



Australian Government



# Reporting back...

2013-14: Working on Country and  
Indigenous Protected Areas programmes

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Front cover: Photo © Kimberley Land Council

Back cover: Unguu Indigenous Protected Area. Photo Peter Morris

*Please note that this report may contain images and names of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.*

# Reporting back

## Foreword

I am pleased to present you with this report which summarises the work of Indigenous rangers from over 100 Indigenous land and sea management groups — the driving force behind Australia's Working on Country (WOC) and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) programmes.

Working on Country is about people, providing 759 full-time equivalent jobs and developing the skills and capacity of Indigenous rangers and their communities who are caring for country.

Strongly aligned, Indigenous Protected Areas are about land and sea — about supporting Indigenous groups to conserve their country for the benefit of all Australians.

This report shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are using WOC and IPAs to protect their culture, conserve their natural environment and to generate sustainable social and economic benefits for their communities.

Partnerships with training, research, commercial and philanthropic organisations have helped develop ranger skills, engage local kids in school and create business opportunities.

Commercial activities such as 'fee-for-service' contracts and business enterprises have also provided economic benefits that have flowed on to local communities.

This community development aspect is as critically important as natural conservation. It is helping to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

WOC and IPAs strike the right balance between nature conservation, sustainable development, cultural respect and jobs for Indigenous people.

I am enthusiastic about the future of WOC and IPAs. I trust this report will be a useful resource and I will continue to follow the progress of your projects with great interest.

Minister for Indigenous Affairs,  
Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion

# About this report



Across Australia, over 100 Indigenous ranger groups are supported by the Working on Country (WOC) and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) programmes.

From the Torres Strait Islands in the north to Tasmania in the south and everywhere in between, Indigenous rangers undertake a range of important environmental and cultural work on land and sea.

**‘The IPA [and WOC] are helping create good jobs, like rangers to take care of country. It is giving young people opportunities day by day. Young people really enjoy working on the IPA, and old people enjoy going out with them.’**

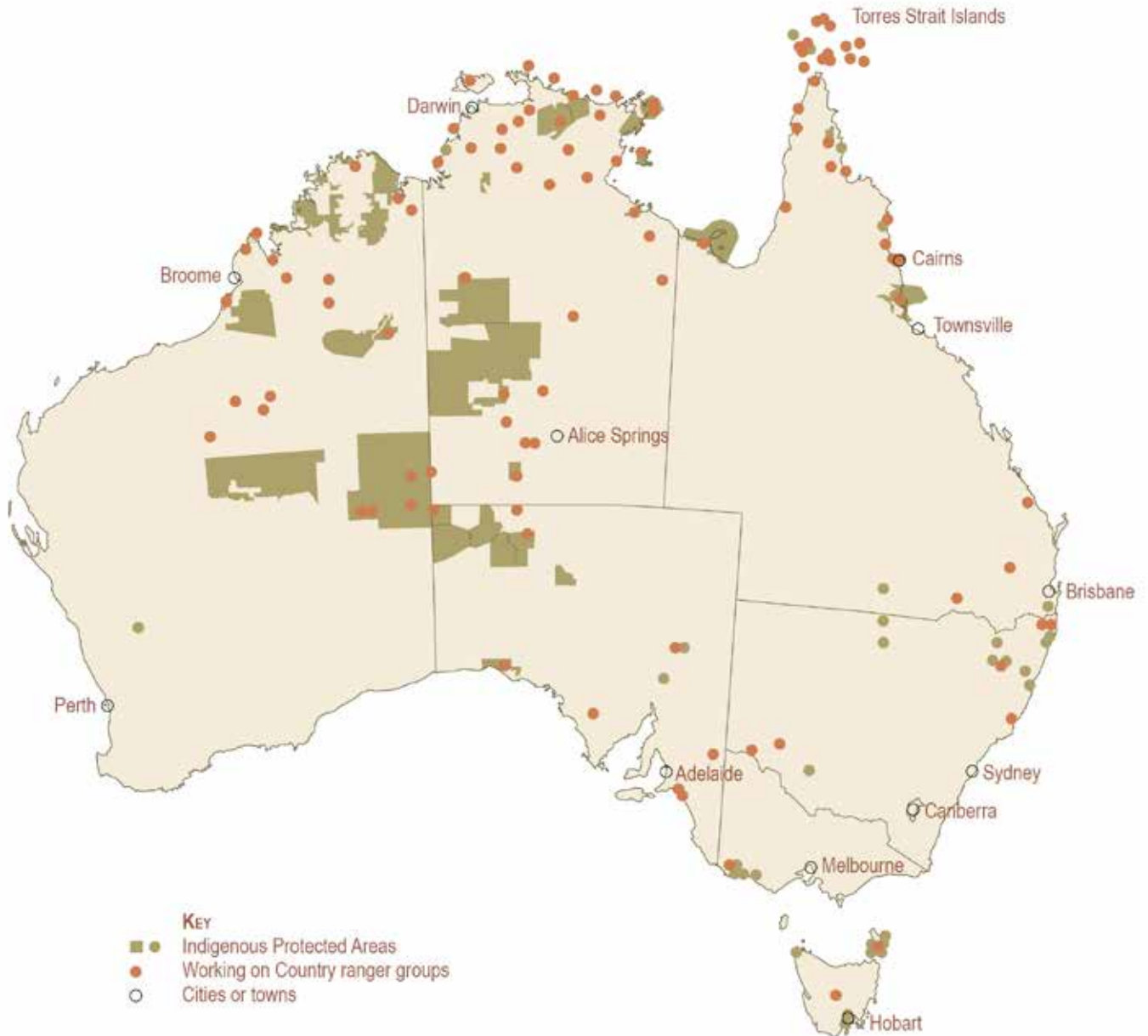
Kumanjayi Jampijinpa Bunter,  
Northern Tanami IPA

