title Conference coming up in Townsville in June as well as our own preparations for a big ranger forum and the annual KLC AGM, with 2017 also being a Festival year.

I hope that all KLC members have been able to enjoy the fantastic wet season. It is wonderful to see country transform with the rain and although it can make it tough to get around, it is wonderful to get out on country and experience the beauty of our region.

ANTHONY WATSON

Developing PBC capacity

Working together, sharing learnings, discussing issues of common interest and developing capacity were some of the key themes to come out of a regional meeting of PBC directors in Broome in February.

The move to establish a Kimberley PBC Alliance also gained support among the more than 25 attendees from 12 PBCs in the region.

Kimberley Land Council Deputy Chief Executive Officer Tyrone Garstone said a key focus area for the KLC is to help grow PBC capability and assist PBCs to tackle regional issues.

"We know that PBCs often face



the same issues and challenges, so that is why we are bringing people together so we can all learn from each other," Mr Garstone said.

"Sharing learnings and having a unified voice will enable Kimberley PBCs to continue to develop and look after their

people. The KLC will continue to support meetings that allow people to come together and share ideas."

Many directors voiced support for a PBC Alliance and will be discussing the idea further at their PBC meetings.





Why is the Native Title Act changing?

The Australian Government is moving to pass changes to the Native Title Act, following a Federal Court ruling affecting Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) across the country.

On 2 February 2017, the Full Federal Court of Australia delivered what is now known as the “McGlade” decision, relating to the signing of six ILUAs by the Noongar people in south-west Western Australia.

The ILUAs had been under negotiation with the State Government and Traditional Owners for many years. The settlement that was reached meant that the native title parties would have received \$1.3 billion for surrendering any right to claim native title in the south-west of WA.

The ILUAs cover 200,000 square kilometres of land stretching across from Jurien Bay to Ravensthorpe, including the Perth metropolitan area.

However, in February 2017 the full bench of the Federal Court decided that the signing of the ILUAs was ineffective and the ILUAs could not be registered by the Native Title Registrar.

In each case, the ILUAs were not signed by all the members of the Applicant. The Applicant in each native title claim is the person or persons whose names appear in the title to the claim.

The decision overruled a previous decision of a single Federal Court judge in 2010 that ILUAs could be effective and valid if signed by only one member of a native title Applicant.

The decision puts into doubt the validity of 126 ILUAs across Australia that have relied on that decision and been registered. This includes four ILUAs in WA but currently none relating to land or waters in the Kimberley.

The Australian Government is now attempting to introduce

new legislation to change the Native Title Act to remove the uncertainty created about previous agreements by the decision.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said the KLC had been involved in providing feedback on the proposed changes.

“We are very keen to have our say on what changes are made to the Act as they will have an impact for all Indigenous people across Australia,” Mr Hunter said.

“We are working closely with the National Native Title Council on this matter and will keep the Kimberley mob updated with any future developments.”

The South West Native Title Settlement is the largest native title settlement in Australia to date and affects an estimated 30,000 Noongar people.



Kimberley Aboriginal people have say on Constitutional reform

Kimberley and Pilbara Aboriginal people came together in Broome on the 10th, 11th and 12th of February for an important meeting discussing Constitutional reform.

Hosted by the Kimberley Land Council, the meeting was the second of 12 First Nations Regional Dialogues being held around the country to help Referendum Council members hear Indigenous views on changing the Australian Constitution.

Throughout the three-day event the group heard from Referendum Council members Pat Anderson (Co-chair), Megan Davis and Noel Pearson who discussed the main questions relating to Constitutional reform that people need to consider.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter co-convened the event together with Jodie Bell of Goolarri Media Enterprises. He said there were many diverse opinions throughout the weekend, but recognising and empowering first nations people was the clear theme that emerged.

"This is a nation building exercise. Constitutional reform is no magic bullet; but it's about compelling government to act so we can rebuild our Nations," Mr Hunter said.

