

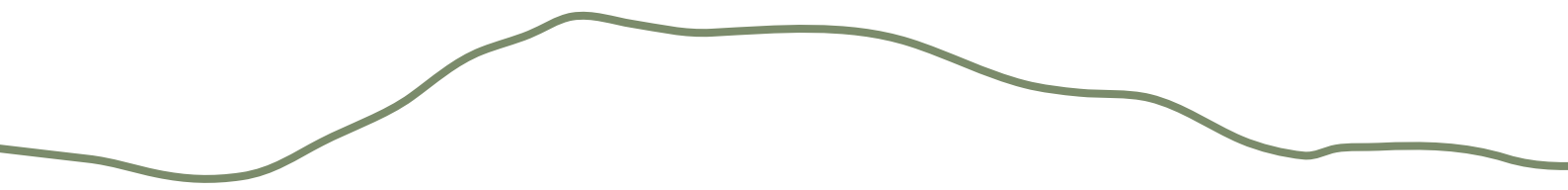


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RANGER REPORT 2022-23





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OVERVIEW

The Central Land Council has built a growing program of passionate rangers who care about country and culture. Its program design focusses on stable employment and workplace support allowing rangers to provide for their families and develop into community leaders. The rangers work closely with experts on threatened species projects, ensuring Aboriginal knowledge and expertise contribute to the nation's understanding of its environment. Elders and traditional owners are at the heart of decision-making about ranger work. The CLC's extensive country visit program blends cultural activities with environmental management to ensure country is looked after by the right people, the right way.

This supplement to the CLC's annual report is a snapshot of the training and the work the rangers do. Each ranger group contributed to painting the picture of the rewards and challenges of operating across vast areas.

The past year has seen exciting progress in the three newest teams; Aputula (Finke), Walungurru (Kintore) and Utopia (Utopia homelands). Each group now has a dedicated full-time ranger group co-ordinator and a long list of casual rangers. The Kintore ranger base is almost fully constructed and Aputula and Utopia are under consultation. With operational funding for these three groups due to expire during the 2023–24 financial year the CLC will be working hard to secure ongoing funding.

The communities in which each ranger group is based continue to guide the program. This year four communities completed healthy country plans to direct the operations of the Muru-Warinyi Ankkul, Anmatyerr, Akitjere and Ltyentye Apurte Rangers. The traditional owners oversaw the planning process and it reflects their aspirations for their community's ranger group. The CLC rangers are a testament to the value of ongoing funding for meaningful work. The CLC would like to thank the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation for their continued financial support of the ranger program and the NT Government for funding infrastructure and equipment. These grants paid for new sheds at the recently flooded Daguragu office and equipment for firebreak maintenance following extreme rainfall and resulting large bushfires. These improvements help the rangers to meet climate change challenges such as extreme weather events.

- National Indigenous Australians Agency – Indigenous Advancement Strategy
- Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation – Real Jobs Program
- Aboriginals Benefit Account – Economic Stimulus Program
- Indigenous Desert Alliance – Supporting Rangers Program
- NTG Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program

Where we work

Table 1. Ranger groups and areas of operation

Ranger group	Areas of operation
North Tanami	Lajamanu and Northern Tanami Indigenous Protected Area
Warlpiri	Yuendumu, Nyirripi, Willowra and Southern Tanami Indigenous Protected Area
Muru-wariny Ankkul	Tennant Creek region
Tjuwanpa	Aboriginal land trusts around Ntaria and adjoining national parks
Kaltukatjara	Kaltukatjara and western half of Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area
Ltyentye Apurte	Santa Teresa Aboriginal Land Trust and surrounds
Anmatyerr	Ahakeye Aboriginal Land Trust, Ti-tree and wider Anmatyerr region
Anangu Luritjiku	Papunya and eastern half of Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust
Murnkurrumurnkurru	Dagaragu Aboriginal Land Trust and surrounds
Arltarpilta Inelye	Atitjere, Huckitta Station and surrounds
Tjakura	Mutitjulu, eastern Katiti-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area
Walungurru	Kintore and western half of Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust
Aputula	Aputula (Finke) and eastern Simpson Desert
Utopia	Arlparra and Ampilatwatja, Sandover region