Each year we collect information from WOC and IPA projects about the number of people employed, the types of activities they are doing and the flow on benefits to the environment and local communities.

This report pulls together a summary of the many achievements of the WOC and IPA programmes for the year 2013-14.

Wunggurr ranger holding a small  
native mammal (WA).  
Photo © Kimberley Land Council

## IPA and WOC ranger groups, June 2014





## Looking after culture and country

In 2013–14, all WOC and IPA ranger groups reported looking after the natural and cultural heritage of their land and sea country as directed by their management plans. Routine management activities included community consultation and engagement, managing native plants and animals and controlling threats such as fire, feral animals and weeds.

### Fire management

Patchwork burning is an important traditional land management tool. Around 85 per cent of ranger groups conducted fire management

activities. Details from the reports show that in many areas, traditional patchwork burning was integrated with contemporary objectives such as asset protection and habitat management.

- **Firesticks Project** - Several groups from New South Wales reported undertaking cultural burning as part of this project.
- **Indigenous Carbon Farming** - A number of groups from Northern Australia reported doing feasibility studies or carrying out fire management to reduce carbon emissions from wildfires.



Unguu ranger Jason Adams burning on the IPA (WA). Photo © Kimberley Land Council

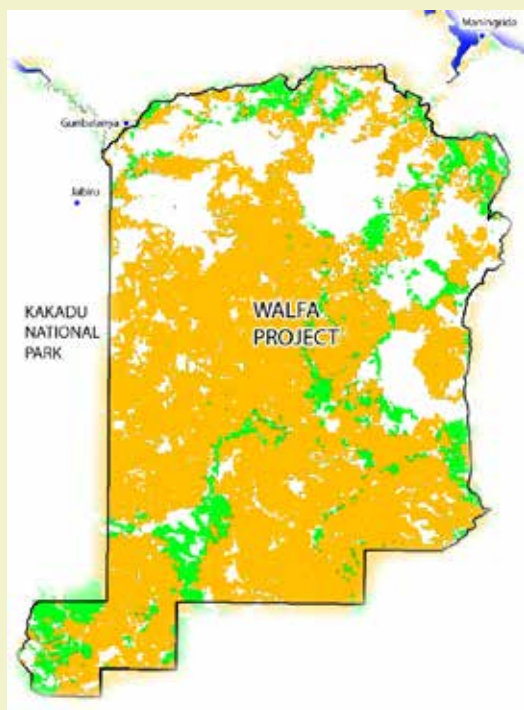
## CASE STUDY 1 - Fire management provides jobs (NT)

The West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement (WALFA) project is a win-win situation — providing jobs for Indigenous rangers and offsetting a global gas company's greenhouse emissions.

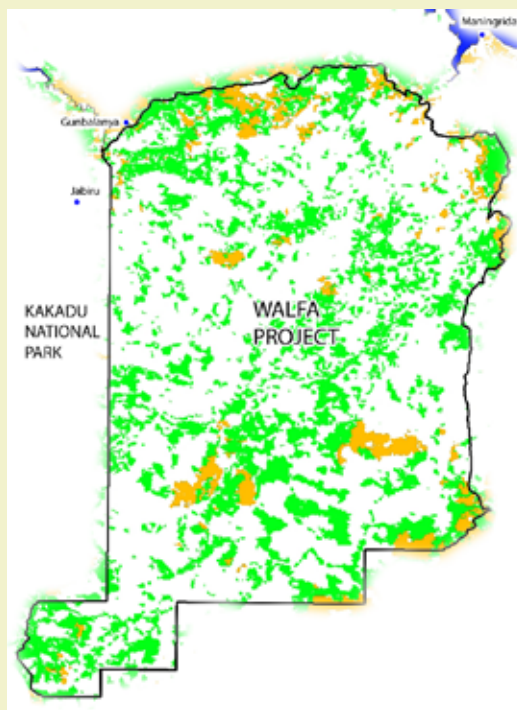
Warddeken, Djelk and several other Indigenous ranger groups have successfully implemented this fire abatement project since 2006 under a long-term contractual arrangement with the gas company, ConocoPhillips.

Through this arrangement, Indigenous rangers use fire management techniques such as early cool burns to reduce the extent of later wildfires and greenhouse gas emissions across 28,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Western Arnhem Land. This then offsets greenhouse gas emissions from the company's liquefied natural gas plant in Darwin.

In return, the company pays Indigenous ranger groups to provide this service, bringing new jobs, networks and educational opportunities.



