



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

PG/81

4 June 2008

INDIGENOUS PROTECTION OF CAPE YORK

Almost 2,000 square kilometres of lush tropical habitat on Cape York will be protected from today in Australia's 25th Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) – the Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers IPA.

Environment Minister, Peter Garrett congratulated the community for their tireless work to protect Kaanju Ngaachi's landscapes, plants and animals.

"Fifteen years after the Keating Government first championed the idea of Indigenous Protected Areas, I am delighted to support the declaration of Australia's 25th IPA at Kaanju Ngaachi," Mr Garrett said.

"Kaanju Ngaachi's forests are among the most diverse and unspoiled in the world and its rivers contain a remarkable abundance of freshwater fish species. The IPA protects habitat for species such as the nationally-endangered southern cassowary, the fish eagle and the yellow-faced whip snake."

Mr Garrett said that as well as conserving biodiversity, the Government's support will provide meaningful employment for local Indigenous people, helping them care for their country according to international conservation guidelines.

"In the next year alone the Rudd Labor Government will invest up to \$660,000 through the Working on Country element of our Caring for our Country initiative to help Kaanju Ngaachi's Aboriginal owners care for this extraordinary stretch of land.

"The support we are providing will create at least three Indigenous ranger jobs straight away, with more jobs to come," Mr Garrett said.

"The Caring for our Country funding will help rangers use their knowledge and expertise to control weeds and feral animals, monitor water quality and look after fragile lagoon environments, survey and map cultural sites and train up the younger generation to care for country.

"This important work benefits all Australians and delivers tangible employment benefits for the people here, with spin-offs in health, education and social cohesion."

Like all of Australia's IPAs, Kaanju Ngaachi now becomes part of the National Reserve System, a network of parks and reserves where examples of our biodiversity are protected for future generations.

For more information on Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers IPA visit www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa or www.kaanjungaachi.com.au