

Second Win for the Gunggari People

On 5 December 2014, the Federal Court of Australia will hold a special hearing in the rural Queensland town of Amby (65 kms west of Roma) where Justice Darryl Rangiah is expected to make a native title consent determination recognising the Gunggari People's native title rights and interests over approximately 146.4 km² of land and waters in central southern Queensland.

The determination would recognise the non-exclusive native title rights and interests of the Gunggari People over certain areas of reserve, pastoral and other leases, and some creeks and rivers, including a 120 km stretch of the fabled Maranoa River.

The outcomes to be achieved are a result of negotiations between the Gunggari People, the State of Queensland, the Maranoa Regional Council and various other parties to the application.

The determination would be the second native title win for the Gunggari People, following the consent determination made by Justice John Reeves at the nearby town of Mitchell in June 2012.

Marshall Foster, a member of the Gunggari Applicant, says that this second determination will be every bit as significant to him and his people as the first determination because it would formally recognise that the Gunggari People continue to hold native title rights and interests over part of the Maranoa River.

"The Maranoa River has been the lifeblood of the Gunggari People for millennia" said Mr Foster.

"It is a place of great spiritual, cultural, social and economic importance to us, and recognition of native title over the river would help us to better protect it for future generations".

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

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

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Marshall Foster, member of the Gunggari Applicant, at the Maranoa River.

ENDS

Interview opportunities: Marshall Foster
Gunggari Applicant Member

Kevin Smith, Chief Executive Officer
Queensland South Native Title Services

Images: High resolution photos available on request