"This is about more than just words, this is about 'doing'. It goes further, for example, than the Apology because 'sorry' is not a doing word.

"Our people need to see the opportunity that is before us. This is about achieving a successful Referendum for something meaningful that will actually make a difference in our lives.

"The Constitution should respect our human rights and our rights as Indigenous peoples. The right to self-determination and the right to choose our own destinies. It means participation and consultation.

"Our human rights should be protected through proper processes and procedures. By guaranteeing us a say in our affairs and by negotiating fairly when decisions are made."

The dialogues will culminate in the National Indigenous Constitutional Convention in Uluru later this year.

Mr Hunter will lead a delegation of 10 leaders from the north WA region to the event, including Peter Yu, Irene Davey, Anthony McLarty, Cherie Sibosado and Wayne Bergmann from the Kimberley and Patrick Churnside, Lorraine Injie, Evelyn Krockez, Jahna Cedar and Peter Windie from the Pilbara.

The latest push for Constitutional reform comes on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.

For more information about the Referendum Council and the dialogues please visit www.referendumcouncil.org.au



REFERENDUM COUNCIL DIALOGUE: Broome, February 2017

Timeline - Key events since the 1967 Referendum

1971: Land rights activists set up the Aboriginal Tent Embassy opposite Parliament House in Canberra.

1973: The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is created as the agency with responsibility for Aboriginal affairs policy.

1976: The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act is passed, the first attempt by the Australian Government to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership.

1978: The KLC is formed.

1985: Ayers Rock/Uluru is handed back to Traditional Owners and is subsequently leased back to the government as the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

1988: Survival Day is marked by Aboriginal people while mainstream Australian society celebrates the bicentenary of the arrival of the First Fleet on 26 January.

1989: ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, starts operations after more than two years of hotly contested debate.

1991: The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation is established.

1992: 'Terra nullius' — the doctrine that Australia was 'no man's land' — is overturned by the High Court, because of the Mabo land rights case.

1993: The Native Title Act is passed.

1996: Wik people are successful in a High Court case to establish that native title and pastoral leases could co-exist.

1997: *Bringing Them Home* is published, revealing the firsthand stories of children taken from their families.

2005: ATSIC, the peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body, is abolished and closes at midnight on 24 March.

2007: The Australian Government stages the NT intervention and suspends the Racial Discrimination Act.

2008: The Australian Government apologises to the Stolen Generations.

2013: The Australian Parliament passes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013 to affirm its support for Constitutional recognition.

2015: The Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples tables its Final Report.

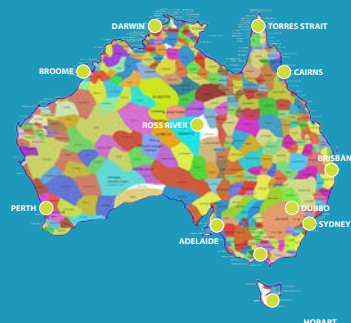
2016: Referendum Council consultation begins.

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REFERENDUM
COUNCIL
MEMBERS



8 Indigenous members
8 non-Indigenous members



DISCUSSION: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

100

delegates from
the Kimberley
and the Pilbara
meet for 3 days.



REFORM IDEAS:

Indigenous voice to the Parliament, acknowledgement, a non-discrimination clause, amending the race power, removing section 25 and agreement-making.

DIVERSE VIEWS, ONE THEME

WE WANT:

Empowerment and recognition of First Nations

"This is a nation building exercise. Constitutional reform is no magic bullet; but it's about compelling government to act so we can rebuild our Nations.

"This is about more than just words, this is about 'doing'. It goes further, for example, than the Apology because 'sorry' is not a doing word.

"Change is not in the saying, it is in the doing and that is the opportunity we have now."

- Nolan Hunter, KLC CEO

Recommendations and big meeting: Uluru, May 2017



Referendum Council Broome dialogue





End in sight for Bindunbur trial

The Bindunbur trial, the first native title claim the Kimberley Land Council has been forced to take to court in more than a decade, is reaching its final stages.