2004 pre WALFA – late burns (orange) show extensive wildfire damage associated with high greenhouse gas emissions



2013 post WALFA – early burns (green) prevent extensive wildfire damage which lowers greenhouse emissions

## Keeping culture strong

In 2013–14, over 80 per cent of ranger groups reported involvement in cultural activities. Significant sites such as rock art, waterholes, fish traps and burial sites were managed; traditional knowledge and stories recorded; and cultural heritage signs installed.

Examples of other cultural activities include:

- **Preminghana camp** - Around 90 people attended the camp whose aims were to practise Aboriginal culture, connect the community with country and foster a sense of Indigenous land ownership. (Tas)



- **Language classes** - The archives of Gumbaynggirr were accessed and language classes conducted for Gumma IPA rangers, contractors and intern students. (NSW)
- **Cultural mentors** - Two community elders were employed as mentors to provide cultural support and mentoring to the Budj Bim ranger group. Activities included training, guiding visitors, protection of cultural sites and personal support. (Vic)
- **Healing the Rivers** - A traditional ceremony which commenced from Murra Murra was conducted with Jamba Dhandan Duringala Elders in April. The ceremony then travelled on to ten other Aboriginal communities along the Darling and Murray Rivers. (SA)
- **Walking the Ngaanyatjarra Lands** - Fourteen rangers assisted with preparation and took part in culture and health walks held in July 2013 and June 2014. The annual 7 day walks facilitate sharing of cultural knowledge within the community. (WA)
- **Maabayj turtle camp** - An annual two week sea turtle camp run by the li-Anthawirriyarra sea ranger unit, links sea turtle research with getting families back on country. As part of an ecotourism trial, a small number of paying guests stayed in newly constructed eco tents and took part in a range of research and cultural activities. (NT)

Right: li-Anthawirriyarra sea rangers monitor a sea turtle on the Maabayj turtle camp (NT)





Djunbunji rangers David Kyle and William Mundraby set up a motion camera to monitor feral pigs (Qld)



Wunggurr ranger sprays weeds (WA).  
Photo © Kimberley Land Council

## Surveys and monitoring

Over half the ranger groups carried out one or more biodiversity surveys while nearly 80 per cent of groups undertook environmental monitoring.

- **Motion cameras** - Reports showed that a number of ranger groups were using motion cameras. It's a relatively new technique that uses heat-sensing cameras to remotely take photos of passing animals.

## Feral animal management

Over 80 per cent of ranger groups reported managing feral animals. Priorities included reducing impacts on threatened species and endangered ecological communities.

Feral cats or pigs were a key target for around a third of ranger groups. Foxes and camels are not as widespread, but were also targeted by ranger groups in the areas they occur.

- **Feral horse cull** - Paruku rangers and stakeholders organised an aerial cull of over 7,000 feral horses which were damaging the Lake Paruku area. (WA)

## Weed management

Over 85 per cent of ranger groups undertook weed management which included managing Weeds of National Significance (WONS) such as parkinsonia, mimosa, olive hymenachne, lantana, boxthorn and gamba grass.

- **Boxthorn control** - Crews spent over 100 days controlling boxthorn on Bass Strait IPAs. (Tas)



Territory Natural Resource Management's Chair Kate Andrews (left) with Crocodile Islands rangers (L to R), Leonard Bowaynu, Samuel Wumulul, Fabian Gaykamangu and Simone McMonigal (NT)

## Sea Country management

Over a quarter of ranger groups undertook a range of sea country management activities such as marine patrols, collecting discarded nets and other debris and turtle and dugong monitoring.

- **NT Natural Resource Management Award** - The Crocodile Islands rangers who manage land and sea country took out the 'most outstanding ranger group' in 2013. (NT)
- **Surveillance patrols** - The Djelk rangers conducted 28 marine patrols for Australian Customs, sighting 70 vessels from Cape Stewart to Cuthbert Point over the year. (NT)

## Visitor management

A large number of Indigenous ranger groups are engaging with tourists. Over 60 per cent of groups managed facilities for visitors while 50 per cent of groups provided information through signs, ranger talks, websites or pamphlets. Activities were also directed at managing visitor impacts at important natural and cultural sites as well as supporting commercial enterprises.

- **Welcoming visitors** - The Chuulangun rangers maintained campgrounds and facilities for over 300 visitors to their IPA. (Qld)

## CASE STUDY 2 - Rangers find new revenue streams (SA)

Tourism and feral goat control are just two new revenue streams the Nantawarrina rangers are pursuing to create economic opportunities for their local communities.

Six full-time and four part-time Indigenous rangers manage the IPA that sits in the heart of traditional Adnyamathanha lands in the northern Flinders Ranges.

They are employed by Nipapanha Community Council, which has established an Adata Madapa Tourism business arm to oversee the implementation of their tourism strategy and build community capacity.

A number of tourist facilities were completed in 2013–14 that has allowed the IPA to generate fees from tourists. This revenue is returned to the business arm of the Community Council to allocate to further tourism and community projects. A café and guided tours will eventually see community members outside the ranger group employed as well.

A similar arrangement for sharing benefits has been put in place for feral goat mustering. Rangers removed around 900 animals from the IPA in 2013–14 reducing the grazing of native plants to benefit rock wallabies while generating revenue.



