



Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation News

Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
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November 2025



Pics by Christine Howes



From WAC General Manager Louisa Taylor Ahmat

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of Wuthathi who have entrusted me to provide strategic leadership of operational activities, in partnership with the board of directors and Wuthathi Tribal Elders Council, to ensure effective governance, strategic alignment and organisational success, Louisa writes...



As a proud Dowareb from the Meriam Nation, I know firsthand the struggles and challenges that many of our PBCs and RNTBCs face.

Limited funding compared to the high demands placed on the organisation creates a significant imbalance, but these are the constraints that we work within.

Having worked in this sector for well over ten years, I have a solid understanding of corporate governance principles, including compliance, risk management, and strategic oversight.

I am very excited and honoured to be working for WAC as I truly see them as being trailblazers for Cape York and beyond.

Through their leadership, they are driving positive change for our people and by embracing

new ideas – WAC is really changing the game as we know it.

Whilst I am still finding my feet, the team, board of directors and elders have been a pleasure to work with.

WAC is doing so many great things that, due to the fast-paced nature of our work, there is often limited opportunity to pause and reflect on the significant contributions and achievements of the team.

I am excited to be part of this journey and contribute to the organisation's ongoing success as we continue to grow our footprint.

Since starting, my priority has been to streamline operations to improve efficiency and work towards sustainable outcomes.

I am also keen to recruit to fill various staffing gaps and invest in staff through team building and capacity development.

I am really looking forward to visiting Shelbourne Bay and being on Wuthathi country.

I look forward to meeting with our members and traditional owners at the AGM.

Please note, our office will be closed over Christmas (see *back page*) and no access passes will be issued.

Families are strongly encouraged to plan well in advance to source their access pass to avoid disappointment.

Louisa

New WAC General Manager Louisa Taylor Ahmat joins the corporation with more than ten years' experience working in Native Title..

"My mother is a Torres Strait Islander from Mer Island and I identify myself as a Dowareb and Irish," she said.

Louisa said she enjoyed working for non-Government organisations and some of her career highlights in the Native Title sector included working as the PBC Manager for Mura Badulgal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC when they became the DOGIT trustee, Operations Manager for Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC when they entered into a joint management partnership with QPWS over Apudthama National Park and Yamarrinh Wachangan Island, and the Practice Manager for the Native Title Office in the TSRA, which was the Native Title Representative Body before GBK.

"With NGOs I find myself working in areas that are much more rewarding and I feel I am making a difference and effecting change," she said.

"I feel I am contributing to a cause with real social impact rather than focusing on bureaucracy where I feel there is less flexibility to be innovative. I have worked for the state and commonwealth but did not feel these positions aligned with my values.

"Job satisfaction is paramount to me as it provides a strong sense of purpose and fulfilment."

She said she aimed to bring her positive outlook and proactive attitude to WAC.

"I bring a positive outlook that encourages teamwork, creativity, strong work ethics and a genuine commitment to helping the corporation and the Traditional Owners work towards their aspirations and long-term goals," she said.

"I value teamwork, innovation and creating an environment where people can do their best work, which is something I am very passionate about, and that is building nations."



From WAC Chair Keron Murray

Families, community members and leaders gathered for the signing of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) Authorisation for Captain Billy Landing South on Friday 15 November 2024 in Cairns – a historic milestone, WAC chair Keron Murray writes...

This significant moment represented a profound step forward in securing the land and sea rights of the Wuthathi people and preserving their cultural heritage.

Almost a year later, on Tuesday, 14 October, 2025, in our office, executive director Karrell Ross and Rachel Small, along with other members from the State of Queensland, delivered the deeds to Captain Billy Landing South, the Indigenous Management Agreement (IMA) and the licences for the foreshore and the gravel pits.

The handover, the deeds was a smaller ceremony to enact the new Indigenous Management Agreement, with a larger celebration planned for an on-country celebration which will be held later next year.

It wasn't possible to hold the ceremony over the past year due to a massive wet season.