All evidence has now been presented and handed in, with the next step being the delivery of final oral submissions on native title connection by lawyers to Justice North in Perth this April.

To ensure people don't miss out on this final part of the court process, the KLC will be playing the audio of the court proceedings live at Notre Dame University.

Kimberley Land Council Deputy Chief Executive Officer Tyrone Garstone said the final submissions mark an important milestone for Bindunbur claimants.

"Native title court cases are a challenging process for everyone involved," Mr Garstone said.

"People have been fighting for rights to their land for more than 15 years.

"Australian law means people must prove their connection to their land and this can often be a taxing and emotional process.

"It could still be a year or more until the Judge makes his decision following these final submissions, but knowing that this trial process is almost finished is good news and a positive step forward."

While the Judge makes his decision, KLC will be facilitating meetings so that Bindunbur claimants can start discussing what kind of PBC should be set up and how this can be done.

For more information about the trial or the live audio of the Court proceedings in April, please contact the KLC on 08 9194 0100.





Warrwa research update

In March 2017, the Kimberley Land Council conducted field work over Meda Station with Warrwa claimants, as well as with Bunuba, Dambimangari, Willingin and Walmajarri native title holders.

The focus of the fieldwork was to travel to the far northern and eastern parts of the claim to talk about where Warrwa country borders the country of other groups.

Due to the big wet this year it was decided to charter a helicopter to ensure that the key places that were the focus of the research could be reached.

Several places were visited including locations on the mud flats south of the Yampi training area (towards Oobagooma), on the Meda River, in the Napier Range, and east of the Napier Range. The middle section of Meda Station north of the river country was also flown over.

A meeting was also held in Fitzroy Crossing with Bunuba people and further meetings are planned with Dambimangari and Willingin



native title holders. Derby is presently not a focus for research.

There are two Warrwa claims - Mawadjala Gadjidgar, which covers Point Torment, and Warrwa Combined, which covers Derby, Meda Station, and parts of Kimberley Downs and Napier Downs. The claim group is the same for both claims.

The KLC is expecting to provide the State Government with a Warrwa Connection Report in mid-2017.

Timber Creek Compensation case explained

The Kimberley Land Council is closely watching the ongoing developments in the historic Timber Creek compensation case.

In August 2016, the Federal Court handed down a decision about compensation in relation to 23 square kilometres of land in and around the small town of Timber Creek in the Northern Territory.

The compensation awarded to the native title holders, the Ngaliwurru and Nungali peoples, was approximately \$3.3 million, including \$512,000 awarded for economic loss, \$1.5 million in interest and \$1.3 million for non-economic loss, such as cultural rights, and pain and loss.

The ruling is important because it is the first time that the Court has made a decision on compensation for the loss, extinguishment or suppression of native title rights.

The Court also provided direction on the monetary value of those native title rights. It considered exclusive possession native title to be equivalent in value to freehold tenure. The Court considered the value of non-exclusive native title would depend on the circumstances of each area. In this case it was deemed to be 80 per cent of freehold value.

The decision has now been appealed by the Northern Territory Government as it is a test case being the first decision of its kind. The appeal is not about whether compensation should be paid, but concerns how the Court decided the amount of compensation.

Kimberley Land Council Chairman Anthony Watson said the landmark case could lead to similar claims in states across Australia, including Western Australia.

"This is a very important test case that could set a precedent for future claims, including for people of the Kimberley," Mr Watson said.

"We will be watching the appeal process closely and any other developments that could have significance for our people.

"Most importantly this finding backs up what we have been saying for years – that native title rights are valuable and should be recognised as being equal to the property rights of other Australians.

"This case makes clear that Aboriginal people should be rightfully compensated for their dispossession and the loss of their lands."