Figure 1. Ranger program funding

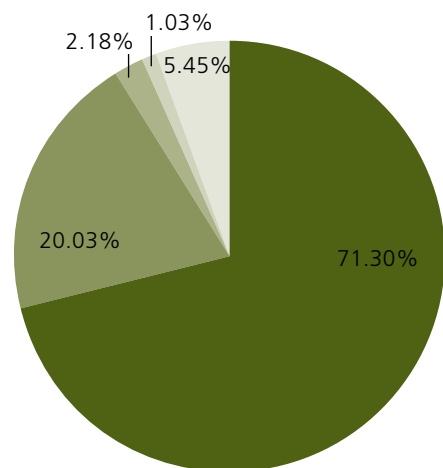
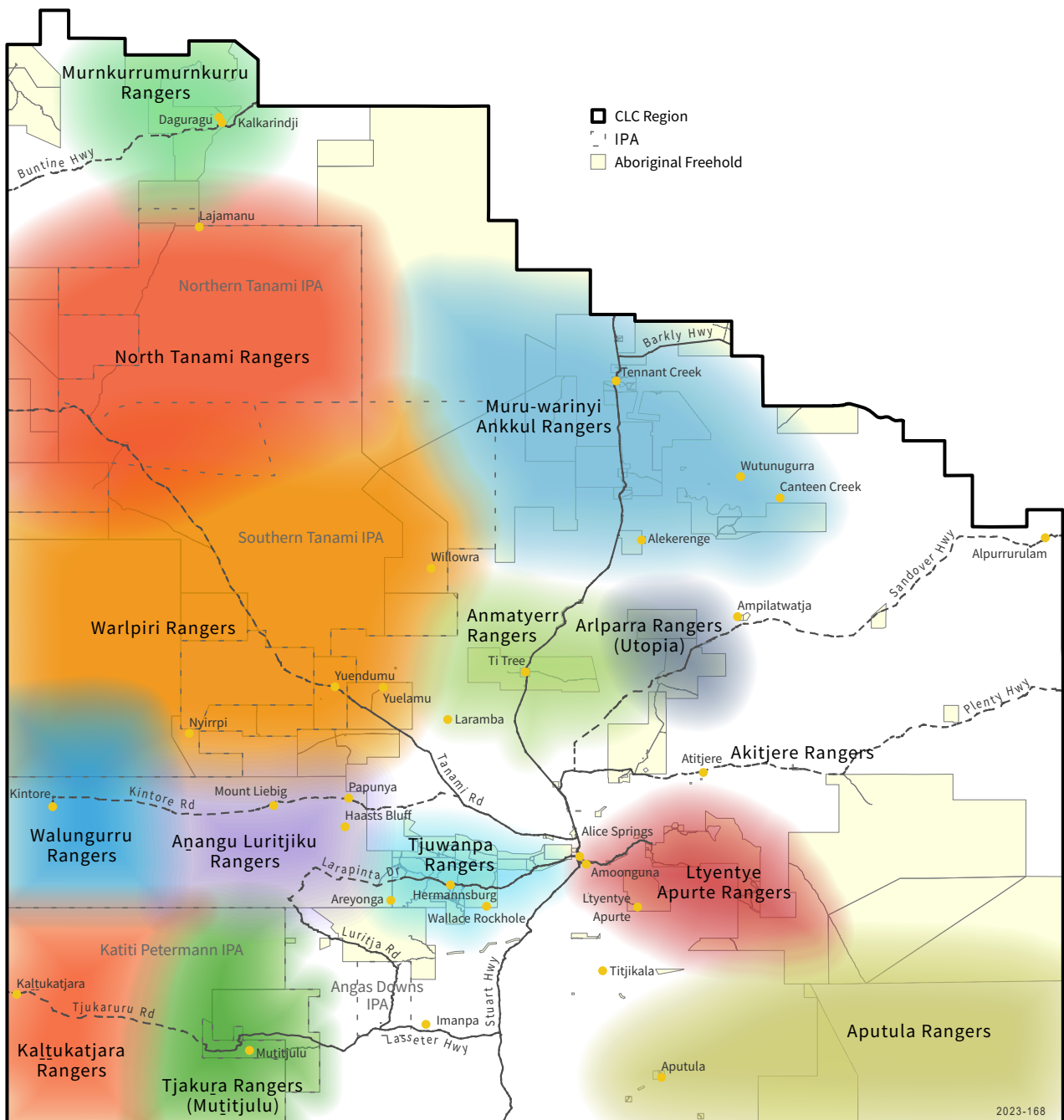


Figure 2 Ranger Group Work Areas



RANGERS CELEBRATE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Josephine Grant

Josephine Grant is happy about her achievements as a CLC ranger over the past decade.

"There are lots of highlights," she said. "One was to finish my certificate IV in conservation land management, another was to become the ranger co-ordinator [with the Anmatyerr Rangers in Ti Tree]. Another was going to Nepal."

In 2019 Ms Grant and a delegation from the CLC and the Indigenous Desert Alliance delivered a paper at the World Ranger Congress in Nepal about the use of fire in the landscape.

"Rangers from all over the world came to share their stories and make friends and ask about the ranger exchange," she said. "I could see the snow on top of Mt Everest from my [motel] room."

Even more than to travel she loves working out bush.

"That's why I applied for the job," she said. "I had been a youth housing officer in Tennant Creek and I'd worked for the night patrol in Alice Springs."

In 2012 a friend told her about a ranger vacancy with the Muruwarinyi Ankkul Rangers.

"It's important to care for country and look after the sacred sites where our ancestors grew up and lived and roamed. It's important to teach the younger generation knowledge of country and to follow our culture. Culture is our identity. It's who I am."

In her early years, Ms Grant undertook fencing work and animal surveys.

"We used a device to record data out bush," she said. "We recorded bilbies, lizards and rats; whatever was in the pit fall traps."

She worked her way through the ranks from senior ranger to support officer and to her current position as a ranger co-ordinator.

She is the first Aboriginal woman in that role at the CLC, and her career has inspired others.

