



**NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL**
Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

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Southeast Arnhem Land Indigenous Protected area expands to protect Sea Country

13 August, 2026

Southeast Arnhem Land Indigenous Protected area expands to protect sea country

A new Marine Indigenous Protected Area has been given the green light, making it the largest marine area under Aboriginal management in the Northern Territory.

The declaration means 2.7 million hectares will now be under Traditional Owner management, adding 861,300 hectares of Sea Country to the existing Southeast Arnhem Land Indigenous Protected Area.

While the existing Southeast Arnhem Land Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) has been under Aboriginal management for over 10 years, this extension signifies the importance of protecting the biodiversity and conservation of precious Sea Country.

Located in the western Gulf of Carpentaria, the IPA provides critical refuge for marine wildlife threatened elsewhere by coastal development, pollution, and maritime traffic.

This sea country IPA will enable ranger teams to monitor vulnerable or customary marine species such as dugong and turtles, and better manage major threats such as ghost nets, marine debris and illegal fishing.

The new area also includes a shared 43,948 hectares over Blue Mud Bay with Laynapuy IPA, ensuring continuous Indigenous ranger presence across the western part of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Beyond Caring for Country and the protection of cultural heritage, the IPA and its embedded ranger groups have consistently advanced training, education, meaningful employment, and self-determined governance in the Aboriginal communities of Ngukurr, Numbulwar and surrounding homelands.

IPAs are supported by the federal government and provide a valuable platform for local communities to establish partnerships with research, philanthropic and industry bodies to advance community aspirations and autonomy.



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This declaration will mean extending these environmental, cultural and economic benefits out into marine areas as well.

Quotes attributable to:

Clive Nunggurgalu, Senior Numburindi Numbulwar Ranger and Traditional Owner

“We are the caretakers and custodians of this Sea Country. It is our responsibility to care for it and make sure it stays healthy for all future generations.

“Today is an important recognition of the work we have already being and will continue to do to care for our Country – both the land and the sea.”

Matthew Ryan, NLC Chair:

For over 60,000 years, Aboriginal people have managed and taken care of our land and sea. This declaration is an important recognition of that work and the importance of listening to Traditional Owners who are the experts of taking care of and protecting land and Sea Country.

It is wonderful to be here alongside Traditional Owners to celebrate this important declaration of Sea Country as part of the Southeast Arnhem IPA, and I thank them for all their hard work getting to this point.