

GUNDJEIHMI

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Media Statement - 27 June 2011

UNESCO includes Koongarra into Kakadu's World Heritage listing

Kakadu Traditional Owners today witnessed and welcomed the decision by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee to include Koongarra within the Kakadu World Heritage Area.

Representatives of the Mirarr attended the 35th session of the World Heritage Committee to support moves by the Senior Traditional Owner of the neighbouring Djok clan, Jeffrey Lee, to permanently protect the Koongarra region from the threat of uranium mining.

Mr Lee has consistently opposed uranium mining on his country and has travelled to Paris to personally support and witness the boundary change as a step towards the inclusion of his land into Kakadu.

This 1200 hectare region is entirely within the Djok Traditional estate and includes the Koongarra uranium deposit which has never been mined. High level Australian and international assessment teams have opposed any mining plans and recommended increased protection for the unique region.

In 2010 both major Australian political parties committed to making Koongarra part of the surrounding national park.

Today the World Heritage Committee voted to modify the boundaries of the Kakadu National Park World Heritage Area to include the previously excluded Koongarra area.

Mirarr people have a company clan relationship with the Djok and Mr Lee requested their support on his mission. Mirarr Traditional Owner Mr Stewart Gangali and the executive officer of the Gundjeihmi Corporation, Justin O'Brien, are in Paris with Mr Lee.

"Jeffrey speaks for his country and we support him. He has always said no to mining at Koongarra. He wants to see that country protected as a part of Kakadu and we absolutely support him in that," Mr O'Brien said today.

"Kakadu is Aboriginal land, Australia's largest National Park and one of the world's valued places. This decision is a key step towards seeing the bipartisan election promise of Koongarra's protection realised. The Mirarr are actively committed to supporting Mr Lee in speaking for his country," Mr O'Brien concluded.

For further information contact Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation
in Paris: +33 6 46 06 1865 or Melbourne 0412 853 641

(Mr Lee's brief statement to the World Heritage Committee, delivered after its decision, is attached.)

**35TH SESSION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE, PARIS
KAKADU WORLD HERITAGE AREA – AUSTRALIA**

**Statement by Mr Jeffrey Lee, senior traditional owner of the Djok (Gundjeihmi) clan, to
the World Heritage Committee**

Gundjeihmi

Ngaye nga-djare manjbun ngudberre nawu ngurri-worhnan World Heritage Committee bu ngurri-ngeinameng gun-red ngarduk gure World Heritage List. Manjbun bu ngurri-wokdi anekke-gen dja gamak gandi-bek kang gun-wok ngarduk. Nga-djalmadbom gun-guyeng dja nga-njilngmak bu nga-bekkan wanjh gandi-bidyigarrme ba garri-djarrkbolknahnan.

Barri-gukbulerri nawu gun-mogurrgurruiga gure Kakadu yiman ga-yime barri-Mirarr ngandi-bidyigarrme rouk, dja Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation warridj, nawu bolkkime garrim-djarrkwam gonhda.

Ngaye nga-djare nawu an-garre ngadberre, gun-red, an-me, gun-dulk, gukku gure Gun.garra ga-djaldi munguih-munguih yiman ga-yime gerrngehgen bu bolkyibolkyimi gun-gare bu na-gorngumo dja mawahmawa ngarduk ngandi-yibolkbawong. Bu garri-bolkngename gure World Heritage wanjh ga-mak garri-bolkknahnan munguiyh-munguiyh.

English

I would like to thank the World Heritage Committee for inscribing Koongarra, my country, on the World Heritage List. Thank you for talking about this and for listening to my words. I have waited a very long time for this to happen and it comes as a very happy feeling for me to see all of us looking after this place.

I am supported by all the Bininj clans of Kakadu and most particularly by neighbouring clans such as the Mirarr People, through their representative body the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, representatives of which are here with me at this meeting.

I want to ensure that the traditional laws, customs, sites, bush tucker, trees, plants and water at Koongarra stay the same as when they were passed on to me by my father and great-grandfather. Inscribing the land at Koongarra as World Heritage is an important step in making this protection lasting and real.