"Her move to Ti Tree, where she had few family connections, was a bold one and a really important life achievement," said regional land management co-ordinator Ben Kaethner.

Ms Grant is proud of the awards she has won: the NT minister's award for leadership in protected areas management (2016), NT Indigenous natural resource management champion (2016) and the Territory natural resource management Rio Tinto Indigenous land management award (2017).

She hopes she has beaten a path for other women.

"One day other women might want to become a co-ordinator. They can see how I started and pursued my passion, and what I've been through. I feel happy and excited about what I've achieved."

One day other women might want to become a co-ordinator. They can see how I started and pursued my passion, and what I've been through. I feel happy and excited about what I've achieved.



Dan Pepperill

Ten years have flown by pretty quickly for Anmatyerr lead ranger Dan Pepperill. Based in Ti Tree with his family, the 36-year-old has loved the job from day one.

“As soon as I started I felt really happy,” he said. “I love all ranger work – meeting with other rangers, camping on country, ranger camps, having a yarn with friends. I’m happy with everything.”

Mr Pepperill has developed a broad skillset in his decade as a ranger. He took part in animal surveys, assisted with fire management and helped control weeds. As a grader operator, he has fought erosion. But for all his experience, he finds there is always something new to learn.

“Traditional way and white-fella way, there’s heaps to learn,” he said. “I completed certificate II and III [in conservation and land management] and got to wear the yellow [graduation] robe.”

Now he’s working on his certificate IV in conservation land management and has helped to recruit several new rangers in Yuendumu.

“I’ve been giving a hand to them mob, signing them up, checking their details. It’s exciting and makes me proud to get them going.”

He hopes to see even more young people take up the challenge.

“We need to see more rangers employed to make a better way for men and women, to work together and to teach the young ones,” he said.

He’d like to see more middle-aged rangers in their 40s or 50s join the program.

He is looking forward to spending his long service leave in Ti Tree where he will have a good long rest and plan the next few years.

We need to see more rangers employed to make a better way for men and women, to work together and to teach the young ones.



Ryan Raggett

"When I started as a ranger, I was little bit nervous to talk to white people, and doing presentations with a microphone. I was 26 years old when I started. I wanted to learn whitefella way and blackfella way - two-way knowledge. I was also interested in teaching young people about what I know.

Now I'm doing timesheets and work planning for the rangers. We list the jobs on the calendar and schedule them in the work plan.

My favourite part of the job is cleaning out springs and rock holes, and putting out cameras to show which animals are drinking the water. We do this all around the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust. The traditional owners like the work that we do, and we like working them. They tell us the stories and rules for the places we work.

I like the opportunity to talk to other people and other rangers when we do our training, and sharing ideas. I also like to do exchanges, like the one we did to Mulan [in Western Australia] a few years ago to talk about night parrots and other threatened species.

In the future I would like to teach the new, young rangers, and say 'don't get nervous or shy to talk to other people' and help them to be better rangers so that they can become new leaders, like lead rangers. I can't wait for my 10-year anniversary."

My favourite part of the job is cleaning out springs and rock holes, and putting out cameras to show which animals are drinking the water.



Charles Lechleitner

Charles Lechleitner credits his uncle Bobby Hayes from Ltyentye Apurte for inspiring him 10 years ago to become a CLC ranger.

"He would take me out on country and tell me stories of the old days and the work he would do to make a living," he said. "That knowledge is what I try to pass on to the next generations. It was a very sad day when that old man passed away, taking with him the stories that I didn't get to hear."

Mr Lechleitner didn't find it easy in the beginning.

"My schooling was a bit less but then I met some fellas who were doing the conservation and land management certificate. They helped me push through my training at Batchelor. I was very happy to finish my certificate IV. They also helped me learn to speak up really good. When we had ranger camps, I'd speak up properly, instead of shaking."

"Over the years I've built my knowledge on white and blackfella ways of living and teaching. Plus I learnt what it takes to become a jack-of-all-trade ranger, working and living on country. I pass on these teachings to my family and friends and anyone who wants to learn."

He found that tablet computers with GPS technology played a big role in the life of a ranger.

"When we go out bush we take the tablet and record everything on it – feral animals, camels, weeds, waterholes. We also use it to take photos so the people in town can see it."

His first trip to the Marlinja community north of Elliott to help with a carbon burning project was a career highlight.

"Before heading out we had heard from the traditional owners that there used to be a lot of bilbies there, but nobody had seen them for a few years. We set up a few motion cameras hoping to spot one or two. When we collected the cameras we found that there were still a lot of bilbies, which made the traditional owners very happy.

"I've enjoyed working as a ranger over the past 10 years and I look forward to a future where more people from all walks of life learn and teach one another about caring for country," he said.

Over the years I've built my knowledge on white and blackfella ways of living and teaching.

Obed Ratara

"Before I got my ranger job, I went to school at Ipolera before moving to Kuparilya outstation to be closer to work. I was working for the regional council in Ntaria, but I really wanted a job that allowed me to get out on country as well. I wanted to work on my own country, for my family, but also help other families in the region. Ranger work gave me a chance to do everything I wanted.