We can't help Mother Nature, but it has given us more time in preparation – it means more tracks, more camping areas and better facilities, which will make it a great event for Wuthathi families, especially those old people who wish to make the journey.

But that is not all we have to celebrate.

Captain Billy Landing South

The Wuthathi directors are happy to confirm the Land Title Deeds were received on 14 October 2025.

A modern day agreed northern boundary between Wuthathi and Gudang Yadhaykenu is marked by a survey peg approximately 750 metres north of the old landing boat ramp, and then follows along the Captain Billy Landing access track.

The camping area on the

foreshore and the first part of the track going back to the main road are part of the new Wuthathi (Captain Billy Landing) National Park (CYPAL).

The second part of the track, closer to the main road, is part of the Apudthama National Park (CYPAL).

There is a road management protocol between WAC, QPWS and the other TO groups (see *maps below*) so access cannot be denied to Wuthathi, QPWS or the other TO groups.

There is also a 'Public Access Licence' along the coast that allows tourists and others to walk up and down part of the area, and a licence at the 'lookout' that allows tourists to drive to turn their car around or get out to look over Wuthathi Country (see *maps below*).

Continues...



2024 WAC Annual General Meeting



...from previous page...

Bramwell Richardson State Land Dealing

Wuthathi Representatives continue to negotiate the head waters of the Olive River as part of the State Land Dealing with support from Balkanu as part of the Bramwell Richardson Property (pastoral lease).

One Claim (CYU#1) and Sea Claim Native Title

The Native Title One Claim (CYU#1) over the Olive River Catchment and the Sea Claim are being done with the support of the Cape York Land Council.

Coming together...

We are happy with conservation outcomes of what we are doing, in line with the Nature Conservation Act, but we are conservationists from time immemorial.

From our elders before time, through the 1970s, 1980s and to now, we can operate and manage our own land exclusively without the assistance of National Parks.

Pilot Vessel

The Wuthathi Pilot vessel is still going well and should be online within the next five to six months.

It will be based in Cairns before it is sent up to base, wrapped and ready for operations (see page 6).

As we look to the future, we are poised to expand our sea country activities and strengthen our stewardship of these lands and waters.

2025 AGM

WAC has requested an extension from ORIC to hold our AGM in early 2026.

The decision was made due to other operational matters that took priority, including staffing changes and key organisational commitments.

WAC is committed to strong governance, and we believe it is important that our members receive a comprehensive overview of WAC operations for the reporting year.

By providing additional time to prepare, we can ensure improved outcomes and more efficient use of resources given that we have members and directors who reside outside of Cairns.

Once a date has been confirmed, it will be communicated to our members to allow sufficient time to plan and attend the 2025 AGM.

The purpose of the AGM is to keep our members up to date on WAC business and maximising this opportunity to reconnect with members and report on WAC's progress.

We have a lot of information to share with all our Wuthathi people, as you will see in this newsletter.

Together, we will continue to honour our heritage and create opportunities that ensure the prosperity and cultural preservation of Wuthathi Ngaachi and Karakara for generations to come.

Keron

WAC Chair
chairman@wuthathi.com



November
2024 @ The
Colonial Club in
Cairns



Sea Country aspirations: managing our Karakara



Wuthathi representatives and government partners involved in Wuthathi's Townsville workshop to develop a new model for cooperative management of Karakara. Pic thanks to Louise.

A proposal to enable Wuthathi to co-design and co-manage their Karakara holistically across State and Commonwealth jurisdictions was taken to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) on behalf of its Tribal Elders Council, Board and members last year.

"Through our accredited TUMRA, GBRMPA and the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) partnered with us to develop a two-year Wuthathi Sea Country Partnerships Pilot Project by way of exploring a new approach towards genuine co-management," WAC Sea Operations Manager Andrew Simmonds said.

"The proposal was based on delivering shared outcomes to achieve both Wuthathi's vision and to meet government management needs and obligations."

He said Wuthathi hosted 'Theory of Change' and 'Measurement, Evaluation and Learning' workshops in Townsville to inform development of a partnership model with a co-design approach to guide the way governments and Traditional

Owners work together.

