



WORKING FOR AUSTRALIA



We need more Indigenous rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas for the long term.

There is now an opportunity to protect Australia's wildlife and our iconic landscapes, at the same time as growing the benefits of meaningful work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, by growing and securing funding for Indigenous land and sea management.

Indigenous rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas are at the frontline of nature protection across Australia. Our country is reaping a range of environmental benefits from rangers and IPAs, including the protection of threatened species, the reduction of destructive wildfires, and the control of feral animals and invasive weeds.

In line with the government's national priorities, Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas also promote the social and economic benefits of meaningful work that people are proud to do. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are reporting improved mental and physical health, improved justice outcomes, and more role models and engagement with younger generations. Indigenous rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas foster new and better partnerships with government, the private sector and charities.

Australia is an enormous country. Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Area funding does not yet meet the scale of the need for active environmental work across our vast landscapes, nor the demand from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Long term funding is critical to sustaining environmental outcomes and to delivering much needed stability in local land and sea management organisations.

“When we keep country healthy, it sets us right too.”

Joelwyn Johnson, Nantawarrina Ranger



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Grow Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas to meet the scale of both environmental need and community demand;
- 2 Commit to stability through secure, long term funding;
- 3 Sustain and reinforce quality delivery by Indigenous land and sea management organisations by ensuring operational support is well funded and government is proactively engaged to assist with delivery and oversight.

INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been managing land and sea country for millennia. The federal government's Indigenous Protected Area program was established in 1997 and the Indigenous ranger 'Working on Country' program in 2007. Both initiatives aimed to provide a negotiated partnership approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples in the management of their country. IPAs and Indigenous ranger jobs recognise the commitment, unique skills, culture and geographic knowledge traditional owners bring to conservation. Combining traditional knowledge with conventional science, Indigenous communities voluntarily dedicate their land or sea country as Indigenous Protected Areas and develop management plans to protect natural and cultural values.

COMMUNITY DEMAND

Country Needs People is a growing alliance of more than 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the Pew Charitable Trusts, who are calling on the government to grow and secure Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas.. Country Needs People partner organisations consistently report the need for more Indigenous ranger positions to most effectively manage environmental and cultural heritage priorities. They also report high demand for Indigenous ranger jobs within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where applicants are 'queueing up' for positions when they become vacant.

INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY

Around Australia, Indigenous ranger jobs are fostering innovation and supporting education. Around 70% of ranger teams reported facilitating accredited training annually, including conservation management certificates, equipment use and environmental project management. Non-accredited and on-the-job training is a core part of ranger work. Many ranger groups engage with their local communities through innovative projects, including junior ranger, school and cultural knowledge programs. Around 65 per cent of Indigenous land and sea management teams build on their work as Indigenous rangers and on Indigenous Protected Areas with commercial activities that generate additional income and jobs. The main activities are fee-for-service contracts, tourism and carbon abatement.¹

ADDRESSING NATIONAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

The evidence is increasingly clear that Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas generate multiple social and economic benefits. Analysis of the social return on investment of Indigenous Protected Areas, commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and undertaken by Social Ventures Australia, found ranger employment opportunities delivered powerful outcomes, including:

- Increased pride
- Better health and well being
- More role models for young people
- Higher employment
- Improved alcohol and substance misuse outcomes
- Fewer interactions with the justice system
- Improved governance capacity of Indigenous organisations
- Better partnerships.

The positive outcomes of Indigenous Protected Areas were found to closely align with 28 of 35 material outcomes in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Strategy's strategic priorities.² Indigenous Protected Areas have been found to be strongly supported by participating communities right across Australia.



CLIMATE AND CARBON

Indigenous ranger and Indigenous Protected Area programs have provided a foundation through which some Indigenous organisations have accessed new and innovative business opportunities, including the carbon economy. Through strategic fire management, Indigenous ranger groups not only limit destructive wildfires and support healthy habitats, but reduce carbon emissions. This has attracted investment for many Indigenous ranger groups, particularly across the tropical savannas of Northern Australia.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2016) Consolidated report on Indigenous Protected Areas following Social Return on Investment analyses. Social Ventures Australia.

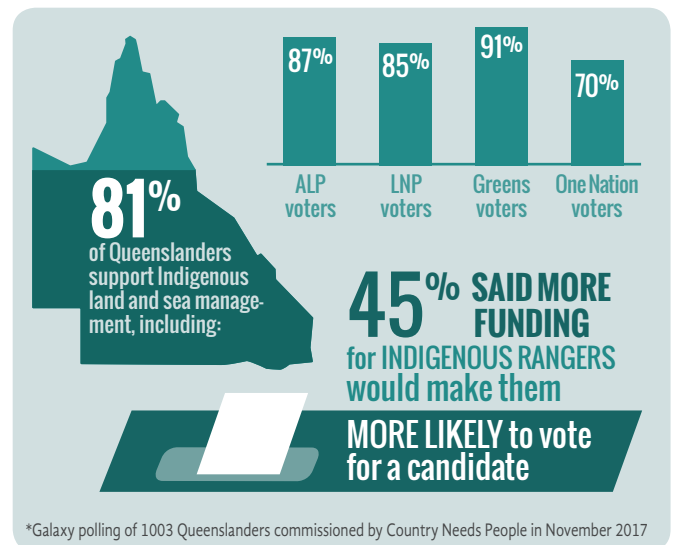
² Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2016) Reporting back: How Indigenous Ranger and Indigenous Protected Area programmes are working on country 2014-15.