A Nantawarrina ranger musters feral goats to be removed from the IPA (SA). Photo Nick Rains



## Threatened species management

Over 70 per cent of ranger groups carried out threatened species activities. Motion cameras, used by a number of groups, provided new information about threatened species distributions. Some species were absent from previously recorded areas but some, such as the black-footed rock-wallaby and central rock-rat were recorded in new areas.

Among the species receiving a concentrated effort in 2013–14 were the flatback and olive ridley turtle, dugong, mallee fowl, greater bilby and the species listed below:

- **Migratory shorebirds** - Napranum rangers completed surveys at 5 locations. Results were added to Birds Australia database. (Qld)
- **Central rock-rat**, *Zyzomys pedunculatus*  
The Anangu Luritjiku rangers used motion cameras to capture a previously unknown population of rock-rats at Haasts Bluff. Thought to be extinct until 1996, the rock-rat is now only known to occur in the McDonald Ranges. (NT)
- **Long-nosed potoroo**, *Potorous tridactylus*  
A record three potoroos and a pouch young were trapped on one night near the Ngunya Jargoan IPA. Indigenous rangers assisted a Firesticks ecologist to install motion cameras on survey plots in the IPA to better understand their potoroos. (NSW)

Right: Angela Lyons checks a *warru* (black-footed rock wallaby) cave for scats, Ngaanyatjarra Lands IPA (WA)

- **Black-flanked rock wallaby**, *Petrogale lateralis*  
The Martu rangers assisted Parks and Wildlife staff to relocate around 30 vulnerable black-flanked rock wallabies from one gorge to another on Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa IPA. To reduce predators, aerial and ground baiting of cats and foxes was carried out. The wallabies were micro chipped, GPS collared and had DNA samples taken before being released. Monitoring showed that the new colony had settled in well. (WA)







Raukkan rangers and ecologists set survey traps (SA). Photo Warrick Angus

- Northern quoll, *Dasyurus hallucatus***  
 The Anindilyakwa rangers helped keep poisonous cane toads off Groote Eylandt, maintaining the area as one of the last strongholds for the endangered northern quoll. The ranger's first line of defence was lost when sadly Ozzie, the cane toad sniffer dog, died of snakebite. Despite this, 20 sound posts were monitored and did not record the calls of any cane toads. The Anindilyakwa rangers also assisted researchers to catch and measure over 60 northern quolls and fit 12 GPS collars. (NT)
- Gouldian finch, *Erythrura gouldiae***  
 Bardi Jawi rangers assisted ecologists set up 10 motion cameras in potential Gouldian finch locations. Rangers also conducted regular monitoring of watering points around One Arm Point and nests in May, which revealed healthy breeding populations of birds. (WA)
- Slender bell-fruit, *Codonocarpus pyramidalis***  
 The slender bell-fruit occurs as scattered shrubs in South Australia where it is listed as endangered. Rangers identified 7 slender bell-fruit on the Nantawarrina IPA and fenced 5 to safeguard them from grazing damage. Seed from the slender bell-fruit was collected but propagation has proven extremely difficult. (SA)



Right: Gouldian finches.  
 Photo © [www.ntbirds.com.au](http://www.ntbirds.com.au)





Celebrating the declaration of the Nijinda Durlga Indigenous Protected Area (Qld)

### Indigenous Protected Areas dedicated in 2013-14

IPAs are an important part of the National Reserve System (NRS) as they include some of Australia’s rarest and most fragile environments. Five IPAs were dedicated in 2013–14 adding over three million hectares to Australia’s NRS. At the end of the reporting period, there were a total of 65 dedicated IPAs covering over 54 million hectares and comprising over 40 per cent of the NRS.

A further 20 IPA projects were in the consultation phase in 2013–14, which involves planning meetings and trips to country with the community and stakeholders to produce an IPA management plan. Once dedicated, these IPAs will potentially add a further 20 million hectares to the NRS, taking the percentage contributed by IPAs to over 50 per cent.

IPA dedicated	State/Territory	Hectares added to NRS
Karrajarrri	WA	2,480,567
Nijinda Durlga (Stage 1)	Qld	186,852
Thuwathu/Bujimulla (Stage 1)	Qld	124,966
Wardaman (Stage 1)	NT	224,704
Yappala	SA	10,855
Total		3,027,944

Table 1. Indigenous Protected Areas dedicated in 2013-14

## CASE STUDY 3 – Real job opportunities (NSW)

In a strong sign of support for Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team (BMEET) supported by WOC — people who appear before the courts can now serve community work and development orders undertaking environmental work in the Fletchers Lake Reserve, New South Wales.

**‘This is a far better way to deal with anti-social behaviour than fines or jail... We want to help young people get out of trouble and stay out of it.’**

Dameion Kennedy, BMEET’s works supervisor

BMEET has already been providing support for young people in the community through cultural programmes, work experience with local schools and mentoring. This opportunity will now allow BMEET to mentor young offenders, helping them to plan and achieve goals towards employment and a career.

