

Dambimangari News

November 2018



Vinka's specialist dream for the Kimberley

Derby's first ever medical graduate, Vinka Barunga, is driven by a passion to create a better future for Kimberley children.

The proud Worrora woman, and member of one of the Kimberley's most prominent Aboriginal families, remains on track to return to her country in the future as a specialist with the skills and training to tackle one of the region's most damaging health issues.

In Perth last month for the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Conference, she reflected on the influences and values which drove her to follow her dream of making a real difference to Kimberley children and their families.

Vinka graduated from the University of Western Australia in 2016 and last year completed her intern year at Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital.

Now 29 she is working at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne hoping to become a specialist in paediatric surgery – a commitment likely to take at least five years of specialised training.

Getting this far has taken a huge focus on study and skills development.

"Growing up in Mowanjum and Derby, I felt well supported by my family and community," she said.

"A lot of families helped me to stay at school and University in Perth.

"The Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation would help out with commitments like air fares to attend funerals and community events." *(continued on page 7)*



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Successful partnership set to resume



On the tour of Koolan Island, from left, DAC Chairperson Rowena Mouda, Kenneth Gibson CEO Ken O'Neill and Kirsty Burgu from DAC. Tim Wride, General Manager Koolan and Maintenance Trainer Chris Taylor from Mount Gibson Iron.

One of the DAC's most important economic and cultural partnerships is being re-established this year for the resumption of iron ore mining at Koolan Island.

The operator, Mount Gibson Iron (MGI), was forced to stop production in 2014 when a collapsed sea wall flooded the main pit and put the future of the iron ore mine in doubt.

The flood was a major set-back for the DAC which had worked with MGI to establish a successful program of employment, training, business development and respect for the island's Dambimangari heritage.

Since then, the company has invested \$100 million in rebuilding the sea wall and has started dewatering the pit to resume production before the end of this year. First sales of Koolan Island iron ore are scheduled for early next year.

DAC representatives visited the site on September 27 for a tour of the new operations.

DAC Chairperson Rowena Mouda said MGI had proved to be a good partner in the past.

"We're looking forward to a positive relationship in the future," she said after the tour of the island.

"It has been important to us that MGI has shown a sincere respect for our traditions and values – and we hope to foster that with cross-cultural awareness programs in the future.

"It has been equally important that the company has been open and transparent in all of its dealings with the DAC."

She said the company was recruiting Dambimangari employees and other Aboriginal people in the Kimberley to work on the revitalised project.

In some cases, recruits would be given training to support their careers in the mining industry.

Koolan Island was one of the first iron ore mines in Australia. It was established in the 1940s to supply the country's fledgling steel industry and produced some of the world's best quality iron ore for more than 50 years.

When production resumes next year, the mine site will continue to produce unique high quality ore at an average grade of 65.5 per cent iron.

The company has increased its ore reserves in Koolan's main pit to 21 million tonnes underpinning an expected mine life of more than five years.



AWC's Stella Shipway and Melissa Bruton, AWC volunteer Issie Connell and Dambi Rangers Dominika Ozies, Azarnia Malay and Cherylyn Ozies. Photograph courtesy Australian Wildlife Conservancy.

Working on country has become a family affair for four sisters who have signed up as Dambimangari's first women rangers.

Cherylyn Ozies, Dominika Ozies, Shorrisha Ozies and Azarnia Malay have completed an extensive training program and are now working on wildlife management and community projects in Dambimangari Country and the Kimberley region.

All four have been on a series of training camps and information sessions to prepare for work on DAC projects.

Cherylyn says the camps have been a fascinating experience.

She says that, as an introduction to the role of Dambimangari Rangers, the new recruits have been learning about bush tucker and bush medicines, four-wheel driving, the use of chain saws, navigation and flora and fauna surveys.

Ongoing work will involve regular expeditions with Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) scientists to identify rare and endangered flora and fauna – as well as feral animals such as cats and dingoes.

Dominika, who was previously working as a playgroup facilitator at Mowanjum was encouraged to apply for the ranger's position by former DAC president Francis Woolagoodja.

Since then, she has had the chance to visit Traditional Country at Yalloon and listen to Francis' uncle and famous Aboriginal artist Donny

Woolagoodja talk about Dambimangari culture and heritage.

