



**OLKOLA**  
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

**News**



September 2022

# Moving towards our Vision

We, the Olkola people, all stand together as one, upholding our traditions and culture with great respect for our old ways.

We lead and govern our traditional lands, business and future.

Others will listen to what we are saying and support our Ways.

Our ancestors have entrusted us to carry on the traditions and to care for the country and all the animals, plants and food within.

We do not take more than the land can give, so it will provide for generations to come.

Our elders teach the young people language and knowledge of how to protect our sacred sites, artefacts, water places and stories of our land, so they continue to live on for generations to come.

We support each other to live life to the fullest, living a healthy lifestyle, ensure we have happy homes, good healthcare and a safe community free of violence and crime.

OLKOLA ABORIGINAL  
LAND MANAGERS



# A word from our CEO...



**We've had a very productive year and we've seen many of our milestones be achieved CEO Deb Symonds writes...**

We are extremely happy with the progress of the Cultural Knowledge Centre and it was amazing to see the great big mud wall in the middle of Cape York standing tall (see pages 5-7).

It feels like it represents us, the Olkola clan, as we find our feet, stand tall and make our way forwards.

We've had an amazing year.

The rangers have earned high praise for a great early season burn and the work they're put in.

We also have experienced wildfires, but they have been extremely diligent about staying on top of those, to save our carbon credits for next year.

With an early wet season expected, we will be looking at re-starting watering monitoring over the six sites we have been monitoring for the past three years.

With only 10 weeks left to the end of the year, we are

also looking at finishing our air strips and making sure our rangers are provided for over the wet season (see page 10 for more).

Issues around mining are still a concern.

We are talking to the government around what is the government's agenda when it comes to conservation versus mining, and especially on the Olkola nation.

These are ongoing talks and we will update everyone things resolve (see page 11 for more).

On a brighter note, we have been very lucky to find another endangered species on Olkola Nation, the red goshawk.

We're really excited.

The bird has been found on Olkola country and we can take steps to ensure that bird is included in our work plan.

The Indigenous Protected

Area dedication has been moved to early next year, and that will be with the opening of the Nakikura Walking Track.

Invitations will go out in January for those.

Our website is undergoing new developments and we have been busy establishing a Members Portal, where the Corporations Members can access photographs and videos on country, the Olkola Language book and much more.

We can also share with our members the recordings found by our rangers.

And finally, our AGM will be held in Cooktown in December this year, we will have facilities for people to attend 'virtually' as we know this is a difficult time of year to travel.

Please watch this space, and our social media pages for more and enjoy this, our second newsletter.

**Olkola Aboriginal Corporation's Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the 20/21 Financial Year was held at the Cooktown PCYC Events Centre on Thursday 31 March 2022.**



It was broadcast via Zoom for those who could not attend in person.

"It was a good run-through for using live video teleconferencing, the Corporation will look at using this technology more often for future meetings," CEO Deb Symonds said.

Earlier in the year, we ordered more 'Olkola-5' shirts for our Members and brought these in for everyone to take home.

In lieu of a calendar this year, we decided to design and order re-usable Olkola Tote Bags and the long wait was worth it.

**To find out more about our 21/22 Financial Year AGM see page 12.**

# A word from our Chair...

**This year has been busy, so our IPA dedication has been delayed until next year, Olkola Chair Mike Ross writes...**

It will be nice and cool, and we'll have the opening for the Nukakurra Walking Track at the same time.

That work is all done, so now we are focussed on the first section of the Cultural Centre, and that's looking good.

We'll probably open that first section when it's finished and start on the second section.

The people there and the rangers have been working full-on with the fire burning.

We had an early burn this year and we've been building up the roads, so the work never stops which is good, it keeps people employed.

Now, when the wet season comes people can start to relax, although it doesn't look like it's going to come in yet.

There's a few thunderstorms around which means there'll be fires, but hopefully they'll be put out with the rain coming behind it.

Rangers are keeping an eye on them.



Then the office staff have also been pretty flat out keeping things happening.

At this time of year things all come in a rush, we have get things happening and finish things, so we can all enjoy a break after what's been a heavy year.