BMEET uses Elders and its work team, as role models and mentors to show that there are alternate pathways to a lifetime of unemployment, or worse, the abuse of drugs and alcohol or undertaking criminal activities.

**‘We want to encourage young people to continue their education, to get work and training and to become responsible members of their communities.’**

Dameion Kennedy, BMEET’s works supervisor

**‘Before the program I was involved in drugs and alcohol and was really just moving towards jail. Getting out on country and interacting with our culture has just opened this big pathway for us and the town, which can now see a future for everybody.’**

Dennis King, Barkindji Maraura ranger



Dameion Kennedy, Howard Harris and Dennis King



Dennis King at Fletchers Lake (NSW)



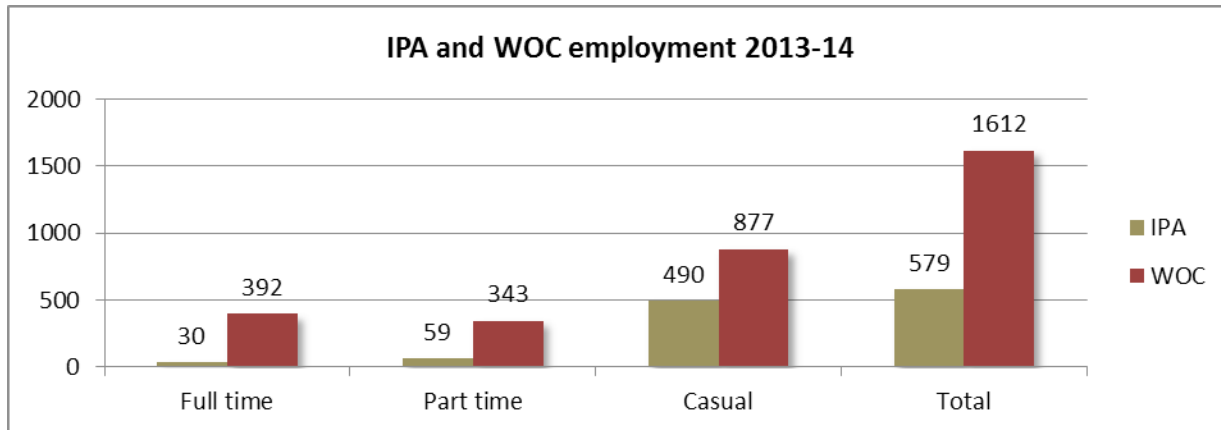


Figure 1. Number of Indigenous Australians employed by the WOC and IPA programmes in 2013-14

## Employment and training

### Employment

In 2013–14, approximately 2,191 Indigenous Australians were employed (full-time, part-time and casually) in WOC and IPA programmes:

- 1,612 - WOC Indigenous positions (759 full-time equivalents)
- 579 - IPA Indigenous positions
- 182 - WOC and IPA non-Indigenous positions.

The majority of Indigenous people, 1,367 worked casually, a further 402 worked part-time and 422 worked full-time, mostly as rangers.

Around 70 per cent of WOC and IPA employment occurred in Western Australia and the Northern Territory and correlates with a higher area coverage of IPAs in these regions.

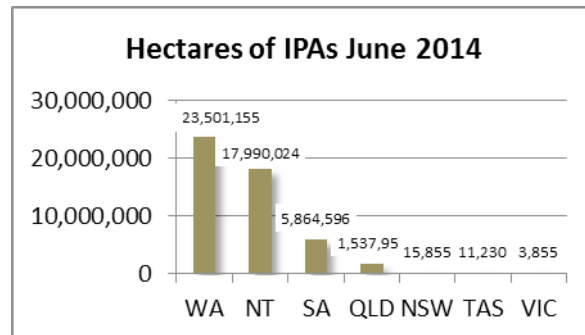


Figure 2. Area of IPAs per state/territory June 2014

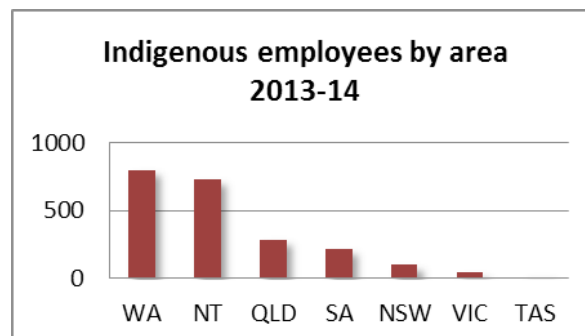


Figure 3. Distribution of employees in 2013-14



Laynhapuy rangers (L to R), Darren Waykala Guyula, Wesley Nguwanguwa Ganambarr, Joseph Yamalpurra Wunungmurra, and Jeffrey Wuinie Guruwiwi (NT). Photo Andrew Falk, © Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation

Around 50 per cent of WOC rangers worked on IPAs. The remaining WOC rangers worked on a variety of land tenures which included public lands managed by councils, state and territory park services, privately owned lands and Indigenous owned freehold lands.

### Career progression

In 2013–14, only 136 Indigenous employees (6 per cent) were reported to have left the programme; this is a high retention rate and suggests a high level of job satisfaction.

