

EASTERN KUKU YALANJI AGREEMENTS

Parties signing the agreements: Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, elders of the eastern Kuku Yalanji people

Location signed: Wujal Wujal

Date signed: 11 April 2007

More than 200,000 hectares of land has been handed back to Cape York's Aboriginal people in what many describe as the most significant land agreements ever made in Queensland.

Fifteen Indigenous land use agreements ('ILUAs') between the eastern Kuku Yalanji people and the government have been reached. The signing of the agreements was celebrated in a ceremony in Wujal Wujal in April.

The areas of land dealt with by the agreements cover approximately 230,000 hectares between Mossman and Cooktown in the Douglas and Cook shires. The land area covered is a significant increase on the 144,000 hectare area in the Kuku Yalanji People's unresolved native title claim, which began in 1994. National Native Title Tribunal member Graham Fletcher commented that, 'this will be the most complex and far reaching native title claim to be resolved in Queensland'.

The ILUA area covers a large part of the eastern Kuku Yalanji people's traditional country. The region is also of international significance, as it incorporates the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and includes the Daintree, Cape Tribulation, Black Mountain and Cedar Bay national parks. The area has one of the highest tourist visitation rates in Australia. According to the Queensland Government, the agreements recognise the eastern Kuku Yalanji People's right to be custodians and managers of their traditional country as well as helping protect the environmental significance of the area.

The agreements also include 64,000 hectares of land to be allocated to Indigenous owners as freehold title. Environment Minister Lindy Nelson-Carr said the agreement was a significant win for the environment, because of the creation of large new areas of national park and Aboriginal land managed for conservation, and that it also provided employment

opportunities for the eastern Kuku Yalanji community. The agreements mean that the eastern Kuku Yalanji people will work co-operatively with Queensland Parks and Wildlife on the day-to-day management of the national parks.

The Australian Conservation Foundation congratulated the eastern Kuku Yalanji people for their perseverance in long and complex negotiations with the Queensland Government, and said that the historic agreements would help to achieve land justice and provide a basis for economic development.

The Premier's announcement of the signing of the agreements is available on the website of the Queensland Department of Cabinet: <www.cabinet.qld.gov.au>.