



## Yarrabah's lone ranger powerless against poachers

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FEDERAL government funding cuts and the Bligh Labor government's inaction have left Far North Queensland's dugong and turtle colonies at the mercy of ruthless black-market poachers.

Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability Glen Elmes MP said the axing of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme on July 1 had resulted in the loss of 15 rangers in the Yarrabah community.

"There is now just a single ranger responsible for policing 240,000 hectares of land and 29km of coastline," said Mr Elmes.

"Despite this the Bligh Labor government has not acted to provide replacement rangers to protect endangered species from unscrupulous individuals exploiting a thriving black-market for traditional foods.

"Prime cuts of dugong and turtle are fetching up to \$50 per kg on the black-market in Gordonvale, Innisfail and Cairns.

"As a result poachers are now slaughtering dugongs and turtles for the black-market in a clear abuse of native title laws and traditional hunting methods.

"Rotting carcasses found at the Yarrabah dump and nearby beaches south of Cairns this month show evidence that they had been butchered using chain saws, and that only prime cuts of meat had been removed."

Mr Elmes said that the Gunggandji people traditionally left only the bones or shells of animals hunted according to customary methods, while poachers after were only taking the 'good meat' which would attract the big money.

"The LNP supports North Queensland Land Council chairman Terry O'Shane's call for traditional owners to impose a total ban on dugong hunting to prevent an endangered species from being hunted to extinction," he said.

"The Minister's claim in the House that she has released a 'discussion paper' on marine mammal conservation shows how little she is prepared to act.

"Minister Jones' previous dismissal of discussion papers as being a sign of 'no policy ideas' shows that she has no plans to tackle this issue."

"We call on the Bligh Labor government to act immediately to provide appropriate personnel and resources to stop the cruel and inhumane slaughter of turtles and dugongs by non-traditional methods from the waters of Far-North Queensland, and to police the illegal sale of their meat." **ENDS**

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