

The Dambimangari Story



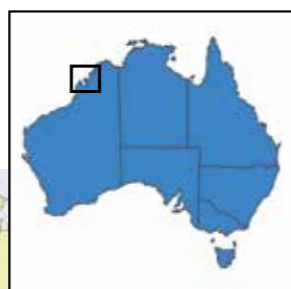
Photo courtesy Ian Obern



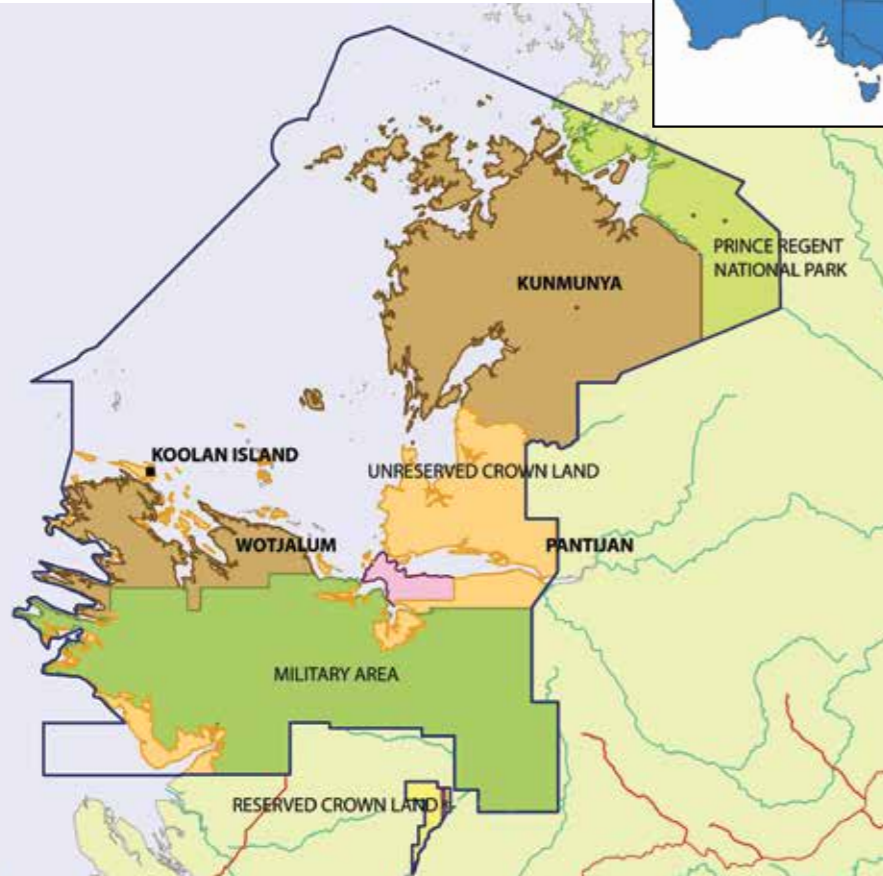
Native Title to a rich coastal region

A Native Title claim was lodged by the Dambimangari people in 1998 and was determined by consent in 2011. The decision recognised the Dambimangari people's connection to coastal lands and hinterland between the Robinson and Prince Regent Rivers. The determination includes large areas of exclusive and non-exclusive native title over Dambimangari land and sea country.

The Dambimangari Native Title Determination covers 16,040 square kilometres of land and 11,896 square kilometres of sea dotted with more than 720 islands – or more than 20% of all Western Australia's islands. The map below shows the current classification of traditional Dambimangari country - including the Aboriginal Reserves of Kunmunya and Wotjalum.



- Dambimangari Native Title Claim
- Land Tenure
- Aboriginal Reserve
- Military Area
- Nature Conservation Reserve
- Other Crown Land
- Private Land
- Reserved Crown Land
- Vacant Crown Land
- Water Reserve



Rangers share a passion for environment

A team of more than 12 rangers is working on the conservation program to manage Dambimangari Indigenous Protected Areas (part of the National Reserve System) and the neighbouring lands and waters. The rangers' expertise is based on a combination of traditional knowledge and western science with training provided by a number of government and non-government organisations.

Some of the priority projects managed by Dambimangari Rangers have generated important new findings for science throughout Western Australia. The projects include –

- The discovery of several threatened wildlife species on remote Chambers Island in Kimberley's Buccaneer Archipelago. The discovery is part of a monitoring program expected to play a key role in the survival of some of the region's most important native animals.
- The establishment of a network of research sites to cover some of the world's most significant biological hot spots. One of the major benefits could be the establishment of wildlife havens in the archipelago to project iconic species like the northern quoll from cane toads and introduced predators.
- Aerial survey and monitoring monitoring dugongs, whales, manta rays, turtles and dolphins in the north-west coastal waters. The program is part of a joint initiative by the CSIRO, WA Marine Science Institution and four Kimberley Aboriginal organisations.