**‘I’m a ranger for life. This is my favourite job and I always work hard to protect our country and help my community’**

Fabian Gaykamangu, Crocodile Islands ranger

Career progression amongst Indigenous ranger groups include the roles of senior ranger, supervisor and programme coordinator. In 2013–14, around a third of WOC and IPA coordinators and supervisors were Indigenous.

Many ranger groups mentor and support Indigenous staff to take on higher positions. Administering organisations also offer employment opportunities such as directors, managers and cultural advisors.



Tjuwanpa women rangers (NT)

## Increasing women's employment

A strategy to increase the employment of Indigenous women rangers started in 2011, since then, there has been a general increase in the number of women working through:

- Increased part-time and flexible employment arrangements
- Employing a larger proportion of women or establishing women's ranger groups.

Although the number of WOC Indigenous women rangers was similar to last year, the number of female casuals has increased. Based on anecdotal information, part-time and casual employment provides women with greater flexibility to balance work with family and cultural responsibilities.

**'Casual work offers women starting out in the workforce an opportunity to build skills and confidence before progressing into permanent positions.'**

Tracy Carboon, Martu women's ranger program manager (WA)

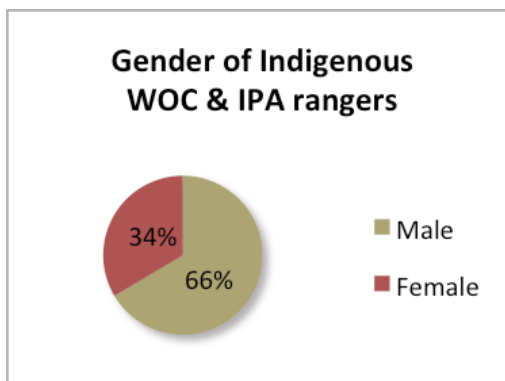


Figure 4. Gender of WOC and IPA Indigenous rangers (includes casuals) in 2013-14

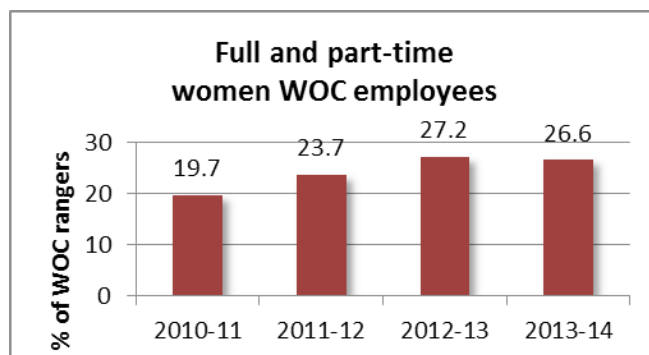


Figure 5. Full and part time WOC women rangers in 2013-14



## CASE STUDY 4 – Budj Bim: A successful training ground (Vic)

The Budj Bim volcanic landscape in Victoria is a training ground for members of the local Indigenous community, the Gunditjmara.

Looking after several IPAs, Indigenous rangers develop skills and experiences beyond land management — setting them up to deliver long term contributions to their community.

In this part of rural Victoria, employment opportunities are limited, so ranger jobs are highly sought after. Currently 13 rangers are employed and training opportunities provided include public speaking, tourism, cultural heritage, conservation and land management and a host of practical and management skills.

**‘We are able to provide an entry point into the workforce for those who would not otherwise have such opportunity and then we give them the skills to move on.’**

Matthew Butt, project manager

The WOC and IPA projects have proven to be successful in building local capacity; moving Indigenous people on from ranger work into other employment further afield. Project manager, Matthew Butt estimates that over the past 11 years, 30 people have moved on to jobs in agriculture or with Parks Victoria, or to apprenticeships or further study.



Rowan Pickett and Josiah Hazelton carry out patch burning in the Budj Bim area (Vic). Photo Greg Shelton



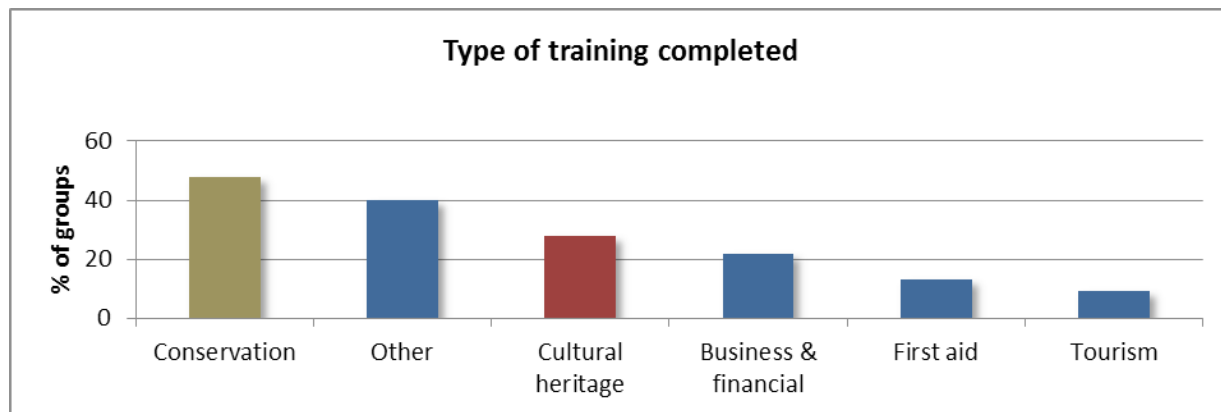


Figure 6. Type of training completed by Indigenous rangers in 2013-14

## Training

In 2013–14 over 60 per cent of WOC and IPA projects facilitated training for one or more employees. In total 385 employees undertook accredited training and 950 employees undertook non-accredited training, the remainder received ‘on the job’ training.