"This model will provide the foundation for Wuthathi to build its capacity to work together with, though independently to, government partners to manage country in line with Kincha lore and with respect for Elders past and present," he said.

"The work to develop the partnership framework supports Wuthathi to prepare for getting on Karakara, once it takes delivery early in 2026 of a new 9.1 metre commercial work boat being built in Brisbane.

"The vessel will allow Wuthathi Custodians, Elders and staff to undertake shared Wuthathi and cooperative management activities.

"The delivery which will take place by March 2026 will be an exciting milestone for Wuthathi."



Captions: Above: Pic: Return of Ancestral Remains to Australia 2025 Source: Supplied / Aimee McArdle/NHMLondon/NHM London; Above Right: Acknowledgement at the Queensland Museum. Right and below: the return to Country. Pics supplied.

Bringing them home to Ngaachi

Wuthathi ancestors have been returned to Australia from the United Kingdom with a ceremony at the Natural History Museum in London.

Wuthathi was proudly represented by Uncle Brian Macumboy, who conducted a traditional Wuthathi song and shared words with the ancestors and Smithy Wilson, supported by chair Keron Murray, all of whom stood with honour and pride to welcome home the ancestors.

Tribal Elders Council chair Johnson Chippendale said they were returned to Wuthathi ngaachi in September this year. "Our ancestors were taken about nearly 120 years ago," he said.

"It was really emotional because after all these years it is sad, but also it's happy to bring them back home.

"We had six junior rangers working with us and they were very excited that working beside senior Elders, they couldn't stop talking, I could tell you.

"But they learnt a lot, they learnt about their own culture and one of the young lads said it was one of the best weeks of his life, sitting around campfire and talking about the country itself and the history."

He said they hadn't just focussed on the past.

"After we did the repatriations, we continued with our



planning," he said.

"We have started looking at developing a seasonal calendar.

"It's in the making now and will continue until we finalise the plan, that we will present to the board also at our AGM early next year.

"It's very exciting."

You can see more on this story on the SBS webpage via the QR code to the right.







Captain Billy deeds in-hand

Title deeds of the Captain Billy Landing South were handed over to Wuthathi People by the State of Queensland in a small in-office ceremony celebrated by board and staff last month.

"We chose a small ceremony so that the money for that celebration could be used toward a celebration on-country next year," Elders Council chair Johnson Chippendale said.

"The deeds to the land are ownership, not just recognition.

"Although known as Captain Billy Landing today, being the modern-day boundary between Wuthathi and Yadhaykenu, agreed by Elders back in 1995, our old people called this region Mutjati.

"The Wuthathi Captain Billy Agreement area overlaps the native title determination area, with Wuthathi People now holding the Aboriginal freehold title as well as the native title over that part of country.

"Having both the native title and the Aboriginal freehold title is a statement to the world that

Wuthathi People are still here and still strong."

He said most of Wuthathi country on the mainland had Native Title recognition, as well as Aboriginal freehold title held by Wuthathi.

"All of the coastline from Captain Billy Landing right down to the Olive River mouth now has Native Title determinations and Aboriginal freehold title held by Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation," he said.

"Joint management agreements are in place between Wuthathi People and Queensland Parks for joint management of national park areas in Wuthathi Country, both on the mainland and over our islands, with the Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation going from strength to strength."

The handover was a follow on from last year's ILUA signing held in Cairns.



I'd like to thank and congratulate all Wuthathi families here and all those involved in getting what we celebrate today, Tribal Elders Council chair Johnson Chippendale told the room at last month's Native Title determination in Cairns.



"Today, we celebrate more milestones on this journey started by our pioneers, together as one people," he said.

"I'd like to thank Federal Court Judge the Hon Debra Sue Mortimer for her strong

approach in listening to mob."

He said they had negotiated boundaries with their neighbours against the odds. "We know the system isn't a perfect system," he said.

"Reforms are needed to the

Native Title Act."

He also talked about the conservation focus of Wuthathi, which began with the fight of their pioneers.