- A collaborative program with Bardi and Jawi Rangers to tag and track the migration of dugongs in the Kimberley region.
- Fire prevention and right-time burning - a well established program to improve the environmental management of the land.

The Dambimangari group also has responsibility for sea patrols, wildlife surveys and observations, plant quarantine and habitat clean-up.

The program was established as an independent Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation project in line with Healthy Country Plan to preserve the region's environment and the heritage. The rangers are developing skills in identifying and recording the animals – using motion-activated cameras – to help plan effective management strategies.

The combination of traditional and western expertise has been an important element of Dambimangari rangers' work with neighbouring Wunambal Gaambera Uunguu ranger teams on a marine turtle monitoring and management program of international significance. See www.dambimangari.com.au

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Wandjina images by Dambimangari artist Donny Woolagoodja light up the sails of Sydney Opera House at the Vivid Sydney Festival in June 2016



New life for an ancient land

Dambimangari people in the remote north west of Australia are planning to build a revitalised future, based on traditional culture in one of the world's most magnificent coastal regions

The rugged landscape of Dambimangari country is an awe-inspiring place. The towering coastal cliffs and picturesque islands of the western Kimberley have been home to countless generations of "saltwater people".

The lifestyle of Dambimangari people was severely disrupted by European colonisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Families were relocated to a succession of missions and government settlements. The disruption and dispossession had sometimes tragic consequences.

However, the advent of Native Title and a measure of self determination for the traditional owners of the land in the past decade has opened up new opportunities

Today, the descendants of communities which have cared for the country for thousands of years are planning a return to the values and vitality of their ancestral home.

The elders and the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation are establishing significant programs to invest in the future.

Dambimangari programs will support economic growth, cultural renewal, education, a strong social support network and environmental management.

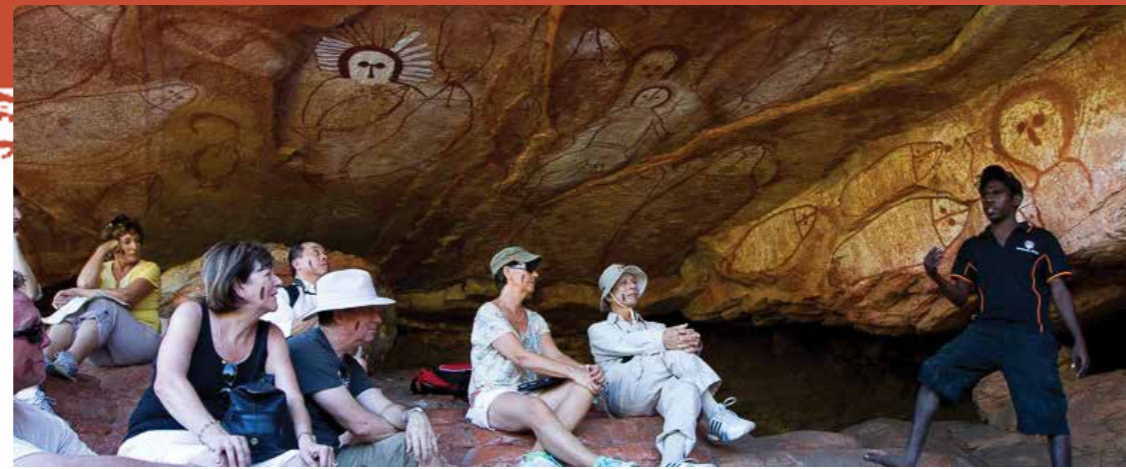


Photo courtesy Pam Jennings



Photo courtesy Marita Mason Morgan



Heritage of the saltwater people

Much of the history of the Dambimangari people is told in the remarkable rock art drawn in caves and sheltered geological formations hundreds or - in some cases - thousands of years ago. The images, also reproduced in exquisite modern Aboriginal art, provide the guidance for a new era of revitalisation.

Some of the finest Dambimangari art reached an audience of billions in 2000 at the opening of the Sydney Olympic Games. As part of the opening ceremony, viewers from around the world were treated to a display of art from the Kimberley region.

The spectacular works by Dambimangari artist Donny Woolagoodja were drawn from the region's heritage and culture .