In 2013–14, nearly 50 per cent of ranger groups reported that one or more employees were undertaking or had completed a conservation and land management certificate. Cultural heritage, business and financial management were also popular courses.

Other courses included work health and safety, leadership, mentoring, money management, fisheries compliance, coxswain’s licences, firearms handling, digital media, fire management, cultural site recording, field-based digital data recording, motion camera surveying and turtle monitoring.

A future focus of the WOC and IPA programmes will be to broaden rangers skills to:

- Win commercial contracts to diversify income
- Ranger career expansion (including opportunities to undertake compliance and regulatory related work)
- Acquire skills for other employment areas.



Paruku rangers undertake wilderness first aid training (WA).  
Photo © Kimberley Land Council

## School, community and economic benefits

### Community engagement

In 2013–14, almost 80 per cent of groups reported engaging with the community by consulting Traditional Owners, working with local schools and kids, organising visits to country and sharing cultural knowledge. Activities included:

- **Garma Cultural Festival** - Dhimurru rangers showcased their work and lead daily cultural walks for over 100 visiting youth. (NT)
- **Community nursery** - The Raukkan nursery team collected 10 kg of seed and propagated 65,446 native plants for revegetation and fee-for-service work. (SA)
- **Junior Rangers** - The Mandingalbay Yidinji Junior Ranger programme was launched in October 2013 with a big turnout of community members and 39 children taking part in a range of activities. (Qld)



Blackstone school students listen to an Elder tell the story of Turkey Tjukurrpa, Ngaanyatjarra Lands IPA (WA)

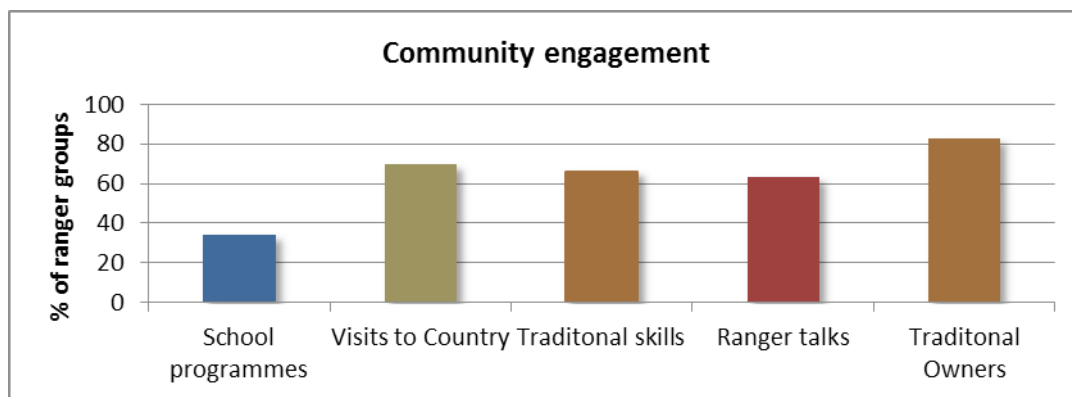


Figure 7. Types of community engagement undertaken by rangers in 2013-14

- **Student leadership camp** - Torres Strait Land and Sea rangers were guest speakers at the Tagai State College leadership camp. (Qld)
- **Learning on Country** - Five Northern Territory ranger groups and associated schools trialled a Learning on Country programme which aimed to improve the school attendance of kids by involving them in ranger activities and excursions that link to mainstream curriculum outcomes. (NT)
- **School vocation and education (VET)** - VET programmes (cadetships, traineeships or apprenticeships) offer students nationally recognised VET certificate courses — delivered through a partnership between schools, registered training organisations and industry. In 2013-14, several groups reported hosting VET students to provide structured workplace experiences and learning.
- **Work experience** - Older Southern Cross Distance Education students were employed as casual labourers to work alongside Nimbin rangers. Some of the students have gone on to TAFE. (NSW)

**A review found that rangers are positive role models, providing a visible career option that encourages children to stay in school and further their education.**

Review of WOC and IPA programmes, 2011



## Commercial activities

In 2013–14, 65 per cent of projects undertook commercial activities to generate additional revenue and jobs.