The corporation, the board of directors and the workers of Olkola Corporation are busy and doing the best they can.

To those who have lost loved ones this year, we'd like to offer our deepest sympathies and condolences, and I'd like to wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – we'll meet again in the year to come.





# Welcome to Helen ...



**Olkola Aboriginal Corporation's recently appointed Indigenous Protected Area Coordinator Helen Penrose was born in Kombumerri Country (Gold Coast) and grew up there, as well as in Kalkadoon Country (Mt Isa) and Wulgurukaba Country (Townsville).**

Her favourite jobs to date have both been connected to James Cook University.

"The first was conducting dugong aerial surveys of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait, and the second was on-sea-country recording of Indigenous Knowledge to inform the conservation and management of threatened species," she said.

"I have also worked as an independent consultant to convert a cattle station in Byron Bay back to its former glory as a freshwater wetland.

"I bring my broad background and experience in environmental management to Olkola Aboriginal Corporation, and my interest in, and passion for, Biocultural Knowledge.

"I also bring my willingness to be guided by the Olkola Knowledge Holders to look after Olkola Country alongside the Ranger team."

# IPA dedication set for early next year

**Early next year a dedication ceremony will be held at Nukakurra to signify the establishment of an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) for the Olkola people.**

The event, likely to be held in March, 2023, will include the official opening of the Nukakurra Walking Track.

"The IPA dedication will be a tribute to all those who have worked tirelessly," CEO Deb Symonds said. "The IPA means that we have entered into a voluntary agreement with the Australian Government for the purposes of biodiversity and cultural resource conservation and sustainable use of Traditional lands."

IPA Coordinator Helen Penrose said the IPA covered 728,600 hectares and included Olkola and Alwal CYPAL National Parks, three Nature Reserves, Olkola (Kurrumbila), two Resource Reserves, as well as Aboriginal Freehold Land.

The area will be managed by the Olkola Rangers to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) standards.

"The Olkola IPA Plan of Management will guide our management of Country for the benefit of Olkola people, both present and future," Helen said.

"The Corporation has already met with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to discuss and reflect on current arrangements for joint management.

"The Olkola Rangers have completed a number of aerial incendiaries burns with QPWS staff and boundary burning.

"QPWS completed an aerial pest shoot of horses and pigs which included a cattle survey, with more to come."

**There are still two part time IPA Ranger positions available, please contact the Cairns Office landline on (07) 4051 2184 or email [admin@olkola.com.au](mailto:admin@olkola.com.au) for more information, and see p 12 for more job vacancy information!**

# Connection to country at heart of cultural centre build

**An 'aesthetic connection to Country' will lie at the heart of the Olkola Cultural Knowledge Centre, Centre for Appropriate Technology (CfAT) Senior Consultant Andre Grant says.**

With just under a million dollars of funding from the Department of Tourism, Innovation & Sport, alongside 'significant investment' from Olkola Aboriginal Corporation itself plus hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of pro-bono work from designers and engineers - Andre expects great outcomes when it comes to growing indigenous tourism.

"The project is particularly exciting because architecture and engineering students and graduates from Melbourne and Monash University engaged with different Olkola people on Country eventually coming up with a final design," he said.

"The design was then picked up and fully engineered -for free - by engineering company Arup, who have been a fantastic partner on many projects with us.

"We've got a very, very accomplished indigenous builder on this project, Zeph Walker.

"He's actually Kuku Yalanji and has got a whole crew of Indigenous staff there working under him."

*Continued...*

*One of the rammed earth wall that is a feature of the new Olkola Cultural Knowledge Centre.*



From p 5...

“There have been a few challenges along the way, including some very hard ground, but we’ve finished pouring the foundations and Arup have signed off on those footings, so we are now above ground, which is an important milestone,” Andre said.

“The next stage is to build a rammed earth wall, because Traditional owners wanted that feeling that the building was coming out of the very earth – out of Country.

“So, we’ve identified a gravel pit where we’re going to extract some dirt and compact that into some of the walls in the building.”

Andre says that the build will incorporate as many local materials as possible.

“It’s definitely a beautiful way of doing things and it’s a great story to tell – it’s aesthetically and emotionally about that connection to Country.

