

Traditional Owner Comment

Murrandoo Yanner

G'day I'm Murrandoo Yanner. I'm from the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria which is a little geographical region that adjoins onto Arnhem Land and Cape York, down the bottom on the Queensland/Territory border. We're moving away from native title into land and sea management.

One of the things we're doing in land and sea management is working on country through turtle and dugong coordination, which is basically a combination of the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, us mob in the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria, the Cape York Land Council and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. We track dugong around northern Australia and work out where their habitats are being destroyed through dredging or development or where they are being poisoned by picking up too much cadmium in the rivers, etc. That could affect our mobs' health.

We're also eating a lot more of them. If you look at turtle and dugong, 90 per cent of turtle and dugong killed in this country are killed by either Indonesian fishermen or professional white fishermen with barramundi nets, and they're all gone to waste thrown to the bottom of the sea. Ghost nets are also a problem. A lot of the trawlers nets are washing up, killing a lot of the dugong and turtle. The federal government pays our mob to go and remove those things

We only kill 10 per cent of all turtle and dugong killed yearly in this country and yet the federal government wants to manage and regulate strongly against the people who are killing the least. If they're serious about saving turtle and dugong, they'd be addressing it with the fishermen and making them all use them flash nets they've got along the east coast where everyone goes swimming. They don't want to see dead turtle or dugong washing up at the Gold Coast or Cairns. Those nets could be forced upon professional fishermen throughout northern Australia but the fishermen won't adopt it because it's too costly. So the government should be footing the bill and making them use those nice nets that let the turtle and dugong live. If you want to regulate you regulate the people and the industries that are killing 90 per cent of them.

We're also doing a lot on carbon. We're being very proactive on bushfire management. If you burn properly you get healthier country, a lot more animals around therefore more food available for the mob – healthy food. Secondly, for example, in the Lower Gulf last year we had a 21 day bushfire that ran across only three stations – the stations are very large there. And it ran for 21 days and in that period it was estimated that 800 000 tons of carbon was emitted. For the



From top: Road between Burketown and Doomadgee during the wet season; Preston Johnny & Billy Jackson setting a pig trap; Kevin Scholes taking a sample of a ghost net to have analysed; Gangalidda & Garawa Rangers on a coastal patrol east of the Albert River mouth; Billy Jackson on the lookout during a ranger patrol. Source: Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal

same 21 day period, basically, if you turned off all the electricity in Sydney and Melbourne for 21 days that's how much carbon got released in the air. We're going to start cashing in on that, by doing our traditional fire management early in the year before the grass grows big and high. It'll still get to burn properly so the trees germinate and all that, but because the grass is still half green we'll create big patchy country. We might have only emitted in the early burns 200 000, so we'll save 600 000 tons of carbon. We can then sell that on the market to the big companies that need to save on their carbon.

We are also getting rid of pest and weeds on our country, all those things taking over that are noxious and clogging the country up. We're doing a lot of that and it employs a lot of our mob. Basically we looked at what's happening in the Torres Straits for a lot of years and good on them. You see customs, quarantine, a lot of the

central services the federal government needs, to control weeds or pigs with diseases or whatever, or Indonesian boat fishermen sneaking in – often a lot of the locals are employed in that. So in the Lower Gulf a lot of these

things are going on but the federal government has absolutely no services. We're forcing them through our numbers in the Gulf and through our political staunchness that 'no you can't come into our region and set any of those services up. You want a customs or quarantine anywhere in the Lower Gulf you gotta hire our people and resource them properly. We're not going to be your jacky-jackies and run around, we'll do it because it's our country.' What it gives us long term politically is, rather than being dependant on the government, they're dependant on us to stop diseases and do all these other things – sort out the Indonesian boat fishermen – then it's a reversal of roles.

We've got the power. We've always told the Torres Strait mob 'you don't have to go out and do no civil disobedience or do anything, if the government doesn't give you what you want simply turn and look the other way, let in all the diseases, let in all the boat fishermen and watch Australian farmers and cattlemen go down the tube.' So they don't realise how vital a service they do for this country and the

political strength that gives them if they ever want to revolt. They simply turn a blind eye to these things coming in.

We're getting our funding away from the government. As we've learnt through native title, you muck around, you're too political, you're too staunch against miners the government and their land rights branch of FaHCSIA will simply pull your funding, sack your board, put in administrators etc. Native title is being weakened very much by that, by the one group within government that is meant to be assisting us, instead basically putting



From top clockwise: Sea turtle tracks on Mornington Island; Wellesley Islands Rangers capturing a sea turtle to record information about it and fire management program.



chains on the black fellas and cutting them right down. So we're looking more at working with large companies and getting our own funding. Provided that we deliver on the environmental outputs we can say what we want politically, such as the dugong stuff, 'We're not regulating dugongs, regardless of what government policy'. But we can't say that because only the government is funding our rangers. So we need to seek funding elsewhere so we can be staunch and make up our own minds and say what we want without the government jerking the chain on our neck.

In the past, transient government staff, police, teachers, whatever that have been running all the volunteer marine rescue, rural fire brigades and everything, we're taking them over, just flexing our muscle and getting in and getting trained up. We're

taking all the resources and assets that have already been placed there by them. We're doing that both in the town and out bush with the burning. We are

teaching the kids, the next generation. There are benefits to being out working on country, as you can see.

PBC Profiles

The Native Title Resource Unit has recently developed online profiles for every Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) within Australia. These profiles aim to enhance the online presence of each PBC by offering a platform of indigenous views and experiences of each PBC in addition to the official accounts available on ATNS and NNTT.

The profiles include summary information on each PBC's organisation and structure, based on publicly available information. They are regularly revised and added to in collaboration with PBCs and NTRBs. The current version of the Profiles is available at

http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/major_projects/pbc_profiles.html.

The NTRU welcomes feedback and suggestions on new content that could be included or changes that should be made to existing content to ensure it better reflects Indigenous people's experience of working with PBCs.

We are looking for:

- Pictures relating to relevant PBC members, the country that the PBC administers or native title determinations;
- Stories or statements about the role of the PBC, its current activities, or its members' relationship to country; and
- Links to PBC websites.

Please let us know if you have other ideas about what information would be useful to post online.



Hilary Jones, PBC Project Officer

If you would like to make a suggestion or seek any more information, please contact the project officer, Hilary Jones at hilary.jones@aiatsis.gov.au or (02) 6246 1140. Hilary works part time, and is in the office on Tuesdays.

Upcoming NTRU Projects

Expression of Interest Notice:

Native Title and the Management of Protected Conservation Areas including National Parks

Management arrangements for protected conservation areas including national parks, which have been arrived at through native title negotiations, vary widely.

The NTRU is calling for expressions of interest from those who wish to contribute papers to a State by State and Territory by Territory Report on native title and the management arrangements of protected areas including national parks.