SCALE OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEED

More than 180 million hectares of Australia is held in various forms of Indigenous ownership, and further rights and cultural connections extend right across Australia. Many of these landscapes are especially rich in natural values and cultural heritage. But the need for active management of environmental threats across this vast area is urgent and extensive. Tens of millions of feral pigs, hundreds of thousands of feral buffalo and camels, millions of feral cats and goats, invasive weeds capable of occupying entire climatic zones, and vast areas where fire is uncontrolled, illustrate the magnitude of the management task. If these threats are left unmanaged, they will affect not only Australia's unique natural heritage but create great economic costs for agriculture and infrastructure across Australia.

WHY QUALITY IS IMPORTANT

Indigenous rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas have real world outcomes to deliver for community and the public. Land and sea management requires skills, training, accountability and risk mitigation. The work being done on Indigenous Protected Areas and by Indigenous rangers includes shooting feral animals out of



helicopters, spraying chemicals on invasive weeds, large scale fire management, monitoring and research, and supporting fisheries regulations on the sea. Often this is delivered in very remote areas with limited infrastructure. These activities require engaged support, careful implementation and a clear understanding of the land and sea management task, both in the planning and delivery - from traditional owners, Indigenous organisations and government.

SECURING CERTAINTY

Long term funding, with accountability, is vital to sustaining local capacity, and environmental, social and economic benefits. Long term contracts send a critical signal about stability and political commitment to Indigenous land and sea management. Funding certainty encourages retention of good staff, forward planning and increased capacity to strengthen governance. It also sends an unambiguous signal that Australia values Indigenous land and sea management work and its potential.

More than **830** FULL TIME equivalent ranger jobs, employing close to **3000** individuals



INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS

An Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) is an area of land or sea managed by traditional owners.

Traditional owners enter a voluntary agreement with the Commonwealth Government to protect biodiversity—the animals, plants and other species—and to conserve the area's cultural resources, like sacred sites and rock art.

Indigenous Protected Areas do not change the underlying tenure of the land or sea area, instead they support a management plan and partnership between government and a traditional owner group to protect natural and cultural values.

Indigenous Protected Areas reinforce and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance of land and sea

management and create a platform for negotiating natural, cultural and local management priorities. IPAs are dedicated under International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories which promote a balance between conservation and other sustainable use. Indigenous rangers provide the workforce through which the Indigenous Protected Area plan is implemented under guidance of elders.

IPAs now make up close to half of the area of Australia's National Reserve System and are the fastest growing element of our protected area network. Over the last two decades, the growth in Indigenous Protected Areas has been a dramatic reflection of support, leadership and ownership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This highlights the value to local communities and the wider Australian public of increasing and securing funding for Indigenous Protected Areas over the long term.

WARDDEKEN RANGERS AND THE WARDDEKEN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA

On the stone country of Arnhem Land, the 1.4 million hectare Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area is globally significant for its natural and cultural values. It is home to dozens of endemic plants, a host of threatened species and unique and threatened ecosystems, including threatened sandstone shrublands and anbinik rainforests.

Warddeken traditional owners have always maintained their relationship to country, and today undertake strategic land management work through their Indigenous Protected Area plan of management and ranger workforce.

Warddeken are renowned for their sophisticated fire management strategy for the Warddeken IPA. Through the implementation of this strategy, the Indigenous Protected Area has greatly reduced the extent of intense late-season wildfires and attracted carbon abatement investment through the resultant reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

The Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area has fostered powerful results for the Warddeken community too. A two-way education school has been established on country, and daluk rangers – Warddeken Women Rangers – have been growing their engagement and their impact. Through a concerted push sparked by Warddeken traditional owners' feedback on Indigenous Protected Area management, women rangers have doubled their participation in ranger work on the Warddeken IPA in just two years. Daluk rangers receive 'work ready' training alongside accredited and on-the-job training, and their duties include researching and recording data for the largest ever biodiversity survey in Arnhem Land.



The daluk rangers undertake invasive weed, feral animal and fire management to protect precious rock art sites and keep country healthy.

The achievements on the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area are far from an isolated example of the environmental, social and cultural success achieved by Indigenous rangers and on Indigenous Protected Areas. Across Australia, these two programs are delivering powerful results for people and nature.

I have been a ranger with Warddeken Land Management since I was 16 years old and have lived on the country my rangers manage for my whole life. I have been working as a ranger now for fourteen years.

My job as a ranger allows me to live on my country at Kabulwarnamyo Outstation and it gives me meaningful work.

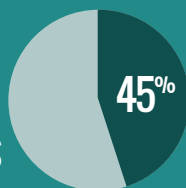
I see my families and peers in bigger townships doing nothing, just getting sit down money and drinking their lives away. Maybe I would be doing this myself if I didn't have my job as a ranger.

I am raising my son on his own country now, just like I was raised, and every day I see him learning more and growing stronger. He is only three but he already wants to be a ranger too.

I would like to share with you one message in particular: working as a ranger is about respect. Respect for our ancestors; for our elders; for our culture; for our country; for ourselves and for our children. Respect is the key to Aboriginal people and our communities staying strong.

- Ray Nadjamerrek

CLOSE TO HALF
of Australia's protected lands are
INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS



= 10 TASMANIAS

AROUND 25%
of Australia (more than 180m hectares)
is held in **INDIGENOUS OWNERSHIP**



85000+ PEOPLE SUPPORT

the Country Needs People call to grow and secure Indigenous ranger jobs and Indigenous Protected Areas