The appeal will be heard by a full bench of the Federal Court later this year and there may be a further appeal to the High Court.

UN Special Rapporteur visits the Kimberley

United Nations Special Rapporteur, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, visited the Kimberley in March.

Ms Tauli-Corpuz was in Australia to examine the human rights situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of her mandate working with Indigenous people across the world.

As Special Rapporteur, Ms Tauli-Corpuz regularly conducts fact finding missions where she reports on the human rights situation in specific countries and addresses cases of alleged violations of the rights of Indigenous people through communications with governments and others.

She also promotes good practices including new laws, government programs, and constructive agreements between Indigenous peoples and states to implement international standards and conducts thematic studies on topics of special importance to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The key focus areas for Ms Tauli-Corpuz during her visit included looking at Indigenous disadvantage,



the administration of justice and detention conditions, land rights and native title, prevention of violence against women and the rate of children removed from their homes by officials.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said native title rights and their strong connection to the human rights of Aboriginal people were a key area for investigation.

"People are most concerned about looking after their country and the legal rights that people have to do that are delivered through native title," Mr Hunter said.

Ms Tauli-Corpuz will prepare a report with recommendations to the Australian Government following the visit.

NNTC sends Nolan to NY

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter will travel to New York for the 16th session of the UN Permanent Forum in New York in April.

The theme of this year's event is the *Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration*.

Mr Hunter is being sponsored by the National Native Title Council to attend the gathering and will use it as an opportunity to raise concerns about the lack of implementation of the declaration in Australia.

"While Australia has officially adopted the UN Indigenous Declaration, we continue to see

governments implementing policies that are in direct contrast to what this declaration is all about," Mr Hunter said.

"In the Kimberley this has been evidenced by repeated attempts by the State and others to undermine native title, as well as a general disregard for native title holders as key stakeholders in projects that affect their lands.

"The declaration may have been accepted but it has clearly not been implemented."

Mr Hunter will use the Permanent Forum to highlight Kimberley issues, including how land tenure reform can affect native title, community closures and the continuing problems faced by people living in remote areas. The Permanent Forum will run from 24 April to 5 May.



The Kimberley Ranger Network began its annual fire management program across the region in March.

Facilitated by the Kimberley Land Council, the program is undertaken by 13 different ranger groups and is based on the traditional fire methods of Indigenous people.

The program is one of the most effective ways of reducing the destructive impacts of wildfires late in the dry season.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said high rainfall over the wet season had led to an increase in fuel loads, creating ideal conditions for wildfires later in the year.

"From March to July Indigenous rangers will be conducting strategic fire operations in key areas throughout the Kimberley to reduce high fuel loads," Mr Hunter said.

"The program involves the use of traditional fire methods and knowledge, combined with modern science and technology, to create cool burns which leave patches of burnt and unburnt country.

"The burnt patches of land create fire breaks which prevent the spread of uncontrolled fires and can be used to slow down or stop fires that occur late in the dry season.

"Kimberley Land Council staff and rangers have undergone nationally accredited fire operations training to undertake this work.

"We also liaise closely with shires, pastoralists and other property owners to advise of any planned burning activities, and ensure that people, stock and property are protected."

Wunggurr ranger Robin Dann said fire management is one of the most important tasks rangers undertake to look after country.

"With high rainfall occurring across Willinggin country, the rangers will be targeting older fuel loads early in the dry season, making fire breaks through country as part of the aerial burning operations in 2017," Mr Dann said.

"Without rangers doing this important work, late season fires can devastate our country, causing damage to important cultural places and biodiversity."

Other organisations and government departments also work on fire management in the Kimberley, including the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Australian Wildlife Conservancy and pastoralists.

Anyone with concerns about a fire in their area should check the www.emergency.wa.gov.au website for more information or in an emergency situation call triple zero immediately.