"Seeing the rock paintings and listening to Donny was an amazing experience and taught me a lot about who we are and where we came from," she said.

Ranger Co-ordinator Dale Furley said the four women complemented the Dambimangari ranger group.

"We now have a team of 10," he said.

"I've found that the guys have a new sense of commitment since the ladies arrived.

"Their enthusiasm has been infectious and I think they're going to be a real asset."

Last month, three members of the group got down to business working with AWC in the Yampi Sound training area. Three Dambimangari Rangers, two AWC staff and one volunteer spent five days mapping the locations of endangered species and introduced predators.

Under the guidance of experienced AWC team members, the Rangers took a lead role in measuring, sampling and data recording. Wildlife ecologist Melissa Bruton said the teams worked well together.

"The Rangers and AWC volunteer did a fantastic job, she said.

"The group then recombined the following day to set up the final site at Mt Mandeville Lagoon, and run the next training step: bandicoot handling (Phase 1).

"Here the Rangers learned to safely and comfortably handle Bandicoots – or kicking balls of muscle."

Strategic Program back on Track

Dambimangari Board and management have resumed work on the DAC strategic review circulated to members earlier this year.

The work is designed to update some of the programs which were implemented after Dambimangari's Native Title determination in 2011. The review will also consider the introduction of new programs and management processes in line with the increasing responsibilities and opportunities for the DAC.

In May this year, the group ran a series of workshops to discuss

- A review of the Healthy Country Plan
- A Visitor Management Plan for marine parks
- Implementation of Dambimangari's visitor pass
- A proposed Marine Park at Buccaneer Archipelago and
- Development of a revised business and management structure

More recently, DAC has been working with Mount Gibson Iron to implement the agreement for mining at Koolan Island.

The mining operation, which will play a critical role in DAC's medium term economic future, is outlined in this newsletter (See Successful partnership set to resume see page 2).



Brianna Barron-Liddell, Chair person Rowena Mouda, Deputy Chairman Warren Barunga, Marine Parks Management Plan Architect Jeremy Flynn, Elaine Riley, Nadena Winton and Stephanie Cox at the strategic workshop in Perth.

The May workshops in Perth, South Hedland, Broome, One Arm Point and Derby attracted more than 150 people.

The DAC office was closed for two months to allow the workshops and reviews to go ahead. The discussions were focused on governance and leadership, establishment of a secure asset base – and the members' determination to improve access and connection to country.

Some of the work was deferred mid-year after a number of changes to the management staff – including the appointment of new CEO Ken O'Neill. On this basis a plan to hold more workshops before the end of 2018 has been deferred until key positions are filled within the organisation. One of our current priorities is mapping gaps at DAC and managing these in a strategic and cost-effective manner in the first half of next year.

More than 300 jobs

The Koolan Iron Ore project will generate more than 300 jobs in the Kimberley region.

Many of them have been earmarked for Aboriginal recruits – particularly Dambimangari applicants keen to work on traditional country.

The company has engaged two recruitment agencies to find a suitable workforce for the project – expected to operate for more than five years. The agencies are looking for potential trainees as well as experienced and qualified employees for the project.

During the past two months the agencies have been advertising in the media and on-line with a particular emphasis on Dambi's web site. A recruitment

spokesperson said this month the response had been encouraging, but she said there were still more opportunities.

These included -

- Trainee Dump Truck Operators
- Trainee Logistics
- Trainee Administration
- General Hand – Processing Department
- General Hand – Maintenance Department
- Apprenticeships

All positions are open. Check the Dambi Web Site.

Resumes can be emailed to:
recruitment2@mtgibsoniron.com.au

Rangers and scientists finding new life in the Kimberley

Wildlife surveys by Australian Wildlife Conservatory scientists and Dambimangari Rangers have identified rare fauna species in the Yampi Training area.

AWC, working with Dambimangari Rangers, has been contracted by Australian Defence Force to deliver science-based land management at Yampi.

The program is aiming to improve the quality of the habitat and assess the flora and fauna.

Wildlife ecologist Melissa Bruton says the teams are also working to manage the impact of feral cats on the threatened species in the region.

"We work on the ground with the rangers to identify the location of the native species.

The most recent survey found 34 bandicoots and 12 golden backed tree rats – a significant improvement on previous studies," she said.

