



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Marine park draft plan to give voice to traditional owners on the Buccaneer Archipelago a first in Australia

Traditional Owners of the Buccaneer Archipelago have spoken out on the proposed Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park draft plan, saying the process has given them a voice and an opportunity to protect culturally significant areas.

The draft plan, which was released in December and is open for public comment until May, boasts Australia's first ever co-designed marine park with Traditional Owners and special purpose cultural zones.

Mayala woman, Janella Isaac, says the proposed marine park is a huge achievement, especially for Elders who have been working towards recognition for so long.

"I feel good inside. It has been a long journey. It's something Mayala people have aimed for, have inspired for, for a very long time," she says.

"We look back at our old people when they first started this journey as part of the recognition process through native title. They always wanted to find the best way to help manage Mayala Country, have a ranger program in place to look after Country and protect Country for our future.

That was an inspiration and a dream that our old people had. Through a jointly managed marine park that dream has become real for our people and that is a big achievement. I feel uplifted, I feel fulfilled."

The Buccaneer Archipelago has WA's highest concentration of traditional owner communities living adjacent to an existing or proposed marine park and are dependent on those waters for their food supply and traditional practices.

Bardi Jawi woman, Rosanna Angus, says the decision to protect sea country with a marine park is more important than ever with the sealing of Cape Leveque Road.

According to figures from the Dampier Peninsular Visitor Forecasts paper, visitor numbers are set to more than double in the next decade – increasing by between 32,000 to 60,000 above current numbers.

Ms Angus said the marine park would benefit Bardi Jawi people and ensure protection for significant cultural sites.

“The cultural zones are very important for sustaining traditional practices like fishing, hunting and gathering and enable us to protect our saltwater culture,” she said.

“These cultural zones protect our backyards, areas where we have our stories and our significant sites. A lot of these places aren’t mapped out, so it’s safety for our culture, but it’s also safety for visitors too.”

KLC Bardi Jawi IPA Coordinator, Daniel Oades, says having a draft plan jointly created with Traditional Owners is a significant milestone.

Mr Oades says there is a lot of misunderstanding around cultural zones but said the culturally significant sites had existed for a long time and were important to protect for Traditional Owners.

“I think some stakeholders are misinterpreting what the different zones will mean. I think there will be a time where everyone gets more of an understanding as conversations continue.”

“We’re in the process of establishing the interim joint management board that will look at all the submissions that come in from the public and the stakeholders, and get a feel about what everyone one else is thinking about the draft plan.

“It does feel like you’re piloting something that’s great and new, with the new legislation... and to be on the forefront of sea country management – it’s exciting for all involved, because this is what people have been talking about, and what people have wanted in these types of reserves for a long time, and we’ve been able to break new ground starting it in Australia.”

KLC Chief Executive, Brian Wilkinson, says sea country principles are no different to land management principles.

“There needs be a balance of cultural heritage and environmental management that protects and preserves areas to enable everyone to enjoy the sea in a responsible way.”

“We have seen the introduction of Marine Parks, like the one in Shark Bay, that has been able to restore the fishery, whilst and still allowing the area to be enjoyed for recreational use. The development of the Buccaneer Marine Park in partnership with Aboriginal traditional custodians will realise the same benefits and protect sea country for everybody for many generations to come”

The public comment period for the Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park Draft Plan is open until May 21.

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