

May 4, 2015

Request to the Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Environment.

As Indigenous organisations working in remote Australia we want to highlight the success and importance of Indigenous land and sea management in our regions and call for greater investment in this federal budget.

It is critical that Australia can recognise and support the successes in remote Indigenous Australia and as well as address the problems.

Work done by Indigenous Rangers across the landscape, often within Indigenous Protected Areas is transforming the lives of many people for the better, protecting the environment for the benefit of all Australians and allowing Individuals to gain strength through working to provide for their families.

This work is succeeding where many other programs have failed because it is addressing priorities shared and driven by Indigenous people for natural and cultural protection of their lands and seas, because it is developed and applied in consultation with, and under the guidance of senior traditional owners.

In the lead up to the Federal Budget in May it is time to secure and strengthen the Australian Government's successful investment in Indigenous land and sea management. We must move beyond point scoring on remote area living and commit to approaches we know can work and which value traditional owners' strengths.

In light of this we call for the Federal Government to start practical action to this end in the May budget including:

- Commit to a ten year funding horizon for existing and future investments in Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas. Security and predictability of funding is fundamental to allowing Indigenous people to build stronger institutions and expand the good work currently happening.
- Commit to a timeline and associated investment for doubling the number of Indigenous Rangers employed nationally in Australia from existing levels, both by increasing employment in existing programs and extending programs to new areas in consultation with traditional owners and their support organisations.
- Support a long term target of 5000 jobs in Indigenous land and sea management across Australia and work with Traditional Owners, and relevant Indigenous organisations to achieve this. This is the scale of work that needs to be done to protect and manage our country.

Statements from Individuals and Organisational representatives.

“I personally have seen that working on country as a ranger and through Indigenous Protected Areas is transforming the lives of people in our region. We are seeing younger people come up through the ranks to take leadership positions, people learning new skills, young and old engaged in really positive practical activities that makes them proud and delivers benefits not just to their families but for all Australians who get better environmental protection and management.” **David Ross. Central Land Council (NT)**

“Our communities are working with Indigenous Protected Areas to create lots of local opportunities. We are using the IPA to create tourism opportunities, to protect our country, to work with mining companies to get contracts. We have big plans for our country and we know that many more of us can do this Ranger work if we are given the opportunity”. **Central Desert Native Title Services (WA)-Darren Farmer Traditional Owner for Birriliburu and Strategic Advisor**

“We are already working on our plans for managing our traditional country and building enterprises to support our people here. We’ve done a lot, but we could do so much more with dedicated IPA and Ranger funding, we could create more jobs, manage more country and create more tourism employment opportunities” he said. “That’s got to be a high value public investment”. **Ngadju Conservation Committee Les Schultz (WA)**

– “The ranger program has been a key foundation for KJ’s success in delivering social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits to Martu. It resonates with Martu aspirations to look after country and to teach their young people, and it provides a hope and a focus for young Martu in the future. A recent independent evaluation shows that KJ’s on-country programs and activities have provided transformative change for Martu communities. Government should put further investment into the ranger program that has demonstrated success and is clearly providing future pathways for young people in remote communities.” **Peter See, CEO, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) (WA)**

“It’s really important to remember we have active and dynamic people out bush and people are looking for opportunities. Ranger programs and land management generally create the kind of opportunities our young people can work with. It’s that simple and we need more of it.” **Scott Gorringer Mithaka (Qld) spokesperson:**

“The Kowanyama Aboriginal Land & Natural Resources Management Office has always focused on the need to have land and sea management grounded in the authority of the traditional owners and these jobs allow for that. We will continue to take responsibility for managing this region and we urge government to look to long term partnerships with us by extending investment in land and sea management through local Indigenous people” **Chris Hannocks Land and Sea Manager Kowanyama (Qld) spokesperson:**

“Our rangers are trusted by the community. After the recent cyclone, the rangers were among the first on the ground helping with the cleanup before the emergency people arrived. They had the equipment to clean up, and people listened to their safety messages. The community and Traditional Owners rely on the rangers for help, and to do many jobs - they look after the sacred sites, lands and seas - they are really the ‘front’ people for our community. They will be the future leaders and that’s why we need to support them.” **George Milaypuma, Senior Cultural Advisor, Crocodile Islands Rangers (NT)**

“Indigenous Rangers and IPAs are a proven success across Australia” said Margaret Rose, YMAC, “IPAs and Ranger programs offer the best opportunity to combine meaningful Indigenous employment with the fulfilment of cultural obligations by Traditional Owners. This core funding is vital.” **Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) Margaret Rose, Deputy Regional Manager for the Pilbara and Nyangumarta Traditional Owner (WA)**

“At Dhimurru our Rangers and our Indigenous Protected Area are two ways we bring together the Yolngu and Balanda/Ngapaki way of thinking for responsible land and sea management. We work with tourists, government agencies, miners, scientists and others to create a strong partnership. Our Senior Traditional Owners have guided this all the way by investing their time and their knowledge. We ask the federal government to make a similar long term investment.” **Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation-Chairperson Rarrtjiwuy Herdman (NT)**

“Kimberley Aboriginal people have been using Indigenous Protected Areas and the Kimberley Ranger Network to create jobs, develop cultural enterprises and sustainable livelihoods in remote communities. Made up of 13 groups, the Network employs about 170 full time and casual rangers to look after country each year. With long-term federal government investment we could do even more to build on existing social and economic opportunities while protecting the natural and cultural values of the region for the benefit of all Australians.” **Kimberley Land Council-Chairperson Anthony Watson (WA)**

“Land Management projects are perhaps the only projects that can holistically deliver social, economic and educational advancement in remote communities as they are intrinsically aligned with the cultural obligations and aspirations of Traditional Owners. The Commonwealth Government must consider these projects as a strategic investment strengthening and sustaining remote communities and providing key long term environmental maintenance in remote Australia.” **Liam Mulcahy, Ranger Coordinator, Spinifex Land Management (W.A)**

“Yawuru are using our soon to be dedicated IPA and the IPA Country Managers (Rangers) to develop a partnership based innovative land and sea management regime incorporating a commercially successful cattle station, internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands and a connected marine environment. Nyamba Buru Yawuru General Manager, Tony Lee says “this Government investment which combines Yawuru traditional knowledge and applied western science means more jobs, more tourism opportunities and better land and sea management in this unique region. A long term commitment is required from Government to secure these benefits”. **Nyamba Buru Yawuru CEO Tony Lee, on behalf of the Yawuru Registered Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (YRNTBC)-**

“Nantawarrina was the first ever Indigenous Protected Area in Australia 17 years ago and people are rightly proud of that. Local people want to know that the IPA here and the ranger work has a secure future, so there can be more jobs and country will continue to be protected” **Nantawarrina IPA Coordinator Alan Smith.**

“The IPA and Working on Country Rangers programs are working really good. We look after the cultural heritage and help the young people work for their future.” **Mark Butler- Ngaanyatjarra (WA) Council Board member and Ranger.**

“Traditional Owners in our area have always protected and managed our lands and seas. With our Djelk Rangers and Djelk Indigenous Protected Area we are fulfilling our deepest responsibilities to our country and combining our knowledge with science for a two way approach. We can protect our beautiful country for all with a long term partnership with the federal government on this. So that our children can have a real future with jobs working on our country.” **Victor Rostron Ranger Coordinator Bawinanga Djelk Rangers.**

