



For immediate release  
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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Ecotourism management in Indigenous hands - incorporating Caring for Country into Sustainable Tourism Development yields cultural, economic and environmental benefits.**

Presented by Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, the second National **CARING FOR COUNTRY NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE** (9-12 October) and **FESTIVAL** (13-14 October) is being held in **Cardwell, North Queensland**.

During the 4 day Conference, **there will be a series of Expeditions facilitated by Traditional Owners** taking visitors to beautiful locations of environmental and cultural significance around the Cardwell region: the **Mungalla Homestead, Moombay Rainforest, Echo Creek** and, **for the first time in the Great Barrier Reef region, a saltwater country Aboriginal cultural tour will be conducted, with a cruise to the ancient Aboriginal fish traps at The Haven on Hinchinbrook Island, followed by cultural demonstrations on Garden Island.**

Additionally, a Conference workshop, based on an ongoing PhD University study, **'Integrating Caring for Country into Sustainable Tourism'**, will be presented on **Thursday 11 October**, 1.30pm – 2.30pm by James Cook University's **Will Hyams**, in association with **prominent Girringun Aboriginal Elders** who are also Sustainable Tourism Operators.

It will show how tourism can be integrated with Indigenous land and sea management practices, utilising traditional knowledge for sustainable management and enterprise development.

Whilst this project is still ongoing, the Conference workshop will provide an update on how the research, is aiming to **increase the tourism management role of Traditional Owners of Girringun Country**, enabling **greater opportunities for Aboriginal ecotourism development and the strengthening of future consultation with Traditional Owners.**

"We're currently undertaking a round of interviews with Traditional Owners from Girringun Country, and from groups adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef area, **in order to identify 'best practice' management examples on a regional level,**" says Hyams.

"The interviews and field-based consultation with Traditional Owners will then provide **clear direction for enhancing the capacity of Girringun Aboriginal Corporation to manage tourism responsibly as an important component of effective land and sea management.**"

Aboriginal tourism enterprises often incorporate a 'Caring for Country' approach, giving mainstream tourism developers the **opportunity to acknowledge 'sustainable tourism' as a promoter of Indigenous rights that provides an economic base for Aboriginal people to 'care for country'.**

"We anticipate that the study results will assist the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation and others in developing strategic partnerships with tourism operators in the region and ensuring that cultural values are recognised by protected area agencies as well," says Hyams.

As part of the Caring for Country Conference, local Traditional Owners and Indigenous communities have received professional tourism and hospitality training, equipping them with the skills to lead every Conference delegate on an expedition tour.

"Girringun Country generates enormous wealth because as a region it hosts two iconic World Heritage Areas and it's so attractive to tourists," says Girringun Executive Officer Phil Rist.

"We expect that the Project will acknowledge and build upon the Traditional Owners' capacity to manage the environmental, social, cultural and economic effects of tourism occurring in the area." ...../over

The 'Integrating Caring for Country into Sustainable Tourism' workshop is part of the Conference session stream '**Sustainable Economic Development.**' Other areas include Natural Resource Management and Well Being, Traditional Knowledge, Employment, Education and Training, Governance and Partnerships and Heritage.

**The Conference's program** contains Panel Discussions, Case Studies and Group Expeditions to the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage rainforests, **featuring many of Australia's pre-eminent Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers, scientists, anthropologists, land managers and traditional owners.**

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