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MEDIA RELEASE

Dugongs and Turtles – NT Aboriginal group takes the lead in managing marine life sustainably, the Indigenous way.

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**. The Conference not only **points to the future** but is one of the most **relevant and important environmental and cultural events held in Australia this year**.

The Conference workshop '**Dugong and Marine Turtle Project (Bardi Jawi Rangers)**' is being presented by **Daniel Oades** from the **Kimberley Land Council**, on **Wednesday 10 October, 11.30-2.30pm**.

This workshop discusses **the management of sea country resources** focusing on culturally important species such as dugong and turtle, and demonstrating the ability of traditional owners to undertake management of their own land and sea country resources.

This approach is a vital contributor for the preservation of some of Australia's most threatened species. Dugongs (or sea cows) can weigh as much as 400 kg and grow to three metres in length. The only Australian marine mammal to live mainly on plants, their numbers have dramatically declined and they are at high risk of disappearing because of degradation of their environment and other factors.

The **Bardi Jawi Ranger Group** was established in October 2006 with the certification of 6 Bardi Jawi Rangers in the methodology of the Ningaloo Turtle Program Exmouth. They have successfully deployed three **satellite-tagged green turtles from the Lacepede Islands** and **monitored their progress through foraging and migratory routes**. Monitoring of mosquitoes, ants, the traditional turtle and dugong harvest is also done.

Importantly, this Project has had many other successful outcomes – it has **provided coastal and marine management employment opportunities for Aboriginal people** in remote communities; **partnerships** with organisations such as Australian National University, CSIRO, Ningaloo Turtle Program, AIATSIS and the Northern Australia Environment Alliance as well as local schools.

The Project has been able to **maintain, record and continue to facilitate the passing on of traditional ecological knowledge from elders to younger generations** of Bardi Jawi and Mayala People, which is a rare opportunity for youth.

The '**Dugong and Marine Turtle Project (Bardi Jawi Rangers)**' case study is part of the Conference session stream '**National Resource Management**'. Other areas include Sustainable Economic Development, Employment, Education and Training, Traditional Knowledge, 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.** www.caringforcountry.com.au

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