"Wuthathi People's fight for land and sea rights continues on," he said.



Wuthathi celebrates Determination!



2024



Building the next generation of Wuthathi leaders is a top priority for Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation. Thanks to our program partners, we have launched a two-year initiative where youth had an incredible opportunity to learn from our Elders. They engaged in activities such as spear-making, cultural discussions, and walking on country—experiences that left them deeply inspired and connected. The program will move into its second phase, where the youth will undergo accredited and non-accredited training and participate in board meetings soon – watch this space for details!

2025



Our junior custodians on the right (career) path

Taking on a traineeship for Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation is the best thing 17-year-old Kallum Murray-Creed says he has ever done.



Senior Custodian Cameron Wilson, trainee Kallum Murray-Creed and Custodian Coordinator Paul Sexton at the Wuthathi Native Title determination in Cairns last month.

"I love it, yeah, it's the best," he said.

"It's not even a job because it's something you love doing."

The trainee custodians have been working – three weeks on and one week off – since August under the supervision of Senior Custodian Cameron Wilson and Custodian Coordinator Paul Sexton, coordinated by Youth Engagement Officer Gernika Warren.

Gernika said the six had moved into traineeships from the junior custodian program.

"We've got six of them that

have moved into traineeships, and now they're doing their skilling Queensland for their Certificate I in Conservation and Ecosystem Management," she said. "They're very good, very engaged and very motivated."

"It includes 26 weeks' worth of paid work, and that's experience on Country."

"They have to be 16-year-olds to start doing the training and development, it's a tailor-made wrap-around support for their career pathways."

She said they could still accept 15-year-olds for cultural on-Country engagement with elders.

"We have a 15-year-old girl based in the office now," she said. "And we'll be taking a new lot of Expressions of Interest in the new year."

Paul said he was managing their

day-to-day experiences with Cameron.

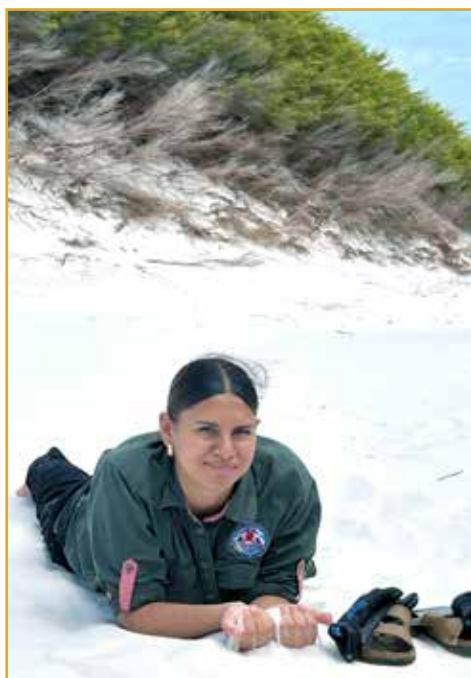
"It's been good having them on board, they're with us until February," he said.

"At my end, it's more on-the-job training, and for Cameron, it's more of a mentoring role," he said.

Kallum said every day was different.

"We could do beach clean-up, track maintenance or fire training," he said.

"It's really fun, it's really good."



Nathaniel, Kallum, Bryson, Kenny & Dalton



Eyes on Country!

The Eyes On Country project, funded by the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), was an opportunity for the Wulungun Kantharru Interim Committee to gain insight to some of the unique wildlife on our Wuthathi Ngaachi and help them to realise the Wuthathi Ngaachi vision.



It was also an opportunity for everyone involved to see how modern technology can assist in monitoring activities in various remote locations.

The project scope covers areas as determined by the Tribal Elders' Council and Custodians.

Female members of the Wulungun Kantharru Interim Committee, female elders from the Elders' Council and female custodians were chosen to work on the project, which involved setting up 23 camera 'traps' across three separate locations - Captain Billy, Beach Road and Middle Camp.

WWF Australia's Eye on Country Coordinator Emma

Spencer played a key role in the coordination and placement of the cameras.