For more information about Indigenous fire management please visit <http://www.klc.org.au/land-sea/indigenous-fire-management>

Fast facts:

- Kimberley Ranger Network rangers manage fire across almost 200,000 square kilometres. This equates to about half the total land mass of the Kimberley and approximately three times the size of Tasmania.
- The Karajarri, Gooniyandi and Balangarra ranger groups will be the first to commence fire operations.
- Rangers conduct more than 80 days of burning each season.
- Indigenous fire management is crucial in protecting threatened species in the Kimberley, including Gouldian finches, Black Footed Rock wallabies, the Purple crowned fairywren, the Golden bandicoot and bilbies

Fire brochure hits shelves

The KLC has released a new Indigenous fire management brochure for the public. The information pamphlet aims to provide Kimberley residents and people travelling through the region with the facts about Indigenous fire management and why it is so important.

The brochure is just one of the ways the KLC is hoping to increase understanding and public awareness about early season prescribed burning in the Kimberley.

Keep an eye out for the brochures at council offices, tourism bureaus and ranger bases.



INDIGENOUS FIRE MANAGEMENT

People, property, country and cultural sites are at risk of wildfire in the Kimberley.



Indigenous rangers combine traditional knowledge with modern science and technology to manage fire and look after country.

The rangers light 'cool' fires between March and July, which burn slowly to minimise fuel loads and create fire breaks.

The cool fires significantly reduce the impact of wildfires late in the dry season.

The Kimberley Land Council facilitates Indigenous fire management in the Kimberley. Together with 13 ranger groups we work closely with shires, pastoralists and other stakeholders to plan and conduct fire activities.

Rangers receive extensive nationally accredited fire training.

At risk from fire

- People
- Property
- Country
- Cultural Sites

Causes of fire

- Lightning strike
- Accidental ignition
- Campfire
- Arson

- Indigenous rangers manage fire across almost **200,000km**
- Over **80** days of burning each fire season



Other organisations that undertake fire management include: the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Australian Wildlife Consultancy and pastoralists.

Rangers tackle bilby conservation



Indigenous rangers from across the Kimberley have gathered in Fitzroy Crossing in an effort to better understand and protect the iconic Australian bilby.

Bilbies were once found across 70 per cent of Australia, but their numbers have steadily declined since colonisation. They are now found mainly in the Central Desert region of Australia and in the Kimberley.

The first of its kind workshop is part of the Kimberley Bilby Project – an initiative which sees WWF-Australia, Environs Kimberley, the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Kimberley

Land Council and independent ranger groups collaborating to look after and record data on bilbies.

The workshop follows the hugely successful Ninu (bilby) Festival at Kiwirrkurra in the Gibson Desert last year.

Nine ranger groups worked with scientists to upskill, share knowledge, develop conservation plans, discuss data management and undertake field training.

At present there is very little data about Kimberley bilby populations and that is why the

information that rangers have been gathering and recording is so important.

The workshop also included field trips to active bilby sites on Gooniyandi country.

Ngurrara rangers Marika Rogers and Kristy Jack look after bilbies and were excited to learn more from other rangers at the workshop.

"Bilbies plays a big role in the land," Marika said. "They move around a lot and when they leave their borrows it becomes another animal's home."



"Our old people used to have bilbies as food to give them energy and protein to survive in the desert. Bilbies are the last of all desert mammals and that's why it's very important to protect the bilbies."

Kristy said the Ngurrara rangers regularly conduct bilby conservation work on country.

"We help protect the bilbies by doing two hectare plot searches and locating the bilbies' active

habitats, and seeing if it's been damaged by cattle or pests," Kristy said.

"We will then build a fence to stop the cattle from hurting the bilbies."

A public forum will be held in Broome in the near future and will provide information on research and management of bilbies across the Kimberley.

Fast facts:

- The bilby is listed as vulnerable in Western Australia and nationally.
- The majority of remaining bilby populations occur on Indigenous owned or managed lands, making ranger groups integral to bilby conservation.
- Bilby populations in the Kimberley are vital to the species as they are one of the last wild refugia.
- Ranger groups who attended the workshop included Ngurrara, Gooniyandi, Nyikina Mangala, Karajarri, Yawuru, Bardi Jawi, Bardi Jawi Oorany, Nyul Nyul and Nyangumarta.





