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Media Release

Traditional Owners encouraged by WA State Government commitment to aquaculture

The three West Australian traditional owner groups from the Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project in the state’s north are encouraged by the State Government’s commitment to support the future development of aquaculture in Western Australia with development plans well progressed to establish operations.

The Government is to be congratulated on recognising the potential of aquaculture to diversify the economies of regional areas of WA and to underpin food security into the future.

There is growing global demand for quality sustainable seafood and the Kimberley has the potential to become a hub for tropical species aquaculture production in Australia.

The Government’s commitment includes continued support and development of the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone (KADZ). Traditional Owners in the Kimberley are strong supporters of the KADZ and have sought a significant allocation in the zone under the banner of the Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project.

The Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project is a joint venture between the Mayala, Dambimangari and Bardi Jawi traditional owner groups and Maxima Opportunity. Aarli Mayi is Bardi language for food from the sea.

The WA Government’s commitment to aquaculture is strongly aligned with Federal government initiatives to develop Australia’s north, and the Kimberley Development Commission’s Blueprint 2050 for development of the region which acknowledges and values Traditional Owner participation in the development of a strong and diversified regional economy and it’s social development.

Traditional Owners hope that the Government will also commit to assisting them to undertake commercial aquaculture activity on their country.

Local community members in the Kimberley region say development of commercial opportunities in the aquaculture industry are part of the solution for a better future for Aboriginal communities.

“Realising our aspirations to participate in aquaculture is a natural extension of our traditional saltwater culture and our skills in managing natural resources. There is also the added benefit of significant potential for economic development and jobs on country for our people,” said Mayala Aboriginal Corporation Director and Elder Graham Ejai.



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Kevin George, Bardi Jawi PBC Chairperson and Bardi Jawi Aarli Mayi representative said his people are excited about the State Government’s Commitment and the prospect of long term economic benefits that will come from projects like Aarli Mayi.

“This means jobs on country for our people and the opportunity to generate wealth and careers for traditional owners,” Kevin said.

Maxima Opportunity Principal John Hutton said “the Aarli Mayi aquaculture project involves three traditional owner groups who have agreed to form a partnership with Maxima Opportunity Group.

The resulting entity will therefore be 75% owned by traditional owners of the Kimberley.

“The project brings together the strong saltwater skills and knowledge of the three saltwater country custodians and Maxima’s history in pioneering the development of commercial seafood projects in the Kimberley,” Mr Hutton said.

“The Aarli Mayi project would assist traditional owners work together to development a proposed 13,000 tonne fin fish farm in the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone.

“The three traditional owner groups have joined together to collectively apply for 13,000 tonnes under the Aarli Mayi project.

“The Aarli Mayi Aquaculture Project will enable the vision of the Kimberley Saltwater Country people by providing the foundation for an independent commercial future, healthy communities, and responsibility for healthy saltwater country.

“This co-operation is about building a saltwater asset for saltwater people.

“We intend to help traditional owners to build a profitable enterprise in the food sector, to provide tangible jobs for locals and bring prosperity to the region.”

Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation CEO Peter McCumstie said the proposed project was "providing opportunity for TOs to get back on their country with a sustainable economic base."

The State Government has said it hopes to attract new investment in both production and development which will lead to increased employment in our state’s regions and this is a welcome boost to traditional owners.

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