

Chapter 7

Dhimurru wind bringing change

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The wind carries the moisture right up high into the atmosphere, and we get the feeling that maybe it's going to rain, and that makes us feel happy. And so we are sitting there and suddenly we feel a cool breeze. This indicates to us that the rain is on its way. Then the dhimurru wind arrives from the east bringing rain. This is the giver of life to the plants.¹

Dhimurru history

Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru)² is a community-based organisation created in September 1992. It was established by Yolngu (Aboriginal) land owners as a vehicle through which they might retain some control of, and ability to care for, their ancestral country on the Gove Peninsula located on the north-western tip of the Gulf of Carpentaria in north-east Arnhem Land. Yolngu are the traditional owners, custodians and managers of north-east Arnhem Land and have successfully cared for their country for millennia.

When Dhimurru was established Yolngu society and country had been heavily impacted upon for over 20 years by the imposition of large-scale industrial development in the form of bauxite mining, a refinery, seaport and a service town. The mine and refinery were established in the 1960s by a consortium called Nabalco who obtained leases from the Australian Government without the consent of Yolngu, whose ownership of the land was not yet recognised in Australian law. The project now employs some 900 staff and 1500 contractors and is serviced by the regional township of Nhulunbuy. Nhulunbuy is essentially a non-Aboriginal enclave with a population of 4000 people: it is on, and surrounded, by Yolngu country.

While Yolngu country is provided nominal protection under the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976, and access to Aboriginal land requires visitors to hold a permit issued under the 1978 Northern Territory

1 Dhimurru website see, <www.dhimurru.com.au> viewed 17 April 2012.

2 When established in 1992 Dhimurru was initially known as the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation.

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.