



Rising sea levels threaten Torres Strait Islands

Rising sea levels, a frightening problem throughout the south Pacific Ocean, is also a major environmental problem in the Torres Strait.

Walter Mackie from the Torres Strait Regional Authority's Portfolio for the Environment and Chairman of the Yam Island Community Council said as global warming melts the Arctic and Antarctic, seas are rising, threatening island communities.

"It is coming to the fore where we practically notice, especially in the outer islands where I come from, from Yam, I can see our problem there is two-fold, it's the erosion and tidal inundation causing concern for us," Walter said.

"So TSRA and any other relevant agency that can assist in trying to minimize problems.

"That's the least we can. I mean we can't jack the islands up, but we have to do something."

As well as global warming the Torres Strait is facing another environment issue, ghost nets and other ...

Continued page 2...

Project Newsletter - February 2008

Welcome to this month's edition of the Talkin' About Land project newsletter.

This Queensland-wide project aims to project build greater awareness in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of issues surrounding land use. It also aims build greater awareness of native title, and the process of negotiating native title claims in Queensland.

On the enclosed CD you'll find copies of three audio segments produced for the project this month, including a great story that takes a closer look at what the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation do to protect natural and cultural heritage.

Also you hear more about the land and sea issues facing the Torres Strait Islands.

As well, we reflect on some native title outcomes for traditional owner groups over the last 12 months.

Please help to promote greater awareness of Indigenous land use issues in Queensland by sharing the information contained on the CD and in this newsletter with your local community.



The Torres Strait Islands, at the tip of QLD's Cape York Peninsula.
Source: www.answers.com

Rising sea levels threaten Torres Strait Islands (Cont...)



*An islet of the Torres Strait
Source: www.janeresture.com*

Visit the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) website for more information
www.tsra.gov.au

... debris washing up on shore.

Ghost nets are also threatening turtle and dugong populations.

Walter Mackie said the Torres Strait Regional Authority is doing the best it can to protect the environment.

“Currently we have under the TSRA a land and sea management unit.

“We’ve got operating delivery of 18 projects. Some of the key regional projects underway include a sustainable land use planning project which aims to support island communities, planning the future sustainable development of the islands.

“Through the national land care program, TSRA staff are also working with communities to propagate native species and revegetate areas of the island that have been degraded.

“It’s a health issue for us. It’s a concern to the community that needs to be addressed to protect our environment.”

Successful Native Title Claims

Over the past twelve months, Indigenous Services has been involved in the successful resolution of three native title claims within Queensland.

The first was a determination of native title rights and interests for the Strathgordon Pastoral Holding, an area of 1180 square kilometres approximately 415 kilometres north west of Cairns on Cape York Peninsula.

The consent determination, made by Justice Greenwood of the Federal Court of Australia on 26 July 2007, recognised the **Strathgordon Mobs**’ right to possess, occupy, use and enjoy the area to the exclusion of all others. The State and the Strathgordon Mob also entered into an Indigenous land use agreement that sets out how their rights and interests will be exercised.

Indigenous Services also played a significant role in the negotiation and resolution of the **Eastern Kuku Yalanji** native title determination.

The consent determination, made by Justice Allsop of the Federal Court on 9 December 2007, recognises native

title rights and interests over approximately 127,000 hectares of land between Port Douglas and Cooktown.

In addition, the negotiation resulted in the parties entering into 15 registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements relating to numerous issues including environmental protection, transfer of freehold land to the native title holders, the dedication of a number of reserves and national parks and a greater role for the Eastern Kuku Yalanji People in the management of national parks in the area.

Finally, on 12 December 2007, Justice Spender of the Federal Court of Australia made a native title determination, with the consent of all parties, in favour of the **Ngadjon Jii**.

It was in relation to an area of 13,287 hectares including parts of the Wooroonooran National Park, the Topaz Road National Park, Malanda Falls Conservation Park, two quarry reserves and an area of unallocated State land.

The State and the Ngadjon Jii also entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement that sets out how the native title rights and interests will be exercised.

The Talkin’ About Land project is online at www.bimaprojects.org.au. You can get audio copies of all project material, and links to more information.

Protecting natural and cultural heritage

The feral pig (*pictured right*) is just one of the animals Indigenous rangers with the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation have to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

As an Indigenous Ranger with Girringun in Cardwell, Michael Morton is in the field fighting feral pigs and wild dogs as well as fighting weeds, saving whales from fishing nets, repairing damaged walking tracks, and protecting rock art.

While there's plenty of work to perform for the ranger unit on the land, Michael actually spends most of his time on the water.

"My role is mainly a liaison role to ensure consultation by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service through the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, the traditional owners," Michael said.

"A lot of it is general national park management stuff and in that we do compliance enforcement. I'm on the marine park so I'm out on the water.

"There's three of us in the unit, there's one on the mainland, we also got temporary staff, Indigenous staff and casual Indigenous staff so they're employed within agency.

"We do feral animals, weed control, park servicing, maintenance, walking tracks and the biggest one is the protection of cultural heritage on behalf of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation.

On the land feral pigs, weeds and wild dogs keep the rangers busy, while on the water, whales and crocodiles are the animals to watch out for. Well we have a pig problem here in this area.

"Sometimes we get wildlife incidences where we have whales getting caught in nets out on the water side of things, so we go out and try and untangle the whales from the nets.

"But the feral animals it's mainly pigs and you get some wild dogs come in, not so much dingoes, but just wild dogs.

"The feral pigs play a big role in destroying national park habitat, mainly though the spreading of weeds throughout the national park areas.

"We also have crocodile management where if we sight a crocodile in a public area, we're obliged to set up a crocodile trap and remove it, try and trap it and try and relocate the croc.

Girringun's Indigenous ranger also play an important role in protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of Girringun's region.



"Girringun's got a GIS system there and they've already recorded most of the cultural heritage sites within this area.

"If there's a burn program happening out on the national park area, they consult with me and I consult with Girringun.

"There's a cultural heritage site there, we go out as a unit and clean around that site and protect it from fire damage.

"It's a rock shelter and it's got artwork on the wall. We backclean around the rock shelter so the fire or the smoke doesn't affect the artwork.

"We also put in the drip lines so there's no water running down on the artwork."

What's on this month's project CD?

Track 1: Protecting natural & cultural heritage
(5 minutes)

*Michael Morton, Indigenous Ranger
Girringun Aboriginal Corporation*

Track 2: Successful native title claims
(2 minutes)

Track 3: Rising sea levels in the Torres Strait
(2 minutes)

*Walter Mackie, Chairman
Torres Strait Regional Authority Portfolio
for the Environment*

**We welcome your feedback on the
Talkin' About Land Project.
Call (07) 3892 0100 or
email karend@989fm.com.au or visit
www.bimaprojects.org.au**