
Azton Howard



Bardi Jawi Indigenous Protected Area
Kimberley Land Council

The inaugural Excellence in Sea Country Award has two winners, one of whom is Azton Howard from the Bardi Jawi Rangers and Kimberley Land Council for his role in expanding the scope of Ranger activities and engagement of Indigenous Rangers across diverse ecological projects.

Azton has been a Bardi Jawi Ranger since 2014 during which time he has been responsible for a major expansion in the scope of activities in which Rangers are involved, leading tasks in the WAMSI Kimberley Marine Research Program across diverse projects examining ecological processes in local waters. Azton enthusiastically led his more junior rangers in their involvement in this research, forging strong enduring links between rangers and researchers. Following initial contacts with scientists, Azton realised the strength of uniting Traditional knowledge with Western science to answer some of the pressing questions the Bardi Jawi community had about Sea Country health. He was instrumental in establishing a strong partnership with AIMS to set up a monitoring program for fish and benthos that is now in its fifth year. More recently, he also became a film star playing a key role in a documentary

on Sea Country monitoring that won first prize in the prestigious 2021 Mud & Saltwater Film Festival.

Azton has been key to the success of many marine science programs across Government agencies and universities including AIMS, DBCA, Fisheries and CSIRO, especially those that have relied on on-going sampling without scientists being present. These experiences have given Azton an excellent reputation amongst marine scientists who speak very highly of his capabilities and would like to continue working with him in the future.

As a Bardi man, Azton is also very dedicated to his community and fulfilling his duties as a Traditional Owner. He is a spokesperson to his local PBC and the Ranger Steering Committee, imparting to them clear messages about on how we can assess Sea Country health with monitoring, and detailing potential actions to be taken by the community. Azton has also participated in marine park planning with DBCA and has been a voice for both the rangers and the wider community, advocating for Traditional sites to be protected, and coastal livelihoods maintained by securing healthy marine ecosystems. For the younger generations, Azton is a clear role model. An excellent ranger, always showing up for his duties, always expanding his knowledge and set of skills, and sharing them with his community.