Project Outcomes

More than 50,000 images were collected across the project, and more than 2300 of those contained animals.

Wuthathi Custodians Kathy Wymarra and Purincja Chippendale assisted in camera collections in Middle Camp, where at least 14 species were captured by the cameras.

Brush turkeys were the most common in the Captain Billy location and dingoes were most frequently detected in the Beach Road location, where they were

often detected in groups of two and included both adults and juveniles.

Other native species included cassowary, orange-footed scrubfowl, and one rufous fantail.

The cameras also captured several species of rodents and macropods (kangaroo/wallaby), which were unable to be identified at the species level.

The cameras also detected several invasive species including feral pigs and cats, cattle and cane toads.

Feral pigs sometimes appeared in groups of nine or more, which included boars, sows and young.

IPA management best of both worlds

Wuthathi's Custodial Rangers play a dual role in implementing conservation practices and passing down cultural knowledge.

The Custodians are learning both Traditional ecological knowledge and modern conservation techniques.

"WAC's management of our Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) reflects a holistic approach to conservation that respects environment and culture, blending tradition and science," WAC Sea Operations Manager Andrew Simmonds said. "Our model is sustainable, protects heritage and supports biodiversity."

He said they were working from two plans – one for external stakeholders and one exclusively for Wuthathi.



"Our formal IPA plan is a public document and includes the extensive detail required for dedication and management," he said.

"It helps us to attract caring for country resources and includes what we need for our monitoring and evaluation, reporting and planning requirements.

"The Community IPA, or

Healthy Country Plan, is our own resource for sharing knowledge about Ngaachi and Karakara between generations. It's an internal document which is formed from a kincha lore and culture perspective.

"Both plans were informed by the Wuthathi Integrated Culture and Conservation Framework developed by the Wuthathi Land Trust in 2003."



Where to next ...

The survey has provided 'baseline' data to measure the effectiveness of future control programs that may be carried out to manage invasive species like feral pigs and feral cats, or to track impacts following future

wildfires or other natural disaster events.

The data collected in the September field trip could also be used to feed into the seasonal calendar work and other important activities that work toward better understanding

Wuthathi Ngaachi.

The results will help inform the management of Wuthathi Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and camera trap surveys may be used again to keep track of native and invasive species on Wuthathi Ngaachi.

Seagrass under a Wuthathi spotlight

Seagrass monitoring has been ongoing by Wuthathi Custodians who have been working in partnership with James Cook University since June 2022.

Part of the deal was training the Custodians in seagrass

species identification, monitoring and mapping methods (satellite, drone, transects & quadrats).

The Wuthathi Sea Grass Monitoring project was funded by a partnership between the Australian Government's Reef

Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, with support from James Cook University's Sea Grass Watch and TropWater.

The data they collect each year will be stored in the Wuthathi Country Culture and Information Database.



Wetlands and Fresh Water Places were the targets of the year's water monitoring and wetland assessment field trips.

Further monitoring of the perched lakes and Harmer Creek flowing through Wulungun Ngaachi has been complete throughout 2025. This work was completed by Wuthathi Custodians and Elders with Cape York Water

Partnerships and James Cook University, and funded by the Commonwealth Reef Trust administered by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

"It is expected this baseline monitoring will help inform a long-term monitoring

framework for Wuthathi freshwater places which contribute to the water quality of karakara and the health of Wuthathi timbarandan (reefs)," WAC Sea Operations Manager Andrew Simmonds said.



For more information about any of the stories in this newsletter please contact our Wuthathi Office on 4249 3360.

Employment If you're looking for work, we would love to hear from you. Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC has roles to play in all areas of our land management, from admin to custodianship, if you have a skill you think we can use, please contact our office to see what's available.

Christmas & New Year Office Hours

Wednesday 17 December: Base closure

Friday 19 December: Office closed: last work day for all staff.

Monday 5 January 2026: Office and operations re-open.

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Pics with thanks to staff, Christine Howes & Kerry Trapnell.

Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation News was edited by Christine Howes ©2025