



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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Indigenous rangers protecting Australia

Indigenous rangers will travel thousands of kilometres from locations all across northern Australia for a massive ranger gathering in the Kimberley this week.

Held at Pender Bay on Bardi Jawi country, the three-day Kimberley Ranger Forum is a celebration of everything it means to be an Indigenous ranger and the vital role they play protecting the environment and maintaining culture.

Hosted by the Kimberley Land Council, in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Kimberley Ranger Forum will have a focus on biosecurity as Indigenous rangers play an ever increasing role as the eyes and ears of the remote north.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter said 60 different Indigenous ranger groups and a total of 400 people are expected at the forum.

“Aboriginal people have a strong spiritual connection to country, a customary obligation and a responsibility to care for the land,” Mr Hunter said.

“The success of the Indigenous ranger program is based on its strong link to people’s cultural values and their native title rights and interests.

“For over a decade Indigenous rangers have cared for country and culture. Now, more than ever, their work is having an impact, not only in their own communities, but all over Australia.”

With more than 10,000 kilometres of coastline, islands and river inlets across northern Australia, Indigenous rangers are on the frontline to protect Australia’s biosecurity. Their work helps safeguard Australia from biosecurity pests and diseases that could have a significant impact on agriculture industries, environment and human health.

Indigenous rangers have helped find and deal with potential biosecurity threats, such as citrus pests, exotic ants and other animal and plant pests and diseases.

Indigenous ranger groups across the north also help collect data to prove that Australia does not have specific pests and diseases that exist in other countries.

Bardi Jawi ranger Azton Howard conducts biosecurity work along the Dampier Peninsula coastline, checking the water for debris, and surveying plant and animal health.

"Timber, insects, floats, wreckage from boats, goods cast overboard and a huge amount of plastics have been removed from the Kimberley coast thanks to this work," Azton said.

"This is helping to keep our country and the rest of Australia healthy and protected from diseases and pests.

"We are the eyes and ears of the north and without Indigenous rangers this work could not and would not occur."

The Kimberley Ranger Forum will run from August 1 to 3, with groups travelling from across the Kimberley, Northern Territory and north Queensland to attend. For more information and a full program of the week's events visit <http://www.klc.org.au/land-sea/kimberley-ranger-forum>

Indigenous rangers receive funding from the Commonwealth Government Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Area programs, and through the Australian Government Agricultural Competitiveness and Developing Northern Australia White Paper initiatives.

***Senator Nigel Scullion has made a commitment to extend Indigenous ranger contracts to 2020, the shortest extension in the program's history. The government has also said it will extend Indigenous Protected Areas by five years to 2023 but this has not been formally announced and the detail, including whether the amount of funding will stay the same or increase, remains unclear.*