



Kimberley Land Council



MEDIA RELEASE

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WOMEN RANGERS PROTECTING COUNTRY AND CULTURE

More than fifty Indigenous trail-blazing women have gathered together on country in a show of strength and unity for a women's ranger movement that is sweeping across the country.

Travelling from all parts of the Kimberley to Bandl~~ing~~an (Windjana Gorge) on Bunuba country, the Kimberley forum was the third in a series of women specific ranger meetings held across the north of Australia as efforts to secure long-term funding for female positions ramps up.

In the Kimberley, women ranger teams have doubled in the past two years, with more women looking after more country than ever before. However, women's ranger teams continue to face major challenges, such as ongoing shortfalls in funding, the uncertainty of short-term contracts and cuts to programs and policies.

Kimberley women rangers are now calling on the Australian Government to double funding for Indigenous Rangers across Australia and work towards achieving gender equity.

Ngurarra Ranger Coordinator Chantelle Murray was the first female ranger coordinator in the Kimberley. She says there has been a major shift in both the numbers and value placed on women land and sea managers.

"When it comes to conversations about land management women play a very important role in looking after country through both cultural and western ways," Chantelle said.

"There are a lot of opportunities arising for women rangers but not as much funding as we have expected.

"We all need to work together across different levels to tell our stories to accomplish our vision of more women rangers as this is very important to us and our future generations."

The Kimberley Women's Ranger Forum will be an opportunity for the rangers, coordinators and cultural advisors to discuss the challenges that face female rangers, identify solutions and push for policy changes and more jobs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar attended the forum and delivered the opening speech.

Ms Oscar, a proud Bunuba woman and strong Kimberley leader, says working as a ranger enables women to contribute to their future, their families and communities, benefiting every single Australian.

“Our women rangers hold a vital place in actively using our knowledge, and learning innovative practices, to keep our country, our people and all human and non-human relatives healthy and strong,” Ms Oscar said.

“This forum is a celebration of our women and recognition that we must support and grow the roles our women rangers fulfil in maintaining our civilisation – the oldest on Earth – for generations to come.”

The Kimberley Land Council, which organised the event together with the Bunuba Rangers, and facilitates the Kimberley Ranger Network, has been working hard to increase women ranger numbers across the region.

Corporate Services Manager Sarah Parriman says women rangers are leaders in their community and are inspiring many young women to take up the charge caring for country and culture.

“For many women living in remote locations in the Kimberley, Indigenous land and sea management is one of their main opportunities to engage in meaningful employment,” Ms Parriman said.

“As a young Aboriginal woman growing up in the Kimberley, being an Indigenous ranger was never an option for me. Now we have women rangers working all over the Kimberley.

“Employment as a ranger can empower women and have transformative benefits for families, communities and the women themselves.

“Every day women rangers get up, put on their uniform and feel proud that they are contributing to their country, culture and community.”

Dermot O’Gorman, CEO of the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia, said: “Over the past decade, Australia has seen substantial progress with Indigenous ranger groups managing their country, and there is an increasing awareness of the importance of women rangers in that role.

“However, Indigenous rangers have been asking for these programs to be strengthened and expanded. WWF supports calls for Indigenous ranger numbers to more than double, with a focus on ensuring gender equity, that would see the 50 amazing women rangers at the Kimberley forum joined by many hundreds more”

The Kimberley Women’s Ranger Forum is being held from 9 to 13 September 2019. The forum is organised by the Kimberley Land Council and hosted by the Bunuba Rangers. Backing from WWF-Australia and Lotterywest is part of a broader initiative to support Indigenous women rangers, including work to create the nationwide ‘Women Rangers Network’.

The KLC facilitated Kimberley Ranger Network employs Indigenous land and sea managers to undertake cultural and natural resource projects to improve and enhance the unique biodiversity and cultural values of the region.