Bidyadanga crocodile warning

Karajarri rangers have deployed a crocodile trap at Nyapuru Creek following reports of a saltie in the area.

Karajarri ranger Sheen Kitty said it was highly unusual for a crocodile to be spotted at the creek, which is a popular fishing and camping spot around five kilometres from Bidyadanga community.

"People use this location for fishing, getting outdoors and taking kids to experience the area," Sheen said

"The crocodile has been disturbing people and we have never had a crocodile that has made humbug like this, so we are here to get this fishing place back to normal again.

"We've set up our first croc trap and it is a waiting game now, so hopefully we catch the crocodile."

Sheen said deploying the crocodile trap was a first for the Karajarri team, as well as the nearby

Nyangumarta rangers who also assisted in setting the trap.

"It took two ranger groups to put the croc trap together and it was not an easy job," he said.

"It's all about team work if you want to deal with crocs."

Signage has been erected in the area to inform the public of the crocodile sighting and the Karajarri rangers will continue to monitor the situation closely together with the Department for Parks and Wildlife.

Karajarri rangers are part of the Kimberley Land Council facilitated Kimberley Ranger Network.

The rangers play an integral role in looking after country, delivering land and sea outcomes in the southern Kimberley. They also work across the Karajarri Indigenous Protected Area, which covers almost 25,000 square kilometres of country.



Green Army changes

The Kimberley Land Council will continue to fight for the jobs of 30 Kimberley rangers following the axing of the Green Army program late last year.

Green Army currently funds 30 Indigenous participants working alongside rangers, as well as three ranger development positions in the Kimberley Ranger Network.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said Green Army had provided an important pathway for young people, especially women, into environmental and cultural management work.

"The Green Army program currently employs 30 Indigenous participants," Mr Hunter said. "Half of these are women and the Green Army program has enabled the development of specific women's ranger groups."

KLC Land and Sea Unit Manager Will Durack said the KLC is investigating other funding options to keep these important jobs.

"We are looking at every available option because we know the huge value that these jobs have delivered for all the participants involved," Mr Durack said.

"Our female rangers have clearly shown how important their knowledge is to protecting land and culture and we want these teams to continue to survive and thrive."

The KLC Land and Sea Management Unit will continue to work closely with all staff impacted by the funding cuts.

Questions remain for remote communities

A State Government announcement, which outlined funding for 10 priority remote communities in late 2017, continues to deliver more questions than answers according to Kimberley Land Council Chairman Anthony Watson.

Mr Watson said the KLC welcomed investment in the 10 identified communities, as part of the previous State Government's remote services reform agenda, but said a clearer plan for all communities was needed.

"Last year, I welcomed the State Government's acknowledgement that remote communities require investment for upgrades," Mr Watson said.

"Our communities require upgrades to water and power, and all communities need access to these essential services maintained.

"However what remained unclear at the time was what the announcement meant for those communities that were left off the list.

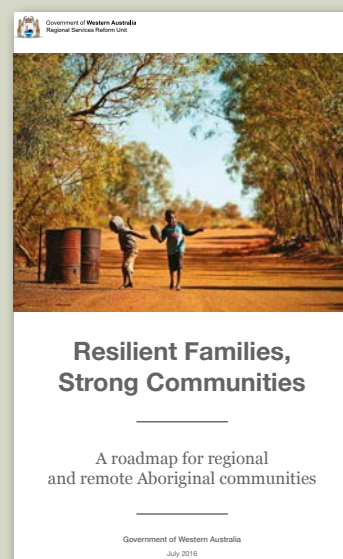
"With a new State Government in power, the future direction of this reform agenda remains uncertain."

