

## News

# Clogged harbour claims boat after 20 years

**THE clogged Endeavour River harbour almost claimed a prawn trawler last week, with knee-deep water leaving the boat leaning dangerously.**

The *Serenity's* gunwales were only centimetres above water as she lay in the shallow swing basin – an area meant to be free of traffic and deep enough to allow large vessels to turn around.

The Cairns-based boat, which draws 3m, was completely grounded by about 1.30pm, with a low tide of 0.69m at 2.30pm. The owner said there was no damage to the vessel, which had been coming to Cooktown for about 20 years.

“There was a relief skipper on the boat

who wasn't aware of the conditions in the harbour,” he said.

Two boats were also grounded in the river earlier this month, and locals fear the replica *Endeavour* will not be able to anchor at the wharf when it visits in 2009 as part of Queensland's 150th birthday celebrations.

But Queensland Transport has stood firm on its refusal to dredge the harbour, maintainig there was sufficient water for most boats to enter the harbour.

But Endeavour River Action Committee spokeswoman Anne Williams said the department failed to acknowledge that it was only on high tide that the harbour

was easily accessible. “On the majority of low tides there is insufficient water for vessels to anchor – and this time of year is busy with commercial fishing boats, recreational boats, yachts and charter boats,” she said.

On August 25, Transport Minister John Mickel wrote to the committee advising that dredging to provide access to the boat ramp, being blocked by growing sand bars, would only be considered when the channel depth was less than 1.5m below the lowest astronomical tide.

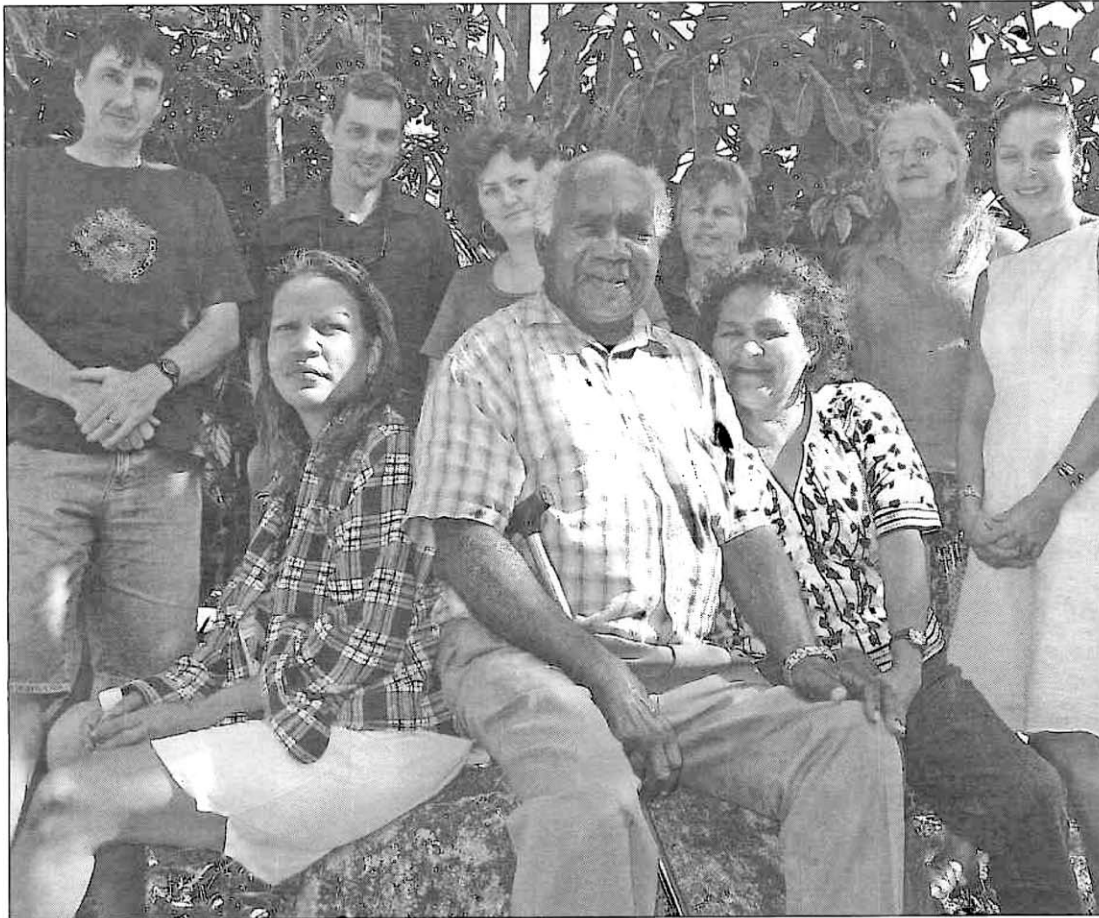
But Mrs Williams said that on a very low tide “you can walk across the sand bar on the approach to the boat ramp”.

# Mark diary for final gig



**Evgeny Ukhanov, the Russian pianist whose performance thrilled almost 100 people in Cooktown on a wet night in April 2006, is returning to Nature's PowerHouse for the year's final Sunset Concert on Sunday, November 30. 'Evgeny will perform works by Chopin and some of his friends,' said promoter Jacqui Sykes. Phone 4069 5442 for details.**

# Bid to save ancient language



State Library of Queensland staff and traditional owners, including 'Uncle' Eric Deeral (centre) met at the Cooktown library last week to begin the preservation of the Waymburr – or Cooktown – region's Guugu Yimidhirr language.

Picture: SARAH MARTIN

By SARAH MARTIN

**EFFORTS** are being made to save the Waymburr area's ancient Aboriginal dialect before it disappears forever.

“We are fast losing words and older speakers and the young people aren't fluent in the language,” warned Guugu Yimidhirr elder Eric Deeral.

“There was once about 600 fluent speakers, mainly at Hope Vale, but today the number has dwindled.”

Traditional owners have joined the State Library of Queensland in a bid to preserve the language before it is too late – and they want the community's help.

“We are teaching people how to use technology to preserve and maintain their language,” said the State Library's Faith Baisden. “Technology has the ability to stop the loss of language, and the school, kids and the community can get involved.”

Traditional owners and state library staff spent two days last week recording language into a purpose-made computer program, and hoped the equipment would be available at Hope Vale's Indigenous Knowledge Centre.

“Language and culture must be used and preserved,” said Mr Deeral. “If just the people in this community know how important the language is, that is an important step.”

The group's vision for the Guugu Yimidhirr language includes signage around town being in English and traditional dialect.

“How many people in Cooktown know the traditional name for the town – Waymburr?” said Guugu Yimidhirr speaker Alberta Hornsby of the area from Poison Creek to the coast bordered by the Annan and Endeavour rivers.

“Imagine if we could have signs on the way to Cooktown saying, ‘Welcome to Guugu Yimidhirr country’ or ‘welcome to Waymburr,’” she said.

Guugu Yimidhirr is ranked in the world's top 10 endangered languages by linguistics professor Peter K Austin.

**'How many people in Cooktown know the town's traditional name, Waymburr?'**

- Alberta Hornsby