“There’s never been any rammed earth construction on the Cape, so this is kind of a first.

“Zeph’s taken it on without any qualms, and we have a rammed earth expert contracted to support this construction.

“The rangers have been involved in a whole range of different aspects of that.

“They really did a fantastic job grading and levelling the pad, installing the site office that’s in there, helping out with installing the water and some of the energy systems there.

“They’ve also been supporting the rammed earth expert, getting out in Country and finding stuff, doing a lot of the transport and clearing of the land, and that’s not even to mention having to move 25 tonnes of timber from Mossman recently.

“They’re doing an incredible job.”

## Sandy Creek & Nukak





# Nukakurra moving forward



**Volunteers from Monash and Melbourne Universities spent four days with Olkola Elders and staff to digitally document the landscape along the Nukakurra Walking Trail earlier this year.**

Research Assistant Volunteers Melissa Iraheta and Mitchell Ransome travelled from Melbourne to Killarney to spend time with staff as well as Mike Ross and Jack Lowdown, who spoke about the history of the Corporation and its journey through joint management of the trail.

“The aim of this project is to digitally document the landscape of the story places on the trail and produce a 3D scan,” CEO Deb Symonds said.

“Eventually we will be able to wear virtual reality glasses wherever you are and explore the walking trail, or click an internet link and be guided by Mike and Jack around the trail.

“Melissa and Mitchell showed us how the technologies worked, how the data is saved and transformed and some other projects where this type of high-tech camera equipment has been used.”

She said they had framed their work around the Blue Tongue Lizard Story clashing with the Freshwater Crocodile and the Nukakurra Lagoon.

“The importance of scanning these two-story places is to continue the passing down of Olkola cultural knowledge stories,” she said.

“Participating in this project was very exciting because of the outcomes – the end results aligns with our Olkola Healthy Country Plan for bringing country to people that cannot access it.

“We are thinking further of how and where this 3D scanning technology could be implemented across Olkola lands, and whether we could use the data to measure the health or deterioration of land over time.”



# Rangers surveys working for Country



**A highlight of the ongoing management work our Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers is the slow eradication of feral pigs on country to protect our waterways through the wet and dry seasons.**

Most of our Olkola Rangers are qualified to handle the dangerous 'hog-gone' bait in remote areas – the bait contains sodium nitrite, which is an approved food preservative in low doses, but which kills pigs quickly and humanely by oxygen depletion to the brain and tissues (metabolic anaemia).

There are regular inspections of bait locations with the pig carcasses usually found within 200m of the bait site.

Head Ranger Richard Ross said the results could be better – and faster.

He said their other ongoing work kept them busy, particularly their fire work, which was critical to the Corporation's Carbon Abatement Project.

"The Olkola fire ranger

team successfully burnt 36 per cent of Olkola country including the National Park, in 2021," he said.

"We're still working out the numbers for this year, as we see through with the wildfire response season.

"As a bonus, only about nine per cent of country was burnt out due to wildfires this year because of a big effort on our part in terms of controlled cool burning last year."

He said weed management and control was also a big part of their work.

"Fire grass is an important Alwal food source, particularly during the dry season, so we've been surveying the grasses," he said.

"Those surveys, which go right into Piggy Piggy Spring, have shown we have

weeds which we need to incorporate into our weed management plan."

He said Sicklepod, Grader Grass, Gamba Grass and Rubbervine were the four main species they were keen to encourage.

"The rangers cleared right into the Spring, to bring them back to as natural as can be," he said.

"The area has been fenced off to stop feral animals getting in there, and changes in water quality are





# Bringing Alwal home

Story thanks to ABC Far North & Kristy Sexton-McGrath

Reprinted with permission.

Full story at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-06/golden-shouldered-parrot-indigenous-extinct-cape-york/101399068>

*Pics thanks to Geoffrey Jones*

There are believed to be fewer than 1,500 golden-shouldered parrots left in a small parcel of Cape York in far north Queensland — the only place they are found in the world.

Traditional owner and chairman of the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation Michael Ross said the sanctuary would provide a safe haven for the “funny little birds” that nested deep in termite mounds.

