

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARITA BUDDEN

Member of the Jirrbal,
Atherton Tablelands country,
Far North Queensland

On 8 October 2010, the Federal Court recognised the Jirrbal Peoples' native title to 92,000 hectares of their traditional lands, 133km South-West of Cairns. The decision took place through three consent determinations, which found that the Jirrbal Peoples, which includes the Girramay, Jirrbal, Mamu, Djiru, Gulngay and Ngajan Peoples, have native title rights to their lands. The following interview is with Marita Budden - the Chairperson of Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation, the Prescribed Body Corporate for the Jirrbal Peoples. This interview was conducted at the Native Title Conference 2015.

MY NAME'S MARITA BUDDEN and I'm the Chairperson of Wabubadda Aboriginal Corporation, which is for the Jirrbal Traditional Group, on the Atherton Tablelands. We're part of the rainforest groups. One of the 18 or 20 rainforest groups in Far North Queensland.

We are on the Atherton Tablelands, and further out towards Ravenshoe. Our country is a huge area, and some of it is not actually claimed yet. Most of the area is green, but then we have the part where it starts to go into the more dry areas. The Jirrbal people actually didn't live in the rainforest, they traversed all the

lands, but that's where their source of food and everything came from. So when we say we're rainforest people, we don't actually mean that we lived only in the rainforest.

Native title to me means lots of things. It's knowing that we have something for our future generations. Also knowing for the present and knowing for our ancestors that they worked towards something over all those years in trying to get something back for their people. For me now it's just having some control, and when I say some control I mean as in we don't have full control of our own lands, but having native title is that acknowledgement from other people. For me it's knowing that some of the hard work has come to fruition, but there is still a lot of hard work to do. Just based on everything here at the conference and what I've been hearing.

When we put our first native title claim in 1999, I think; we've been going a long time. We were wondering 'what is native title going to do for us?' They say that 'at the end of your native title you'll get recognition and you'll have this and this and this', but we said 'well what do we do in the meantime? We do all this hard work, but what do we get along the way?' They said that there are some benefits that you can get from it, but I didn't actually see a lot of those benefits with the working group; it was a hard slog.

Our vision for the future is that we're working towards economic development on our land. We're just in the process now of getting our business plan done. So coming to the Native Title Conference has been really good. I can get information that can actually assist us in developing our plan further. Seeing different things that people have done on their country through their native title and through their processes right through. So that's going to really help. Also knowing the challenges and how we're actually going to resolve those challenges.

Family

I've been working in Indigenous Affairs for 25 years or even a bit more. I started with my parents because they used to take me and teach me about all that. That's why I'm here today too. They've passed on now, but that's what they did for me and I will keep passing it on. Our children don't really understand because they are not realising that they've still got to go out there when they're adults. They're children now; they don't understand all those things. I mean I didn't understand it when I was 17 or 18 too, and I was thinking 'hmmm, why do I need to know all that'. But as you go along, your parents are saying to you 'no, you should come and listen'. And that's what I do now: I say that to my own children, 'you should along come and listen'. That's one way of teaching them.