My favourite parts of the job are welding and snake catching. The rangers often need to weld panels and fences for keeping horses out of waterholes. We are also on call for snake removals around the community. Most often we need to take them away from the school, so it's a good way for the rangers to show young people the type of work that we do.

Over my ten years in the ranger group, I've built up my skills in team leadership, administration and work planning, and have just completed six months as the Papunya ranger co-ordinator. Going to Papunya was a good challenge and gave me a chance to prove that I could do it, but I'd really like to be a ranger co-ordinator in my own community, on my own country one day.

For any young people thinking about doing ranger work, I'd say 'give it a go, if you want a good job working on country and learning new things, then have a try. It's really important to work on country and look after it, because it will look after you'."



GENDER EQUITY STRATEGY

The land management program's gender equity strategy gathered momentum at workshops about the barriers women face across the sector and set targets for the next four years. The team discussed with women and men about gender equality, and how to inspire men and boys about the cause, and further defined the program's targets. It also came up with a vision statement: 'Women are able to fully participate in their workplace, free from all forms of discrimination and disadvantage. There is equal gender representation across all functions of Land Management, where culturally appropriate.' It plans to launch the strategy in December 2023.

Women rangers from across the region attended two major professional development workshops. In August of the reporting period, 13 female CLC rangers from eight groups met at Tilmouth Well for a wellbeing workshop featuring lots of engaging activities. Presenters from the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council's demonstrated emotional and mental wellbeing tools and processes of their Uti Kulintjaku [to listen, think and understand clearly] project. The women shared tips and tricks for cheaper living and discussed ranger engagement, workplace processes and gender equality. They said they felt proud of their work, more confident, and glad to be able to 'let their feelings out' with their colleagues.

Soon after, more than 200 women gathered at Inteye Arrkwe (Ross River), an hour east of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), for the third Northern Territory Strong Women for Healthy Country Forum led by Mimal Land Management. More than a quarter were from the CLC's land management team. Women land management, the art and health sectors gather at networking events to share their work and advocate for their collective needs. A steering group, Message Sticks, was formed and five women nominated to represent the CLC region. Strategy co-design, ranger presentations, bush medicine workshops and sessions with local mental health support teams filled the week. Women rangers say they truly value these forums.



TOP Women's Wellbeing Workshop attendees at Tilmouth Well in 2022.

BOTTOM Strong Women for Healthy Country Forum at Ross River in 2022.

The three-year Yitaki Mani (reading the country) project reached its final stages in 2023. With the support of 10 Deserts, the Indigenous Desert Alliance and Territory Natural Resource Management the project produced resources to maintain the knowledge of kuyu pungu (master trackers) by teaching their ancient animal tracking knowledge to younger generations, especially rangers. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between generations, preserve the elders' knowledge and skills and to find new ways to teach people who no longer live off the land.

The future custodians of this knowledge, the CLC's Warlpiri and North Tanami rangers, were vital to the project's success. They want to work on country and have the potential to use these

unique skills professionally, for example in biodiversity surveys for environmental impact assessment. They are also teachers. Throughout the project, they shared their special knowledge with students of Warlpiri-speaking communities and promoted the unique opportunities available through ranger work.

Anthropologists, linguists and other experts in Tanami Desert cultures and languages helped the Yitaki Mani team to develop resources to teach the tracking of warlpijiri (bilby), wadarpi (sand goannas) and wardilkya (Australian bustards) and other species. The teaching materials included 'mind maps' that describe the observations trackers need to make and the knowledge needed to track an animal.

LEFT Yitaki Mani tracking workshop at Newhaven.
RIGHT Madeleine Dixon with a spinifex hopping mouse.



RANGER GROUP ACTIVITIES

Akityarre Rangers

Urlampe sacred site fence and homeland support works

After years of planning and consultation Akityarre Rangers were able to complete three projects prioritised by the traditional owners of the Urlampe homeland near the Northern Territory/ Queensland border. When senior traditional owner Allan Rankine worried that animals might fall down an open old well on Manners Creek Station the rangers fenced it off and placed spacers on the fence to keep cattle out.

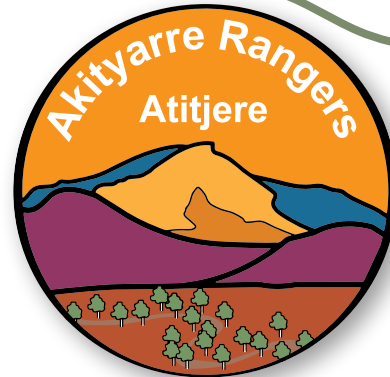
The rangers fenced off Alcoora Spring, a sacred site and very special place for the Rankine family and the wildlife. The very hard ground was tough going, but the project was well worth doing because it will protect the spring from cattle and horses. Stock will be able to drink at a trough that overflows outside the four-strand fence, while native animals can still get through.

The rangers also erected warning signs to prevent station workers and tourists from driving down into a large, deep sink hole on Manners Creek Station. They made the signs from old car bonnets and hand painted them in bright colours.

The Rankine family are happy these jobs have been completed and the rangers are very pleased to have worked on them.

