GROOTE EYLANDT RANGERS PLAY A VITAL ROLE

The valuable work of the Territory’s Indigenous marine rangers in managing and protecting coastal resources has been showcased in a new publication launched at Alyangula today.

Chief Minister Clare Martin has presented copies of the publication, *Indigenous Marine Rangers*, to members of the Anindilyakwa Sea Ranger group at Groote Eylandt, where Community Cabinet is being held this week.

The booklet was produced by the Territory Government in conjunction with the Tiwi and Anindilyakwa Land Councils.

Ms Martin said the rangers are outstanding community role models in the work they do to support the work of Marine Police, Fisheries, Conservation, Customs, Quarantine and other Federal agencies.

“The Indigenous Marine Ranger network also gives Aboriginal Territorians an immense sense of pride and achievement. The ranger program means Top End coastal traditional owners can contribute to protecting and managing their homeland,” she said.

Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis said through ongoing surveillance and monitoring, the rangers spot at least one illegal foreign fishing vessel each week.

“We have 14 Indigenous marine and sea ranger groups, with about 100 members, who take part in surveillance, monitoring and resource management, across the entire Territory coastline. That is a huge job and they should be very proud of what they are doing,” he said.

Coordinator of the Anindilyakwa Ranger Program, Simon Hartley said the group hopes to secure $94,000 from the Natural Heritage Trust to study the impact of Indigenous fishing on sharks and rays off the Top End coastline.

“As part of this project we want to develop shark identification sheets and a database to improve the understanding of shark fishing by Indigenous people as part of a wider study addressing shark bycatch issues.

“The sheets will be developed in consultation with Indigenous groups so they are regionally and culturally appropriate and will include the traditional names for species,” said Mr Hartley.

The Marine Ranger Program has been so successful that the West Australian and Queensland Governments are considering setting up similar schemes based on the Territory’s model.

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