

Mandingalbay Yidinji

Cairns, Queensland

Dedicated an Indigenous Protected Area in November 2011



“We had a native title determination and Indigenous Land Use Agreements, but it wasn’t until we started developing the Indigenous Protected Area project that we could see a way of ‘putting country back together’ – to manage country in a tenure-blind way with our partners.”

Dale Mundraby, Mandingalbay Yidinji Traditional Owner

Straddling the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas in north Queensland, Mandingalbay Yidinji country lies just east of Cairns across Trinity Inlet and includes a great diversity of environments – marine areas, mangroves, freshwater wetlands, rainforest clad mountains, coastal plains, beaches, reefs and islands.

During the past 50 years, much of Mandingalbay Yidinji country was divided into government protected areas, including Grey Peaks National Park, East Trinity Environmental Reserve, Malbon Thompson Forest Reserve, Giangurra Reserve, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Commonwealth and State) and Trinity Inlet Fish Habitat Area.

Following recognition of native title over some of Mandingalbay Yidinji country in

2006, traditional owners began working towards ‘putting country back together’ by establishing an Indigenous Protected Area over the native title determined area and other land and sea areas with the agreement of relevant management agencies.

On 26 November 2011 Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area was dedicated as a Category V protected area (Protected Landscape/Seascape) under the guidelines of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. This is the first Indigenous Protected Area to be established over existing government protected areas. It provides the framework for collaboration between traditional owners and government agencies with responsibilities for managing these areas.

For thousands of years, the diverse environments of the Indigenous Protected Area have been used and managed to sustain countless generations of Mandingalbay Yidinji people - a relationship that continues today. Covering a total of almost 10,000 hectares, about 1,600 hectares of which are saltwater wetland and marine areas, Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area provides a spectacular scenic background to Cairns, just minutes away by boat from the CBD.



The East Trinity Environmental Reserve is a very significant component of the Indigenous Protected Area. It is a vast saltwater wetland that was seriously degraded by agricultural development in the 1970s which resulted in acidification of the environment, loss of fish, mangroves and other biodiversity. Thanks to collaboration between scientists, government management agencies and traditional owners, the natural and cultural values of the area are slowly recovering and will one day provide a world class wetland reserve on the doorstep of Cairns.

The Malbon Thompson Range is a towering spine of rugged rainforest that is home to more than 295 plant species, including vulnerable ferns, and provides valuable habitat to threatened frogs like the sharp-snouted dayfrog, the Australian lacelid and the rare peeping whistletfrog.

Trinity Inlet includes nationally significant wetlands and has outstanding biodiversity with its melaleuca open woodland, range of mangrove communities, seagrass beds, salt marshes and tidal mudflats. The wetlands support large populations of birds, fish and prawns while the inlet provides habitat for migratory wading birds, including species of national significance. The mangrove forests, freshwater wetlands and mudflats, function as nurseries for juvenile fish and prawns and provide important habitat for saltwater crocodiles. Of 82 birds recorded on Mandingalbay Yidinji country, most can be found on the Indigenous Protected Area, including the rare cassowary.

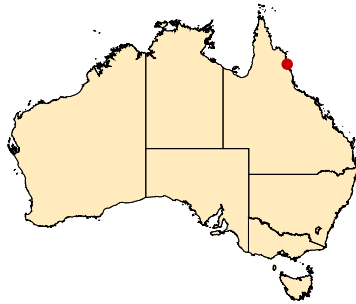


Photo Credits: All photographs used are courtesy of the Djunbunji Land and Sea Program. Looking across Trinity Inlet is courtesy of The Cairns Post. Front – Djunbunji rangers construct a walking track.

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In 2010 the traditional owners established the Djunbunji Land and Sea Program to actively engage in the management of country on behalf of Mandingalbay Yidinji people. Djunbunji has a land and sea management base at Grey Peaks National Park and provides employment and training for Rangers who work throughout the Indigenous Protected Area in collaboration with staff from the partner agencies.

Djunbunji Rangers have built their own steel traps to control the feral pig population on the Indigenous Protected Area and are also actively engaged in weed management on the East Trinity Environmental Reserve. Djunbunji has also recently established a plant nursery to contribute to revegetation in damaged areas of the Indigenous Protected Area.

Traditional owners are keen to establish cultural tourism activities that can provide jobs and share Mandingalbay Yidinji country and culture with the world. Several short walking tracks have already been established and planning is underway to provide visitor access to other selected parts of the Indigenous Protected Area.

Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area is part of Australia's National Reserve System - a nationwide network of reserves especially set up to protect examples of Australia's unique landscapes, plants and animals for current and future generations.



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