Anyemperrke spear gate

The Akityarre Rangers fixed a fence at Anyemperrke, a women's site on Atula Station that was suspected to have been damaged by cattle or by wandering camels. As cattle have been stuck in there in the past, the female rangers decided to install a spear gate allowing cattle to leave the site, but not get back in. The male rangers bought the gate frame and taught the women how to weld legs on its base and install the gate. Rangers Andrina Williams, Melissa Cleary and Irene Reiff also helped to roll up old wire and hammer in new star pickets. When the gate was cemented in the rangers tensioned the fence wires. Everybody was happy to see the site properly protected and that trapped cattle can safely get out.



TOP Alcoora Spring Urlampe Projects fence building.

BOTTOM Rangers at Sink Hole on Manners Creek Station Urlampe Projects.

Anangu-Luritjiku Rangers

Protecting the central rock rat

The Anangu-Luritjiku Rangers have helped scientists to monitor threatened species, burnt country and assisted with the development of the Central Western Desert Indigenous Protected Area which will be declared on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust.

In March, they joined the Central Western Desert IPA development officer and scientists from Territory Natural Resource Management and the Northern Territory Government for surveys of the critically endangered Antina (central rock rat). The rangers were part of the discovery of the threatened species on Ulumaburru (Mount Edward) in 2013.

The surveys focussed on two mountains to the west of the Ulumaburru population – Amunturrngu (Mount Liebig) and Talipanta (Mount Palmer). Old records about the animal from Central Australia in the 1960s suggest that the habitat there would be suitable. Survey workers braved an extremely hot week, using a helicopter to access the high peaks and rocky outcrops that are the home of the rock rat. They placed wildlife monitoring cameras at 23 sites on the two mountains and some low-lying country. Traditional owners provided cultural advice about locations and learnt about the scientific techniques. For some traditional owners it was their first time in a helicopter.

The surveys detected rock rats at all 23 survey sites. This suggests the species was thriving due to good rains over the previous two years. Traditional owners were happy to hear this news, and looked forward to planning some control programs for feral cats with the scientists to protect the threatened animals.

“I’m really happy we found this little animal. We’ve got to look after it now.” - Peter Turner, Amunturrngu traditional owner.



LEFT Monitoring camera placed on a rocky outcrop at Talipanta.

TOP RIGHT Shannon Palmer, Alesha Raggett and Anisha Gorey installing a monitoring camera for central rock rat at Talipanta.

BOTTOM RIGHT Yuella Miller’s first flight in a helicopter with pilot James Griffiths, Benjamin Sloggett and Andrew Schubert.



Anmatyerr Rangers

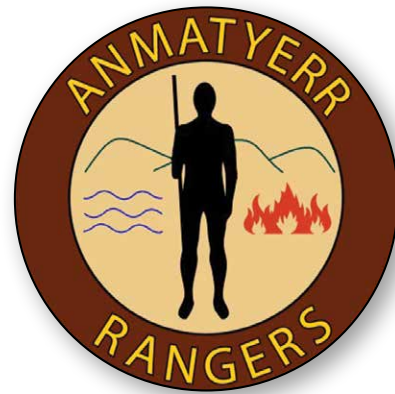
Saving soil on the Ahakeye Aboriginal Land Trust

Soil scientists and erosion experts from the Mulloon Institute wanted to talk to traditional owners and rangers about stopping water run-off to keep country healthy. They met to explain what they wanted to do and where. They used maps and satellite images to identify the type of erosion problems they were looking for. The traditional owners and rangers were happy to help and showed the scientists possible erosion sites. Together, they looked at the type of work that needed to be done and the traditional owners made sure the scientists did not go near sacred sites.

After they selected erosion sites on the Adelaide Bore road and Aileron Station, remediation work started in November 2022. The rangers used the CLC bobcat and a front-end loader from Aileron Station to build up whoa-boys, earth mounds to divert the water off the road. Maurice Campbell, Bevan Pepperill and Clayton Namatjira picked up some bobcat skills from the experts, such as how to safely pick up dirt and build ponds to hold rainwater that would otherwise run off and erode country.

It rained after the work was done, and the rangers had to check again for erosion. They needed to repair some of the whoa-boys on the Adelaide Bore road where the rain had been really heavy, but mostly the water stayed on the country and did not run off.

The work is part of a bigger project improving land management, soil health and carbon storage to deal with climate change. The scientists were impressed with the rangers' skills and said they want to keep working with them. The traditional owners could see the benefit of keeping water on country and were very happy with the results of the project.



Anmatyerr Ranger Bevan Pepperill supervises while Maurice Campbell uses the bobcat to create erosion control banks on Ahakeye Aboriginal Land Trust.



Aputula Rangers

Protecting women’s sacred sites

The female Aputula Rangers worked on a long-standing request from traditional owners to clean up the kungka tree , a women’s sacred site at the old Aputula (Finke) waste dump. Under the guidance of senior female elders the women cleared rubbish and debris for more than two days, using hand tools and a bobcat to prepare the site for fencing. They also also learnt stories about the site from the elders.

To prepare for the job, two rangers Kitana Shaw and Elisha James completed bobcat training in 2022 and refreshed their skills with ranger support officer Clifford Woodford. They completed the work in May 2023, confidently operating the bobcat and communicating with UHF radios.

