

Media News

Exciting new tourism venture launched today at Cooktown (QLD) on 17 December 2014.

THE first leg of an ambitious tourist track that will ultimately snake from the Daintree River to the tip of the Cape York Peninsula was unveiled on 17 December 2014 at Grassy Hill, Cooktown Queensland.



After five years of meticulous planning and consultation with Traditional Owners, the leg of the Dreaming Track, located on the north shore of Cooktown, was officially opened by Federal MP Warren Entsch on behalf of the Federal Government.

Branded the “Gamaay Track” after the Traditional Owners of that area, the track is a 20km, class five walking track beginning just north of the Endeavour River and ending at Nob Point, Cooktown region.

The long-term goal is for the Dreaming Track to run northwards, to the tip of Cape York Peninsula, enabling Traditional Owners to offer visitors a diverse range of tourism products and travel experience along the way. There will be a collection of journeys that focus on nature, adventure and indigenous culture which is realised through a network of hiking trails.

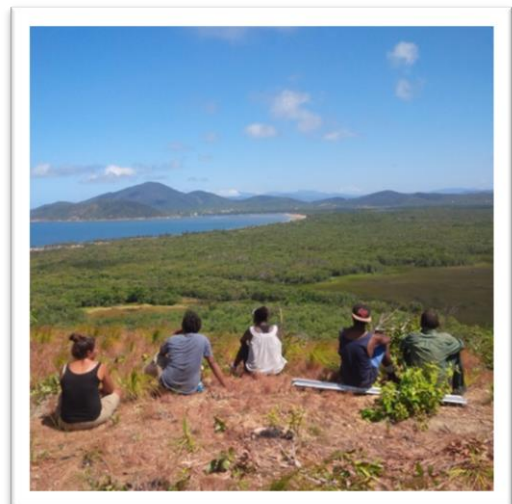
The common thread binding what will eventually be more than a thousand kilometres of track will be showcasing the skills and knowledge of many Traditional Owner groups, who will share those assets to create different business models.

Mr Gerhardt Pearson, Executive Director of Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation which has been involved with the planning, design and development of this Dreaming Track initiative, described the opening as a landmark day for indigenous entrepreneurship on the Cape. “This tourism venture can help transform the social and economic lives of Traditional Owners from here to the top of Cape York,” he said.

“It will offer real potential for Indigenous enterprises and endeavours in so many areas. The track’s construction and its spin-off enterprises will be Indigenous-owned, delivered by Traditional Owners and will be marketed nationally and internationally as an iconic, authentic Cape York experience,” he said.

Early ideas being explored include guided tours, chaperoned horse riding outings, boat and taxi businesses and visitor lodges.

“Hike it, bike it, ride it, drive it” is the track’s mantra. From early 2015, visitors will be able to hike the first leg of the track, after the magnificent efforts over the last nine months of the Gamaay people.



Construction of the track was fast-tracked in March 2014 by a dedicated Balkanu team, but it was members of the Gamaay clan, on whose land the first leg has been constructed on, who took ownership of driving the project to completion on their country.

Erica Deeral said the completion of their leg of the track brought a huge sense of proud achievement and satisfaction. “We have to do something for the next generation, a lot of land is being given back to Bama, we just got to use it, it’s there,” she said.

The Federal and State Governments have financially supported the project.

A Community Workforce Development grant from the Queensland Government enabled members of the Gamaay clan to undertake a Certificate III in Rural Operations, giving them skills in track construction and tourism services.

In late 2009 the Department of Environment and Natural Resource Management (DERM) completed a customer and market research studies into environmental values and threats, statutory and legislative implications, infrastructure design & cost and other studies such as economic costs/ benefits analysis.

Further feasibility, governance and business assessments were undertaken in 2010, leading to a \$1.5 million commitment from the Federal Government through the Caring for our Country program for the commencement of State 1 of the Dreaming Track initiative

