



# INDIGENOUS RANGERS ON COUNTRY

Standing up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Environment. Employment. Culture.

The Indigenous Ranger program is a proven success. Rangers manage and protect Australia's unique environment. The program delivers significant benefits for people, country and the economy. The Greens will double funding for Indigenous Rangers, and provide certainty by shifting to 15 year contracts.

It's in all of our interests to keep country healthy. The Indigenous Rangers program is one of the most successful programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program provides unique environmental benefits, and also offers social, community and economic benefits. The Greens will:

- **Double the funding for Indigenous Rangers by providing an extra \$313 million between 2016-17 to 2019-20;**
- **Extend funding commitments to 15 year contracts, and**
- **Work towards a high-level target of 5,000 rangers.**

## > PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Indigenous Rangers undertake valuable environmental work across Australia, often in remote locations, protecting iconic land and sea scapes.

**Protecting endangered species.** Over 70 per cent of ranger groups work on activities to protect threatened species across Australia. For example in Western Australia, Martu rangers are working to secure the survival of the black flanked rock wallaby.

**Fighting invasive species.** Many ranger groups are working to remove destructive invasive species, including feral animals and weeds. For example in the Northern Territory, rangers in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area are stopping feral animals from destroying habitats.

**Fire management.** Often using traditional fire management techniques, ranger groups across Australia use fire management to promote biodiversity.

**Protecting coastlines.** Ranger groups in coastal areas protect seascapes. Activities include sea patrols, monitoring biodiversity, and removing ghost nets. For example in Wunambal Gaambera Country, rangers monitor dugong and turtle populations.

**Revegetation.** Ranger groups contribute significantly to revegetation, helping restore natural landscapes.<sup>1</sup> In Queensland, Jabalbina Rangers are restoring vegetation including Black Palm restoration.<sup>2</sup>

## > WORKING ON COUNTRY ACROSS AUSTRALIA

There are over 100 ranger groups employing around 1,600 rangers across Australia.<sup>3</sup> Groups operate in all seven states and territories, with many in remote locations across northern Australia, in landscapes ranging from woodlands to desert and coastal areas. Ranger groups operate in around 60 per cent of Australia's Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs; parts of the National Reserve System which are voluntarily dedicated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples).<sup>4</sup>

## > HELPING CLOSE THE GAP

The Indigenous Rangers program has significant benefits for rangers, their families and broader communities.

**Employment opportunities:** The Indigenous Ranger program offers real jobs that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want in areas with few employment opportunities. Rangers receive training and gain skills and qualifications which can help them access other jobs.

**Economic benefits:** Ranger groups build on government investment to secure commercial opportunities in diverse areas such as carbon abatement, tourism and land management. About 40 per cent of ranger groups undertake commercial activities, and fee-for-service contracts in the conservation and

<sup>1</sup> [Indigenous Rangers call for expansion of 'world-leading' jobs scheme; Country needs people: Good for environment.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Indigenous rangers – Working on Country](#)

<sup>4</sup> Department of the Environment, [Indigenous Protected Areas.](#)

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pastoral industries bringing additional income to remote communities.<sup>5</sup>

**Improved health outcomes for rangers:** Rangers significantly improve their nutrition and health outcomes, including reduced heart and kidney disease, and fewer alcohol and substance abuse problems.<sup>6</sup>

**Connecting with country and culture:** The Indigenous Ranger program gets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples back on country. Rangers preserve and share knowledge, and more than 80 per cent of groups are involved in specific cultural activities such as managing burial sites and rock art. This helps preserve and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages, history and links with country.

**Individual and community benefits:** The Indigenous Ranger program offers significant benefits for individuals, and their communities. Almost 80 per cent of groups engage with their communities by working with local schools and young people, and acting as role models of workforce participation, healthier lifestyles and cultural preservation for a younger generation.

**Benefits for the broader Australian community:** Ranger programs contribute to better heritage and biosecurity outcomes, and often reduce government costs in a range of areas. One of the strengths of the Indigenous Ranger program is that its focus on caring for country benefits both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the broader community.

## > DOUBLING OUR SUPPORT

The Greens will double the funding for Indigenous Rangers by providing an extra **\$313 million between 2016-17 to 2019-20**. Analysis shows that investment in ranger programs provides a social return on investment of more than 2.7 to 1.<sup>7</sup> **Extending funding commitments to 15 year contracts** will provide funding certainty for programs that are currently not funded beyond 2018.

Currently there are almost 800 full-time equivalent roles.<sup>8</sup> Doubling the funding will increase the number of rangers and provide a base for a **long-term target of 5,000 rangers**.

## > SUPPORT FOR THE INDIGENOUS RANGERS PROGRAM

**Fabian Gaykamangu, ranger on the Crocodile Islands**

*"I'm a ranger for life. This is my favourite job and I always work hard to protect our country and help my community".<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> [Working for our Country](#), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> [Healthy country, health people](#), 2009; [Country needs people: Improving health](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Consolidated report on Indigenous Protected Areas following Social Return on Investment analyses](#), 2016, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> [Indigenous Rangers - Working on Country](#)

**Dean Yibarbuk, senior Indigenous ranger and fire ecologist for the Warddeken Aboriginal Corporation**

*"It is working ... That sort of thing has changed my whole life and given me pride as a manager of the country."<sup>10</sup>*

[Consolidated report on Indigenous Protected Areas following Social Return on Investment analyses \(2016\)](#)

*"The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and associated Indigenous ranger programmes have demonstrated success across a broad range of outcome areas, effectively overcoming barriers to addressing Indigenous disadvantage and engaging Indigenous Australians on country in meaningful employment to achieve large scale conservation outcomes, thus aligning the interests of Indigenous Australians and the broader community."*

[Working for our country: A review of the economic and social benefits of Indigenous land and sea management \(2015\)](#)

*"The unique conservation and cultural management that Indigenous Rangers perform keeps lands and seas healthy in a multitude of ways. As this report shows, it also provides transformational improvement for Indigenous Australians and also many communities."*

[Respecting culture and country - Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia: The first 15 years \(2012\)](#)

*"On a day-to-day basis Indigenous land managers and rangers carry out important conservation activities such as weed and feral animal control, fire management, revegetation and wildlife protection monitoring. This has helped protect threatened or endangered plants and animals across the country.."*

[Healthy country, healthy people: the relationship between Indigenous health status and "caring for country" \(2009\)](#)

*"... caring for country was associated with better nutrition, more frequent physical activity and fewer chronic disease risk factors and diagnoses."*

**Deen Potter, former Magistrate, Pilbara Region**

*"These programs run by KJ Rangers in the various Martu communities have the potential to break cycles of bad health, regular interaction with the justice system leading to incarceration, dysfunction and trauma. These programs can aid in reconciliation and healing within the communities as participants come together ..."<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Gartrell, '[Indigenous rangers call on Turnbull government to double their funding](#)', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Davidson, '[Indigenous groups say ranger program is working, but needs more funding](#)', *The Guardian*, 9 April 2016.

<sup>11</sup> [Social, economic and cultural impact of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa's On-Country programs](#).