



## Yalanji land hand back underway

The historic return of traditional lands to the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people is well underway with Community Development Plans (CDPs) and Activity Guidelines (AGs) completed for four pilot areas at Cow Bay, Georges Yard, Mungumby and Trevethan. These areas comprise approximately 16, 500 hectares of land handed back to Traditional Owners.

A WTMA-Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation team has engaged the Traditional Owners to develop the CDPs and AGs under the Eastern Kuku Yalanji Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

The plans provide for where and how Yalanji people return to, and use and manage traditional lands for their socio-cultural and economic benefit to improve well being and contribute to closing the gap.

Clan group members from each of the areas expressed aspirations for their community, through plans that set out the social, cultural and economic considerations. WTMA assessed the environmental aspects to help determine what were described as “good living areas.”

Most of these lands agreed for return under secure tenure are within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and will also require development to be consistent with the local government planning and building requirements.

WTMA commissioned Cook Shire to develop a mechanism to incorporate Eastern Kuku Yalanji Community Development Plans with local government planning schemes and to comply with the new *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*.

It is proposed that to streamline the application process, once the community development plans are endorsed by the Shire, they will be incorporated into its planning scheme through a local area plan, meaning the community will only need one development approval for the whole area.

WTMA and Jabalbina aim to facilitate the formation of a cross-government working forum, led by the Department of Local Government and Planning and including the Cook Shire and Cairns Regional Councils, to consider practical ways of integrating the rights and interests of Indigenous landowners with planning and environmental conservation regulation.