Despite the arrival of cats and other introduced species, like cattle, in the Kimberley region, the area remains a haven for native fauna.



The rare visitor to the Australian Wildlife Conservatory Scientists and Dambi Rangers Camp. Photograph Courtesy AWC.

The team had another first this month , with the Western Chestnut Mouse confirmed at Yampi during the trapping session. Another significant find was the identification of a Gouldian Finch. This is only the 3rd record of Gouldian Finches – a target threatened species for monitoring at Yampi.

Another rare species was greeted with more caution when it turned up at the team's campsite. The group caught a brown snake and established that it was a Coastal Taipan – after reviewing a series of photographs.

"This is the first confirmed record of this species at Yampi for over 10 years - probably because no-one else was crazy enough to get that close to big 'brown' snakes!" Melissa said in the survey report.

Vinka's Kimberley dream from page 1

In reality, however, the real burden of education fell on Vinka's shoulders. She secured most of the funding she needed with scholarships.

It's been a tough road to become Derby's first doctor and – potentially – one of the first Aboriginal specialists to work in her traditional communities.

She lost her Mother at 18 and her father at 25.

"Growing up in the Kimberley has given me a strong sense of what's happening in our community – and what's needed in the future," she said.

"I enjoy working with kids and I can also see a lot of benefits since a majority of our people are under 25."

One of the most important drivers in her commitment to a future medical career was a family passion for

study and learning. Her Grandfather, famous Aboriginal community leader Albert Barunga (deceased), her father Nelson Barunga and mother Phillipa (Pepe) Cummins, were all committed to the critical importance of education.

Vinka has adopted the same intense commitment to her studies.

"Aboriginal Education in a white man's world is critical for us to stay relevant," she said.

"If we're going to stand up in Australia's board rooms and influence Australian Governments we have to have European education.

"But more than that, we need the education about our own traditions and heritage to remain culturally strong.

"We shouldn't have to sacrifice one or the other if positive change is going to come".

Setting up on Dambi Country

A network of safari-style tents is being established in coastal regions to facilitate an extensive program of works on Dambimangari country. Nine four-person tents have been purchased by the DAC with some support funding from the Federal Government. The tents will provide Dambimangari Rangers with shelter and accommodation in remote and culturally significant areas.

All project building materials have now been pre-fabricated and delivered. Four of the tents have been assembled (two at Coppermine Creek and two at Silvergull Creek). The remaining structures will be in place by the end of June next year.



Unloading materials for accommodation on Country.

The addition of suitable accommodation will help Dambimangari Rangers to maintain a presence on country and significantly increase the group's capacity to undertake land and sea management activities.

Clearance for Nickel exploration

DAC has given clearance for an initial program of exploration in the eastern sector of Dambimangari Country. The decision followed a heritage survey of the work program area by Dambimangari Traditional Owners in June. A subsequent report on the exploration plans by North West Nickel showed the planned program of ground geophysical surveys and reverse circulation drilling would not affect any Aboriginal sites.

The DAC is seeking to maximise Aboriginal involvement in the exploration work. Under the terms of agreements between the Corporation and mineral exploration companies working on other sites, Traditional Owners have been employed in field work, environmental management, cross cultural training and other activities.



Survey team members Janet, Gertrude and Crystal Oobagooma.

Acquaculture Study approved

The Aarli Mayi Acquaculture second stage Bankable Feasibility Study (BFS) has been given the go ahead.

Minister Scullion approved funding in 2017 and the Aarli Mayi board approved Stage 2 of the BFS at a Board meeting in October this year.

The BFS will determine the potential for a 5000-tonne per annum fin-fish farming operation generating up to \$50 million a year. The project will be a joint venture between three Aboriginal groups – the Mayala, Dambimangari and Bardi and Jawi.

It will be managed by Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project Pty Ltd.

The study was approved at a board meeting of Traditional Owners at Ardyaloon after the grant of Native Title for the Mayala people this month.

When the BFS is completed the board will be able to start consideration of a FID.

The Joint Venture Agreement, to be completed by PricewaterhouseCooper, is the first of its kind to be concluded by Traditional Owner Groups engaged in a joint venture.

If the project goes ahead, it will generate significant income and work opportunities for Aboriginal communities known as the Kimberley Saltwater People.