“They are funny little things, very timid, you could walk through their area, and you won’t see one,” Mr Ross said.

“They are very fussy and shy, but they are beautiful, and they mean a lot to my people.”

Mr Ross said the sanctuary would involve fencing off an area adjoining the Olkola Cultural Knowledge Centre, which is due for completion later this year.



“We will fence the area to keep out the feral pigs and cats and the cattle,” Mr Ross said. “We need to bring the birds home.”

The race to save the bird — a little bigger than a budgerigar — began about seven years ago after traditional owners teamed up with conservation group Bush Heritage Australia.

Several Indigenous ranger groups, as well as natural resource management bodies and property owners, are also working to save the species from extinction.

Mr Ross said counts of nests were regularly undertaken, and remote cameras had been set up in the area to monitor the birds, their chicks and the creatures that hunt them,

including feral cats.

Researchers had also been examining whether boosting dingo numbers could be key in helping to protect the species from cats and goannas.

Vision from monitoring cameras had shown that chicks living in a termite mound regularly patrolled by a dingo had successfully fledged.

“The dingo has been able to keep the predators away and protect those blind spots,” Mr Ross said.

He said mining was also another threat to the spectacular bird, with several companies holding exploration permits in the region.

also being monitored.

“The spring is now running clear and no longer has weeds smothering the area or pigs and cattle compacting the soil.”



He said overall the rangers continued to observe and collect data on the water ways and creeks on country, and to compare data from previous years.

“There are areas of country that are returning to a healthy state,” he said.

**MEANWHILE** Adaptive NRM consultant Steve Murphy and Ranger

Clayton George have written a report on feral cat activity on more than 300km of tracks across Olkola country in July this year.

“The number of cats detected in 2022 was similar to 2018 and 2019,” they said.

“In 2020 spotlighting was done in September when it was warmer and it resulted in almost three times the number of cat detections.

“A key recommendation is to repeat cat shooting patrols in September/October next time.”







# Denial is the cost of resistance

**“The reality is it’s very hard to resist attempts by extractive companies to extract resources,” Cameron Law Principal Solicitor Thomas Cameron says.**

“The only way they can properly resist it at this stage is by locking Country up perpetually in either national park or World Heritage Area type of tenure arrangements,” he said.

“Outside of that, there’s very limited scope for people to actually prevent mining from occurring on Country.”

He said Olkola Aboriginal Corporation continued to defend Olkola’s interests in and around the old Alice Queen mine which were mainly concerned with protecting the Alwal habitat.

“We can’t necessarily prevent a mining company from going ahead with a mine, but we can seek to impose conditions that will protect Country, although even that can be very difficult simply because of the nature of mining – digging holes, changing water courses and exposing other minerals, for example,” he said.

“So what Olkola is doing, at

the moment with Pacgold, is simply seeking, as best it can under the Native Title Protection Conditions (NTPC), to protect the Alwal and the rights of the Olkola people to protect their cultural heritage.”

He said their dispute with Pacgold would be heard in the Land Court this month, but it may be some time before the outcome was known.

“Olkola is trying to explore the boundaries of the NTPCs,” he said.

“The question is how much power does the Aboriginal party really have to impose conditions on Pacgold’s activities that would provide much greater protection to the Alwal and to Olkola country in general than Pacgold, at this stage, are intending to do.

“Pacgold doesn’t think Olkola has the power to do that.”

He said there were three or four companies who had lodged applications for

exploration permits in the north, and Pacgold have lodged applications for further exploration permits in the south east.

**MEANWHILE** Mr Cameron said Cape York United #1 claim was progressing, as sought by Olkola, with individual groups achieving their own determinations.

“There have been a number of determinations already in the north-eastern part of the claim area, with Kuuku Ya’u, Uutaalnganu, Lama Lama, Northern Kaanju and Southern Kaantju all having native title recognised within the One Claim within the last two years,” he said.

“In terms of Olkola country, Anthony Redmond gathered additional anthropological evidence earlier this year, and it is hoped that the State will accept connection over Olkola country in the next month or two.

“If that happens, Olkola will then be scheduled for a determination that is likely to be in 2024.”



