

**\*\*\*EMBARGO\*\*\* 11.45AM | FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER 2014**

## **Butchulla People: Traditional Owners and Native Title Holders**

Following their long and unwavering fight to gain recognition of native title, Friday 24 October 2014 marked the successful resolution of the Butchulla People's claim for native title over Fraser Island.

Justice Berna Collier from The Federal Court of Australia travelled to Fraser Island and held an on-country sitting of the Court. The determination recognises the ongoing traditional laws and customs of the Butchulla People, while also specifying native title rights and interests over about 1,640 square kilometres of sandy dunes, age-old sub-tropical rainforests and pristine lakes. Some of their rights and interests include; maintaining places of importance and areas of significance, teaching on the area and conducting and participating in rituals and ceremonies.

The Butchulla People have a strong and proud tradition of fighting for their island home; from resisting forced removal and attempts to destroy their culture during the colonization process of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to protection against sand mining and environmental degradation in the 1970's followed by a ten year long battle in the Federal Court to achieve native title recognition.

Mr Kevin Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Queensland South Native Title Services, sees this determination of native title as a testament to the strength of the Butchulla People and their ongoing connection to the land.

"K'Gari is internationally renowned for its striking natural beauty and unique environmental and Aboriginal cultural values. This native title determination reinforces the Butchulla People protecting K'Gari as their island paradise for current and future generations", he said.

"This is an opportunity to honour the courage and resilience of Butchulla Elders past and present, to have their rights and interests to their traditional country recognised by the Australian legal system", Mr Smith said.

With over 400 Butchulla People and various dignitaries bearing witness to this historic occasion, the formal court recognition and related Indigenous Land Use Agreement will not only strengthen the Butchulla People's ability to enjoy and protect their rights and interests over their traditional lands and waters but also strengthen the prospect of economic opportunities for current and future generations of Butchulla People through eco-tourism and related business development.

"This momentous occasion closes the chapter on the long, frustrating struggle for legal recognition and opens another that involves the management and leverage of recognised legal rights. A chapter that will be written by the Butchulla People themselves, a task that they will embrace with the same vigour, creativity and passion they have become legendary for" he said.

QSNTS congratulates the Butchulla People on their successful native title consent determination.

**ENDS**

**Interview opportunities:** Kevin Smith, Chief Executive Officer  
Queensland South Native Title Services

**Images:** High resolution photos available on request