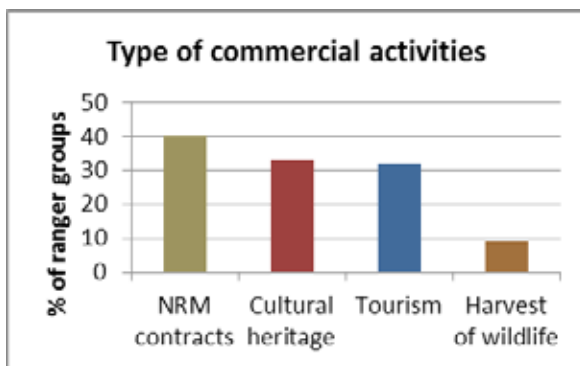


Figure 8. Commercial activities in 2013-14

The main activities were fee-for-service contracts with conservation, mining and pastoral industries. Over 30 per cent of projects engaged in tourism activities such as managing campgrounds and conducting tours. Around 10 per cent of projects were involved with the sustainable use of wildlife.

Commercial activity examples include:

- **Fire abatement projects** - Ranger groups from Northern Australia (Warddeken, Djelk, Dambimangari, Wilinggin, Uunguu and Balanggarra) are using traditional and contemporary fire management to reduce carbon emissions from wildfires and generate an income. (NT, WA)

- **Sustainable mutton bird harvest** - On Babel and Big Dog Island IPAs, Aboriginal operators harvest and process mutton birds ready for sale. (Tas)
- **Crocodile hatchery** - The Djelk rangers harvest and incubate crocodile eggs and raise hatchlings sell to crocodile farms. Five Djelk Women Rangers and their coordinator attended training at Crocodylus Park to further develop skills in crocodile hatchery management. (NT)



Djelk rangers, Romeo Lane and Tara Rostron, hold crocodile hatchlings that are being raised for sale (NT). Photo © Djelk Rangers



## Partnerships

Indigenous ranger groups work on IPAs, national parks, council reserves and private lands, which has initiated the development of a range of mutually beneficial partnerships. Examples include:

- **Sea country management** - A new ranger boat was funded by Lotterywest, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, to assist Bardi Jawi rangers to manage their sea country. (WA)
- **Whale monitoring** - The Yalata rangers spent 10 days with the Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management and Great Australian Bight Marine Park teams between July and October 2013 to monitor Southern Right whales and their new young. (SA)

## Networking

A number of meetings, workshops and ranger exchanges were detailed in the reports.

- **WOC and IPA workshop (SA)** - Approximately 50 Indigenous rangers and managers from across southern South Australia and Victoria attended the workshop in February 2014.
- **WILD10! Conference (Spain)** - Indigenous rangers and traditional owners from the Kimberley region presented at the conference. (WA)

**‘Giving our presentations was the best bit, letting people know what we do - sharing our stories - talking about the IPAs and rangers working on country.’**

WILD 10 Reflections - Irene Davey, Jean O’Reeri and Ari Gorrington (WA)

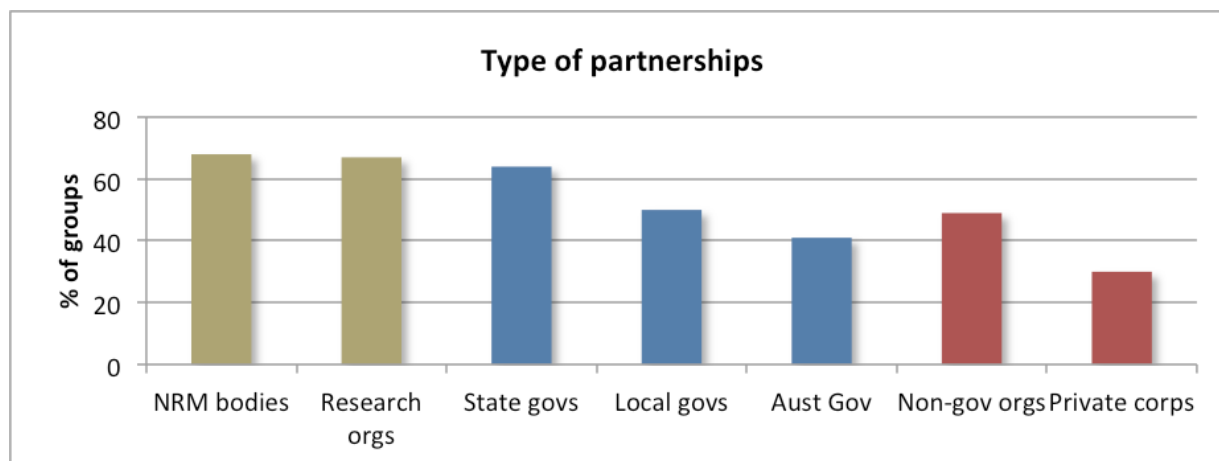


Figure 9. Types of partnerships developed by Indigenous land and sea management organisations in 2013-14

## Health and wellbeing

In addition to providing meaningful employment, WOC and IPA help to connect rangers and communities with their culture and country.

In 2013–14, 70 per cent of WOC and IPA projects reported an improvement in the health and overall wellbeing of their rangers.

**'This IPA, it's the best medicine ... it's going back to country. Country can't do it by itself, it needs Yapa (Aboriginal people).'**

Margaret Nungarrayi Martin, Northern Tanami IPA (NT)

## Thank you...

Thanks for the detailed reports, stories and photos you submitted.

They provide an overview of the important work Indigenous rangers carry out in their communities and caring for our great country.



Djunbunji land and sea rangers on country (Qld)





