

‘These companies do not tell us the truth. We read what happens in other places, and the mining company deny all the pollution and problems until the people do independent tests. Are these dead fish from the cyanide or from their other dumping of wastes into the oceans? We do not know, but we now know that we cannot always trust what the company says’ said Stanley Niga, chairman of landowners representative group, Misima Towo Siung Association.

Following community unrest, the company set up an association run by its own employee to represent Misima’s landowners. Local communities, however, are highly critical of the capacity of a Placer employee to adequately represent their interests to the company.

Landowners have issued a statement and set of demands addressing their concerns to both the company and the national government, which includes a request to release all

reports on this incident and a commitment to an independent review of the mine closure plans and ongoing environment impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Stewart Serawe of the Environmental Watch Group, in PNG said, ‘The men and women of Misima and other mine sites are dependent upon their lands for their future. Mining companies need to respect their rights, including their customary relationships to their land, and their

future reliance upon that land for their survival.’

When contacted, Pat Sankey, Misima Mine’s Operations Manager said that a statement was being prepared in relation to MPI’s claims. Unable to formally comment until then, Mr Sankey said only that MPI’s assertions were unrepresentative, and that Ms Beamont had not contacted the Mines staff for discussion or a mine visit on her recent unannounced trip.

<sup>1</sup> These are available on the internet at [www.mpi.org.au](http://www.mpi.org.au)

## Indigenous managers for dugong and turtle harvests

With new concerns over excessive traditional hunting of dugongs and turtles in the Torres Strait, an *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* assessment will be undertaken of their harvest, and a \$3.8 million federal contract has been signed with the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), through the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre, to develop community-driven approaches to sustainable management of the animals.

A recently published report prepared for the Australian Fisheries Management Authority by dugong expert Dr Helene Marsh claims that the current harvest of dugongs, estimated at 1000 each year, by traditional inhabitants in Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) is threatening populations and suggests 100 to 200 dugongs annually is more sustainable.

The NAILSMA project commences in 2005 and aims to have traditional owners from the Kimberley, Top End of the Northern Territory, southern Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York and the Torres Strait regions collaborate on and implement fishing management approaches.

‘We want local people to take control and accept responsibility for looking after the dugong and turtle populations they depend on,’ said Joe Morrison, Coordinator of NAILSMA.

‘At stake are the sustainable livelihoods of Indigenous people, just as much as biodiversity outcomes. How can we achieve both? The answer surely has to be one driven by Indigenous people, who will be the major beneficiaries from the

sustainable management of these animals,’ said Morrison.

Scientific research will continue to improve understandings of the complex life histories of the turtles and dugongs, but to help ensure the survival of their populations the project will be driven by Indigenous people who hold large bodies of knowledge about the species.

The project’s Technical Reference Group will include scientists, government and natural resource management agencies supporting traditional owners.

NAILSMA was developed by the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council and Balkanu Cape York

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Development Corporation in response to the increasing need to have effective communication to support community-driven management action by traditional owners across the tropics of northern Australia.



Indigenous communities will be supported in developing sustainable takes of dugong.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority