

G'DAY GROUP

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1130 AWST, NOVEMBER 23RD 2022

Historic land deal signals new dawn for world famous El Questro resort

PERTH, WA: The G'day Group is pleased to announce it has secured a 99-year lease in a landmark agreement between the Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) and the Western Australian Government.

The historic Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) covers the traditional lands of Wanjina Wungurr Wilinggin people at El Questro Wilderness Park in the Kimberley and sees approximately 165,000 hectares of El Questro stretching south of the Gibb River Road converted from a pastoral lease to freehold and reserve and returned to its Traditional Owners by the West Australian Government, nearly 120 years after El Questro was established as a cattle station.

Under the terms of the landmark ILUA, part of the land will be leased back to El Questro's operator, the G'day Group, on a 99-year term and the company will retain the right to conduct tourism activities over the whole of the former pastoral lease area.

The agreement guarantees ongoing employment and training for local Indigenous youth and will see the G'day Group purchase carbon credits from WAC that will enable the property to operate with net zero emissions.

The signing of the ILUA is also a significant enabler for the G'day Group to progress its long-term ambition for the property, including developing more accommodation, implementing improved water, waste and land management practices and offering new cultural experiences in partnership with Traditional Owners.

Under the terms of the pastoral lease, livestock were also required to be maintained on the land. However, this agreement will enable livestock to be moved on from the property, allowing for the restoration of the natural environment.

El Questro was first established as a wilderness tourist destination in 1991 by English-Australian couple Will and Celia Burrell. It changed hands several times before being acquired by the G'day Group in 2021, bringing the property back into Australian hands after more than a decade of foreign ownership.

The property resides on the Traditional Lands of two First Nations groups, the Wanjina Wungurr Wilinggin (south of the Gibb River Road) and Balanggarra (to the north).

The G'day Group operates two accommodation experiences on Wanjina Wungurr Wilinggin land, the luxury Homestead resort and the Station, which includes a campground, bungalows and serves as the property's 'central hub'.

The land is also home to several of the resort's most popular nature attractions including Zebedee Springs, Chamberlain Gorge and Miri Miri Falls.

Quotes attributable to G'day Group Chief Executive Officer Grant Wilckens:

"When we acquired this property in 2021, a priority for us was to find a way to secure flexible long-term tenure for our business and enable Traditional Owners to leverage their native title rights into a genuine economic asset."

"I have to congratulate our partners Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation on proposing a model that achieves both these objectives; and the State Government for getting behind it."

"It's been a complex 18-month process to get here but what we've delivered is a ground-breaking agreement that provides us with certainty as an operator to continue to invest in one of Australia's most iconic tourism destinations and elevate El Questro's cultural tourism and ecological credentials."

"As a business, we are committed to a long-term strategy of sustainability and deeper connection with Traditional Owners right across Australia and we are hopeful that this agreement can serve as a framework for other tourism operators and pastoralists, ensuring that Indigenous rights to land are at the forefront."

Quotes attributable to Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation Chair, Arnold Sahanna

"Since the Ngarinyin people achieved their Native Title in 2004 we have endeavoured to build a contemporary Ngarinyin Society capable of sustaining our Wanjina cultural values, building a sustainable economic base for our community and regaining control of our land without impeding the right and interests of our neighbours."

"This ILUA that we are now entering into delivers on all these aspects of our ambitions as a First Nations people."

"This Agreement and the model developed for collaborative development outcomes for the Kimberley is a solid achievement that we hope our young people will see as a way forward for our community to regain our place at the table of decision making in matters that impact on our lives as the Traditional Owners of this part of the country."

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About G'day Group

Founded by Grant Wilckens in 2004 with three properties in WA, the G'Day Group is now Australia's largest regional accommodation provider with around 300 properties across Australia.

G'day reached \$1bn company status in 2020, and is home to three brands; Discovery Parks (owned and managed parks), G'day Parks (independently owned licensed parks) and G'day Rewards (membership program).

G'day is majority owned by Australian Retirement Trust. Founder and CEO Grant Wilckens is also the Chair of the Caravan Industry Association of Australia and Board Director of the South Australian Tourism Commission.