“It felt great, I was enjoying it and it was good being busy,” Ms James said.

Ranger Lorraine Stuart also worked on the project. “It’s been really good to clean the site to make it look tidy. It’s the first time ever for the female rangers to do something and feel proud about it,” she said.

“The old ladies, the ones with the knowledge, feel proud about it too, and it makes the elders feel more connected to it. They feel really happy when it is tidy.”

Working at the Mac Clark Conservation Reserve (Akerre)

The Aputula Rangers have worked at Akerre (Mac Clark Conservation Reserve) since 2022, as part of a Commonwealth-funded threatened species recovery project. Last year they camped for three nights at Old Andado station with staff of the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Division, the CSIRO and the Ltyentye Apurte Rangers and travelled to the nearby reserve every day. They brought along traditional owners to develop a joint management plan, discuss fire and erosion management, plan new signs and film a story about the endangered irrkep (*Acacia peuce*) and the cultural significance of Akerre with the ABC’s Catalyst program.



The team also repaired fences to protect the threatened trees from cattle and assessed the erosion the cattle had caused. While they were at it they removed around 45 cattle from the reserve and fixed breaks in the fence. The rangers learnt how to measure the trees to work out their growth since the last survey. They also helped to set Elliot traps for an animal survey. They were pleased to be part of this work and shared their stories with the traditional owners of the reserve. They taught the Ltyentye Apurte Rangers about their country and picked up fencing skills from the visitors. “It’s all about telling the stories and looking after country,” ranger Clifford Stuart said.

LEFT Elisha James marked out the Aputula dump site.

RIGHT Aputula Rangers measured *Acacia peuce* at Arkerre.



Kaltukatjara Rangers

Improving roads and protecting soil and sites

The Kaltukatjara Rangers and traditional owners have completed a five-year track rehabilitation and soil conservation project that has improved access to country on the Kaṯiṯi Petermann Indigenous Protected Area. The upgraded tracks allow more people to visit their country and outstations without high clearance four-wheel drives. They also make it easier for rangers and traditional owners to burn on the IPA, maintain sacred sites and reduce wear and tear on cars and equipment.

Initially, CLC staff mapped out with traditional owners which roads to rehabilitate, repair or upgrade. Where tracks were close to significant and sacred sites they set up restricted work areas.

This year, rangers and traditional owners undertook a reconnaissance trip with a subcontractor and worked with the grader drivers to manage any cultural risks and that the roads were graded in line with the restricted work areas. For example, they opted not to grade a section of road through a stand of significant trees. Rangers also cleared minor trees, bushes and other obstacles to protect vehicles and graders.

This year's final phase of the project saw approximately 130 kilometres of existing tracks repaired and graded. Rangers and traditional owners also led the graders along an old and in places barely visible 40 kilometre hunting track off the Tjukaruru Road. They had to 'track' tyre marks from many years ago. Grading this section of track has significantly improved access to Kunapula and other outstations.

The Northern Territory Government's Aboriginal Ranger Grants program funded the grading of approximately 200 kilometres of track, the realignment of 18 kilometres and the rehabilitation of 7200 hectares of land. In previous years the rangers completed training in skid steer, bobcat and grader operations.



Grading the road to Eagle Valley outstation.



Ltyentye Apurte Rangers

Restoring the Arltunga cemetery and grading roads on the Santa Teresa Aboriginal Land Trust

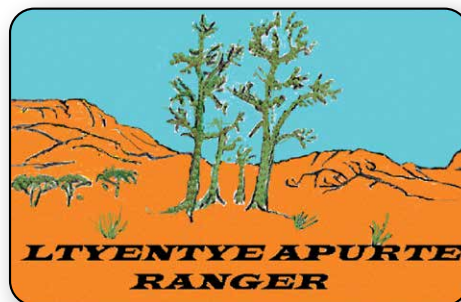
In November 2022, the Ltyentye Apurte Rangers completed the restoration of the historical Arltunga (Little Flower Mission) cemetery on the Arletherre Aboriginal Land Trust. This important project responds to a request by the traditional owner ranger advisory committee and had been a few years in the making. The original crosses at more than 40 graves had been damaged or destroyed by feral animals and livestock.

Regional workplace mentor Jody Kopp and rangers Bronwen Cavanagh, Roberta Cavanagh and Salbena Cleary kicked off the project with a two-day survey of the cemetery. They counted the old graves, recorded their GPS co-ordinates and planned the restoration of the historical site. Back at base the rangers welded and painted 45 steel crosses.

The whole ranger team then worked with NT Parks and Wildlife staff to erect the crosses and build a fence around the cemetery. Many of the old people who lived at the mission feel happy that this important site has been restored and protected.

The rangers began to use the CLC grader to repair tracks and fix erosion on the land trust. This year they assessed the tracks and developed a six-month plan to fix the tracks and erosion with expert Colin Stanton. The rangers prioritised tracks to be graded and Mr Stanton trained them in track maintenance and erosion remediation.

