

## Media Release

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### Sea country mapping kicks off two-way knowledge sharing in the Keppels

The Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Keppel Island's Traditional Owners have begun a partnership to map traditional and scientific knowledge of the marine environment and bring new skills to the region.

Up to 50 Traditional Owners representing all six Woppaburra families have today returned to North Keppel Island (Konomie) to work with AIMS researchers.

AIMS Indigenous Engagement Co-ordinator, Cultural Advisor, and Woppaburra elder Mr Bob Muir said for some of the Traditional Owners, especially the younger family members, it would be their first opportunity to be on their country.

“As Woppaburra descendants we have actively maintained our cultural connections and responsibilities to land and sea country,” Mr Muir said.

“This collaboration will help strengthen our spiritual connections and inform management of our land and sea country for future generations.

“By working together with AIMS, we can also fulfil our obligation to preserve and maintain species and habitats including sea grasses, coral reefs and marine animals including the humpback whale, the spiritual saltwater totem for the Woppaburra people.”

AIMS marine scientist Libby Evans-Illidge said the marine environment around the Keppel Islands supported vibrant and diverse coral reef communities, but these were also facing threats from warming, floods, cyclones and other human pressures.

“This project is a great example of making genuine partnerships with the Traditional Owners of the sea country where AIMS does research,” Ms Evans-Illidge said.

“Our researchers will spend the next week being guided by the Traditional Owners, to identify and document areas of special significance and determine the priorities and study locations for future research.”

“Protecting the Great Barrier Reef and the benefits it provides, requires management that uses traditional ecological knowledge, science and new approaches, and technologies.”

This project has been facilitated by the Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement (TUMRA) Steering Committee. In 2014 the Woppaburra people adopted the formal management arrangement with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority that empowers them to develop and implement sea country research and management initiatives.

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AIMS research Keppels Footage: <https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/OkbZCmR9lfWsuL>