Mr Watson said there is important value in Aboriginal people living on country, working on country, and exercising their native title rights.

"This has been highlighted by the success of the Indigenous Ranger Program, which is delivering significant environmental, social and economic benefits," he said.

"We are keen to work with the new State Government to find solutions that will give remote communities a sustainable future."

The 10 communities identified for investment include, Ardyaloon, Bayulu, Beagle Bay, Bidyadanga, Djarindjin, Lombadina, Mowanjum, Warmun, Wakathuni and Yandeyarra.



Fitzroy River research news

The Fitzroy River is valuable to a lot of people. A number of places have been National Heritage listed for a mix of special rocks and landforms, plants and animals and olden days stories from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Some people are getting interested in using more of the land and water for growing grasses for cattle, food for people and for mining. The Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub (we call it the 'Northern Hub') has been set up under the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) to look at the best ways to develop and protect the resources of northern rivers.

Speaking with Aboriginal people about water and helping Traditional Owners make good decisions about managing and developing their land are important parts of this research. Researchers will be speaking to relevant PBCs for approval to carry out their work. The Kimberley Land Council is supporting the PBCs and Traditional Owners in making agreements with the researchers.

There has been work like this before through TRaCK, NERP and CSIRO. Seven new projects will build on this past work. These new projects are:

1. Environmental water needs for the Fitzroy River
2. Indigenous water needs in the Fitzroy catchment
3. Looking at the whole of the catchment and at all uses of the river and land
4. Tackling the passionfruit vine in Geikie Gorge National Park
5. Bilbies are living along the southern side of the river
6. Looking at ways to explain to others how important Indigenous land management is
7. Looking at the best ways to use Indigenous land management (ILM) knowledge

The scientists, who come from universities around Australia, are some of the best in the world and they recognise the importance of local knowledge. Their work will help people who make development decisions to better understand, use and manage the Fitzroy River water and the surrounding land, plants and animals. The projects will be running over the next three years so get involved if you are interested in what happens to your river!

If anyone has any questions you can call Michael Douglas at UWA on 0408 467 000 or Karen Dayman at the KLC on 0429 502 564.



KLC and YAC announce new partnership

Kimberley Land Council and Yanunijarra Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) are pleased to announce a new partnership that will see YAC take on the management of its highly successful Indigenous Ranger Program.

The new contracting arrangement means that rather than the Kimberley Land Council managing and employing the Ngurrara rangers, this will now be done by YAC as it continues on its journey to independence. YAC is the Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) for the Ngurrara native title determinations.

KLC Deputy Chief Executive Officer Tyrone Garstone said the contract arrangement highlights the work KLC has been undertaking to build capacity in PBCs to manage business and take control of their futures.

He said the handover will occur in a staged process to ensure

a smooth transition and the Ngurrara rangers will continue as strong members of the Kimberley Ranger Network.

"The KLC is very pleased to be supporting YAC to transition to full management of the Ngurrara ranger team," Mr Garstone said.

"We have worked with the Ngurrara people for over two decades, from prior to the recognition of native title, to the Ngurrara people's native title claims that were first made in 1996, to their consent determination in 2007, setting up the fantastic Ngurrara rangers and continuing to provide assistance to the YAC PBC.

"Now we are seeing YAC take on the responsibility of the ranger program, which highlights the professionalism and capacity of the corporation to manage its operations and shape its future.

"This is an exciting time for the KLC as we work to build the

capacity of PBCs across the Kimberley."

YAC CEO Peter Murray has an intricate understanding of the complexities of managing a ranger program, having worked as a ranger, ranger coordinator, Indigenous Protected Area coordinator and now the CEO of an Aboriginal corporation.

YAC Chairperson Marmingee Hand said the transition of the ranger operations will fulfil the vision of the old people to take control of their future and look after country.