Three rangers also completed nationally accredited grader training with Civil Train Australia. They learned to operate the grader safely and legally and then graded the track from Phillipson Bore outstation to the Itnwerrenge (Marion Springs) site. They also graded to the Mparnwenge (Hayes Springs) site



and the Irlkerteye (Salt Springs) bore. The next step is to get all the way to the Uyetye rock art site and back to the Ltyentye Apurte community.

The Ltyentye Apurte Rangers are currently assessing more tracks for repair and ongoing maintenance with the grader to help reduce erosion so that water can move over country without obstruction. The project aims to help rangers and families to access work and cultural sites more easily.

Ltyentye Apurte Rangers working on the Arltunga cemetery project.



Murnkurrumurnkurru Rangers

Undertaking skid steer training on the job

On the 1st of March 2023 the Victoria River and Wattie Creek flooded the communities of Kalkaringi and Daguragu, and with the waters flowed raw sewerage. The rangers and other residents were evacuated and relocated to the Howard Springs facility in Darwin for more than one month. Upon their return the rangers got to work.

“We collected the skid steer from Alice to clean the mess around community, our office and the CLC office in Kalkaringi,” ranger Helma Bernard said. “Our ranger office in Daguragu was flooded badly, so we had to move into the Kalkaringi office. The area was overgrown with grass and our co-ordinator showed us how to use the machine and we all had turns in driving and clearing around the office.

“We organised a trainer to come down from Darwin so we could get our tickets in skid steer operations and were joined by some of the North Tanami rangers from Lajamanu.

“The instructor taught us about the theory, basic servicing, safety and then the practical tests started.

“We levelled out our carpark, made a new driveway into the Kalkaringi office as they were washed away from the floods,” she said.

Due to the floods a lot of houses had to be demolished and replaced.

“We organised through the building company Rusca Development if they wanted us to help them in any way or if they could give us an area to continue training on. They agreed and asked if we could clear a couple of housing blocks and prepare level ground for them to build on,” Ms Bernard said.



Ranger Helma Bernard was the only female at the training.

“Six of the male rangers showed me how to drive that bobcat and the trainer taught me how to control that machine, but the first day I was scared to operate as it was my first time,” she said.

“I started to enjoy that machine in that week. I was so happy to drive and to learn to use that bobcat. Next training I’m looking forward to doing this again.”

Ranger Darius Smiler had the hang of the bobcat because he had already used it a year earlier.

“I got used to it,” he said. “We had to do training with the Kullaru mob from Darwin and it was good to learn more things from the trainer, like how to check oil and to clean the air filter. Also, it was great to work at the work sites where the Rusca company work. It was my first time working in a work site.”

Murnkurrumurnkurru and North Tanami Rangers with Managing Director Jason Jones of Rusca Developments and Willy Thatcher of Kullaru training and assessing.



Muru-Warinyi Ankkul Rangers

Finding and cleaning up grave sites

At the end of June the Muru-Warinyi Ankkul Rangers split into groups of men and women to work on gravesites in different communities.

Gladys Brown, Josie Haines and Kylie Sambo took traditional owners to the Kalumpurlpa and Blue Bush communities for a few days to clean and protect a number of isolated graves from bush fires. Kalumpurlpa is 80 kilometres north-west of Tennant Creek and Blue Bush is about 5 kilometres west of Kalumpurlpa. Rangers and traditional owners set up camp and cleaned around the graves with hand tools and whipper snippers. The site was overgrown with buffel and couch grass, as well as witchetty bush.

The male rangers travelled to the Ngayarramini outstation to find grave sites, a historic wooden cattle yard and a few important rock holes with the area's traditional owners. They could not locate one grave, but CLC ranger mentor Faron Peckham yarned with the group. They also inspected the condition of another grave they had previously fenced.

"Traditional owners Mick and Geoffrey Murphy were proudly explaining to us about the old wooden yard that was built by the old people, which was made with felled trees dug into the ground and no fasteners or materials like what is used in fencing today," ranger Floyd James said.

"They told us how it was used for cattle work and were proud that it was still standing. They expressed their desire to have it protected."

The rangers have added the mapping and protection job to their 2023-2024 work plan.



Muru-warinyi Ankkul rangers Arron Parlow, Jeffrey Curtis and Floyd James and traditional owners at the Ngayarramini cattle yards .



North Tanami Rangers

Attending the Indigenous Desert Alliance conference

In November 2022, the Northern Tanami Rangers travelled to the Indigenous Desert Alliance conference in Yulara. At the conference they completed the first-aid and four-wheel-drive training that is essential to their job. They also caught up with rangers from other parts of Australia and even Canada.

“We enjoyed meeting all of the rangers from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia, building on our connections and being able to see different country,” lead ranger Helen Wilson, from Lajamanu, said. The rangers taught other groups about their work and learned from them.

Ms Wilson was inspired by the Canadian rangers’ presentation about their work.

“It was great to see how the different ranger groups work differently with significant animals and plants and hear different governance stories.

“It was very interesting to see the similarities over the other side of the world,” she said.

She and her colleagues helped the CLC’s Yitaki Mani (reading the country) team to present about a project that supports kuyu pungu (master trackers) share the ancient knowledge needed to track animals.

The rangers spoke about how they balance this learning with the other training CLC rangers do.