# Airstrips ready for take off (and landing)



**Fencing surrounding the Glen Garland airstrip has been completed and minor works will be undertaken to ensure the airstrip is ready for compliance analysis and report by a representative from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) in the coming months.**

The Killarney airstrip is completed and certified for use, but the Corporation aims to have the airstrip at Glen Garland boxes ticked by the end of this calendar year.

“The southern end of the Killarney airstrip was extended by about 120m and we also took back the tree line on the northern end of the airstrip, as required in the report to get it certified for night landing,” CEO Deb Symonds said.

“There is a before and after photo of a road between Boundary Dam and Jungle Creek Road.

“No one has been along these tracks for at least 10 years, so when they did put a grader along them they

had a lot smaller blade so the tracks are only wide enough to get a vehicle along which means it can be maintained easier.

“Before we cleared the road from Killarney homestead to Boundary Dam it used to take 45 minutes – now the road has been cleared you can drive the same track in 12 minutes.

“It was the first time in four years I’ve seen magpie geese nesting on Killarney, which is probably because of the wet seasons, and hopefully, if they’re not disturbed, the numbers will build over the next few years.

“We also spotted a beautiful blue tongue lizard, the biggest I’ve seen anywhere,

he measured 55cm.”

She said opening the roads saved on maintenance and acted as a fire break.

“Because of the extensive works we have been doing, the tour bus will now be able to access these with ease,” she said.

“We have graded out the creek crossings, so they are easy to cross with a vehicle with a trailer even in two-wheel drive.”

She said there had also been extensive work on erosion control.

“In one section alone there was four erosion control drains put in place, and at least 10 tonne of earth to fill in the erosion that was there,” she said.



Olkola Aboriginal Corporation is holding our  
**Annual General Meeting at 10am**  
on **Thursday 8th December 2022**  
at the **Events Centre,**  
**PCYC Cooktown.**



As this meeting is for Olkola Members only to attend, Members who are not able to be present in person can join virtually via the Zoom video link QR Code and/or URL below. If you experience difficulties scanning the code, the Zoom meeting URL is: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9390938573>

### **A kind reminder for respect and courtesy at our meetings**

We kindly remind all Olkola Members attending the forthcoming Annual General Meeting, virtually or in person, to participate with positive intent, to be respectful to one another and to remember that all Corporation business and documents are to remain confidential and stay within the Olkola People.

On the day of the meeting, any nature and/or form of bullying/harassment will not be tolerated. If these circumstances were to arise, necessary means will be undertaken as our Corporation staff have obligations to provide a safe workplace and environment.



## **Contact us!**



**Follow Olkola's social media to keep up to date on our latest news.**

**Instagram:** [olkolaaboriginalcorporation](https://www.instagram.com/olkolaaboriginalcorporation)

**Facebook:** Olkola Aboriginal Corporation Cape York

**Website (in progress):** <http://www.olkola.com.au/>

**Corporate, General & Employment Inquiries**

**Shania Ross:** [admin@olkola.com.au](mailto:admin@olkola.com.au)

**Office Address:** 184 Mulgrave Road, Westcourt Cairns, Q 4870

**Postal Address:** PO Box 523, Westcourt Cairns, Q 4870

**Phone:** 07 4051 2184

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## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN 2023 FOR OLKOLA PEOPLE**

**The Corporation is seeking Expressions of Interest from Olkola People to fill casual roles, which could lead into permanent part-time positions, in 2023.**

We are looking for applicants who want to develop their career within the Corporation.

The positions are:

- **Land Managers and Rangers** (women and youth encouraged to apply)
- **Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Rangers** (women and youth encouraged to apply)
- **Multiple tourism positions** (Tour guides, vehicle drivers, cooks and catering assistants)

The positions may involve work in Cairns, Glen Garland, Killarney or camping on Olkola lands and, subject to conditions, may lead to full-time.

Willingness to undertake on-the-job training, a driver's licence, or willingness to obtain a driver's licence, is essential for all positions.

Applicants will be required to make their own way to work.

We encourage Olkola People to apply.

Contact us (details to the left) to obtain an Application Pack.

Interested applicants will need to send their current Resume, an application letter and address a set of Selection Criteria for the position you are want to apply for .