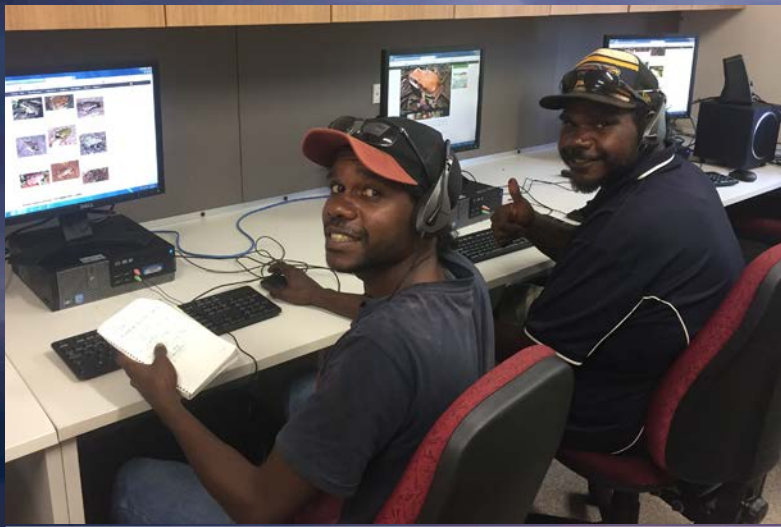
"The rangers will now be working for the PBC, showcasing what we do," Marmingee said. "We are embedding our cultural ways with western ideals and transferring our cultural knowledge.

"We look forward to continuing our strong relationship with the KLC and supporting one another."



Wet season ranger update

Kimberley Ranger Network rangers have been experiencing a big wet season, but it hasn't stopped them from looking after country. Here is an update on just some of the work our rangers have been up to over the past few months.



Cane toad control

The Balanggarra rangers have been working hard over the past few months to get their new and improved base in Wyndham ready for a busy year ahead. The new space has extra room for two additional staff who will be coming on board in April, plus its own meeting room and access to TAFE facilities, allowing for a higher output from the team.

Indigenous all-stars

Rangers from across the north-east Kimberley recently came together for weed management training at Warmun community. The rangers gained knowledge in different weed management strategies, and learnt how to safely use weed chemicals and equipment. They also learnt how to capture data on weed distribution and weeding efforts in the field. Kija, Wunggurr and Balanggarra rangers treated around 100 Neem Trees growing in Warmun and hand-pulled around 1,000 Belly Ache Bush plants at Bow River Crossing on the Great Northern Highway as part of the exercise.





New Balanggarra base

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Mapping training

In Fitzroy Crossing, North Regional TAFE, with the help of the KLC, ran a mapping and navigation training block as part of the conservation and land management studies rangers are completing. The training equipped the rangers with navigation using GPS and topographic mapping skills.

Wet season work

The Wunggurr rangers have experienced one of their longest wet seasons in memory. Ongoing rainfall made getting around quite a challenge but the rangers didn't let that stop them from getting the job done. The team even built a raft to ferry equipment and supplies across some of the water-covered roads.



June's national human rights role



Photo courtesy of Australian Human Rights Commission

Kimberley leader and Bunuba woman June Oscar has been announced as the incoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.

Upon announcing the appointment Commission President, Professor Gillian Triggs, said it was the first time an Indigenous woman had been officially appointed to the role.

"My colleagues and I at the Commission are delighted that, for the first time, an Indigenous woman has been officially appointed to become the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner," Professor Triggs said.

"I would also like to thank the outstanding work of Robynne Quiggin, who has been Deputy Commissioner to the Acting Aboriginal Torres Strait

Islander Social Justice Commissioner since Mick Gooda stepped down in 2016."

Kimberley Land Council Chairman Anthony Watson congratulated June on her appointment to the national human rights position.

"We wish June all the best in this very important position looking after the rights of Indigenous people around the country," Mr Watson said.

"We have many strong and inspirational leaders in the Kimberley and it is fantastic to see one of our own recognised in this way."

June commences her five-year term on April 3, 2017.



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