

AIATSIS at the East Arnhem RANGER FORUM

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IN THE SECOND WEEK OF JUNE, THE first ever East Arnhem Ranger Forum was held at Gulkula, the home of the Garma Festival. AIATSIS Native Title, Land and Water Director Rod Kennett and Research Officer Luke Smyth were lucky enough to be invited to attend.

The Dhimurru Rangers of the Nhulunbuy region hosted the forum to enable Aboriginal ranger groups in East Arnhem Land to share their work, discuss common problems and co-ordinate their activities. Ten different ranger programs from across East Arnhem Land were represented at the Forum, as well as a number of Northern Territory and Commonwealth Government agencies.

A wide range of topics were discussed, including controlled burning, invasive plant and animal management, endangered species monitoring, alternative funding sources, potential uses for aerial drones, ways to share knowledge and skills between ranger groups, and protecting and maintaining sacred sites.

Rod Kennett held a session at the forum about the proposed AIATSIS Caring for Country Archive. The Archive project will work with Indigenous land and sea management organisations to collect and secure documents and media relevant to the history of the Caring for Country movement. The end product will be an online database and reference tool, which will map the Caring for Country movement across time and space.

The proposal was well received by the forum, and AIATSIS will work with ranger groups and other partners to develop appropriate permissions and access frameworks for material which will be part of the Archive.

The forum was also an opportunity for Rod and Luke to spend some time working with the Crocodile Islands Rangers. The Crocodile Islands Rangers and AIATSIS Native Title, Land and Water are working together on a project to identify Indigenous fishing values, with field work to begin in September. On the sidelines of the forum they spent some time planning the upcoming trip, and discussing current fishing-related issues on the Crocodile Islands. This included the signing of a formal research agreement between AIATSIS and the Crocodile Islands Rangers for the project.



Above: Dhimurru Rangers and the Yirralka Rangers signing an MOU.
Background: escarpment near Bulman, NT.
Credit: Luke Smyth, AIATSIS.