In June 2016, new artworks returned to Sydney as part of a national celebration, screening on the famous Sydney Opera House sails. Since then, the Facebook live stream of the two-week event has reached over eight million, with more than a quarter of those from overseas. The spectacular Wandjina images appear on the front page of this brochure

In 2011 Dambimangari country, along with other areas of West Kimberley, were included in Australia's National Heritage List. Among other values, the listing recognises the importance of the land and the rich culture of the saltwater people.

If you would like to know more about Dambimangari heritage and culture, visit our web site at www.dambimangari.com.au.



A new era for Dambimangari people

The construction of a new headquarters for Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation in December 2015 marked the start of a new era for the people and the community in the West Kimberley region.

The office, in Guildford Street, Derby provides modern administration facilities for a progressive management team.

Dambimangari business is built on a philosophy of transparency, accountability and sound prudential management of the community's earnings.

Dambimangari affairs are overseen by 10 directors serving as members of a trust advisory board and the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation

The Board includes

- Francis Woolagoodja (chair)
- Warren Barunga, vice chair
- Rowena Mouda
- Edna Mungulu
- Peter Pedersen
- Sandra Mungulu
- Richard Roe
- Bronwyn Liddell
- Leah Umbagai
- Kenneth Gibson



Chairman Francis Woolagoodja

Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation Board is developing a strategy for economic development. The priorities will be businesses or contracts employing Dambimangari people, joint ventures with low risk profiles and sound returns, tourism, scientific or education initiatives which promote a respect for Dambimangari heritage and environmental management initiatives in the parks and reserves under Dambimangari control.

DAC has also established a successful ranger contracting service which operates under agreements with mining companies, research institutions and organisations like the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

An investment in the future

Revitalisation for the Dambimangari people is based on a combination of economic, environmental and community initiatives. The broad-based program involves six key strategies.

- The establishment of Aboriginal enterprises to be involved in the economic development of the Kimberley region
- Effective training and employment opportunities for Dambimangari people
- Involvement in scientific research and conservation of the unique Kimberley environment
- Expansion of the burgeoning tourism industry – including ocean cruise visits
- Promotion of Dambimangari art and culture



- A substantial contribution to the education of young people as part of a comprehensive social support program for the communities.

One of the key objectives of the group's work is the development of a new generation of leaders to preserve their language and culture and build a successful future for their families and community. The initiatives include the preparation of the Dambimangari Future Generations Project working with old people and researchers to prepare language materials, cultural heritage maps, data bases, family trees and the production of a book about Dambimangari history, country and culture.

Dambimangari people believe that a return to traditional lands will help to address some of the damaging consequences of a history of upheaval and dislocation.

Putting the community first

More than 1,000 Aboriginal people make up the Dambimangari community. Saltwater people from the Derby-West Kimberley region, many were resettled by government authorities in the 20th century.. Today, a majority remain in the Kimberley but others are living in the Pilbara, Perth, South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland.

The modern legacy of colonisation includes the tragedy of youth suicide – now a priority for Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation, chaired by Francis Woolagoodja.

As part of the corporation's community support, Dambimangari staff are implementing programs to

improve the quality of life for people of all ages. The Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation uses funds from Native Title agreements and business investments to provide

- Subsidised medical and health services
- Employment and training initiatives
- Collaboration with tertiary education campuses for Dambimangari students
- Household goods for Dambimangari people and
- Funding for hardship relief

A visitors' code of conduct

As Dambimangari Traditional Owners, we welcome visitors to our country, but we ask everyone to follow the straightforward rules and a code of conduct outlined on the Dambimangari website www.dambimangari.com.au. These legally enforceable rules and processes have been designed to ensure that visitors are safe and respectful to our culture and environment.

What to do

- Before visiting Aboriginal Reserves you must obtain a permit issued by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Traditional Owners will only approve site visits identified in the Visitor Location Schedule
- We request that you observe the Visiting Dambimangari Country Code of Conduct



One condition on the Transit Permit is that visitors respect the wishes of Traditional Owners and only visit certain locations on Dambimangari country. The sites where visitors have permission to access if they have obtained a Transit Permit are identified in the Visitor Location Schedule. The schedule, available on the Dambimangari web site identifies 75 popular places to visit in Dambimangari country. Visit www.dambimangari.com.au

Taking care of country

The Dambimangari Healthy Country Plan supports an Indigenous Protected Area covering much of the Dambimangari Native Title land and adjoining conservation reserves. The programs are designed to deliver an environmentally and economically sustainable future for the region and its people. Some of the key elements include:

- Respect for culture and heritage
- Sound environmental management of resource and tourism development
- Protection of reefs, beaches and islands
- Conservation of saltwater fish and other sea life
- Landscape protection
- Fauna and habitat conservation
- Bush fruit and medicine