Towards the end of the conference, the group took part in a ‘wok-off’ competition to see which ranger group could cook the most delicious chicken stir-fry. Unfortunately the North Tanami Rangers did not win. They still had a great time and really enjoyed the conference. In fact, they wished it went for longer.

“The saddest part of this trip was when we had to drive home the 18 hours again,” said Ms Wilson.



Yitaki Mani workshop at the 2023 IDA conference



Tjakura Rangers

Bringing together traditional knowledge and western science

The CLC’s Mutitjulu-based Tjakura Rangers made headlines in March 2023 when they took part in the first national survey of their namesake – the threatened tjakura (great desert skink).

The group was one of 15 Aboriginal ranger groups from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia in which worked on this monitoring program designed to help protect the tjakura population from large, hot wildfires and feral cats.

The threatened lizards are of great cultural significance to Anangu. To ensure the tjakura’s survival the CLC rangers use traditional cool-season mosaic burning to create patches of thick spinifex amongst burnt areas. This gives the tjakura a place to hide when feral cats are hunting them.

The Tjakura Rangers and traditional owners used their extensive ecological knowledge and tracking skills to locate active tjakura burrows on the Kaṯiṯi-Petermann Indigenous Protected Area surrounding the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and recorded information about the numbers, age and family composition of the lizards at each burrow.

They also shared their knowledge with CSIRO researcher David Thuo, who is studying the family ties between the region’s tjakura with the traditional owners.

The research findings will inform the ongoing management of the threatened species across the IPA and the national park and promote recognition by the science community of rangers and traditional owners as valuable knowledge holders.



TOP Mala Teamay with sculptures of tjakura at the Uluru-Kata Tjuta.

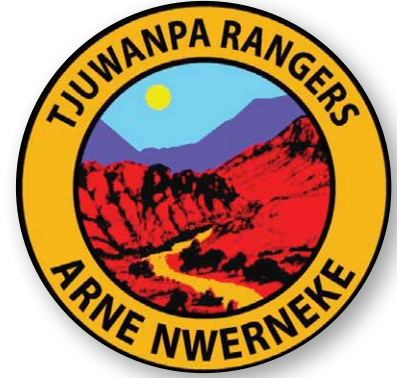
BOTTOM Tjakura Rangers worked with David Thuo, CSIRO researcher.



Tjuwanpa Rangers

Protecting waterholes from feral cattle, camels and horses

There are many springs on the five land trusts surrounding Ntaria (Hermannsburg), and it is the Tjuwanpa Rangers' job to protect them. Cattle, camel and horses come to these springs for a drink and often contaminate the water. The rangers have systematically fenced off each spring with large cattle fencing panels. These fences block large feral animals, but allow smaller native animals to pass through. This year the rangers erected 12 steel panels to protect a large spring in Palm Paddock, on the Ntaria Aboriginal Land Trust. They spent weeks in their shed, carefully welding the panels together in preparation for this project. New rangers learned how to weld from the more experienced rangers. The rangers also experimented with fixing heavy concrete weights to the panels to prevent them from washing away during floods. They plan to return to the spring after rains to see if the method is successful. Regular visits to the spring are also necessary to see if the fencing is working to keep large animals out. The traditional owners of the spring were happy to see this project completed.



BOTTOM Dean Inkamala, Obed Ratara, Byron Ratara, Abel Ratara, Emron Campbell erected steel panels to protect a spring.

LEFT Patrick Abbott set up steel panels to protect a spring.



Utopia Alyawarr Rangers

Managing rubber bush and protecting a sacred water hole

During the last year a full time ranger co-ordinator was appointed to develop the emerging Utopia Alyawarr ranger group in Arlparra. The group consist of five female and nine male casuals who look after the Alyawarra, Angarapa and Atnwengerrpe Aboriginal land trusts. They are part of a traditional owner ranger advisory committee.

The rangers had four wheel drive, bobcat, chainsaw, chemical use and weed spraying training. The latter prepared them for the treatment of the weed rubber bush along the Sandover River. Starting at the southern end of the river and working along towards the north, the rangers sprayed the rubber bush to prevent its spread downriver.

The rangers also trained in mapping and survey techniques. They learned how to use tablet computers to record data. The group has also planned to fence sacred sites.

They have tracked bilbies and feral cats with the traditional owners and completed training in the use of night vision cameras to help with this. They have also identified sites to deploy the cameras.

The rangers fenced a kangaroo dreaming site and water hole that was identified in 2019 as in need of protection from feral cattle and horses. They completed a one kilometre fence in November 2022. The fence allows bush food and medicine plants to regenerate and encourages inap (echidnas), itwew (bush turkeys) and aherr (kangaroos) to return to this important water source. The water quality has also improved.

LEFT Utopia Rangers treated and monitored rubber bush on the Sandover River.

BOTTOM Robin Ross, Stuart Rambler, Mervyn Morton and Joseph Brown installed the last fence at Pwementja in November 2022.



Walungurru Rangers

Looking after country around Karrkurradinytja (Lake Macdonald)



The Walungurru Rangers, Kiwirrkurra Rangers and traditional owners from Kintore and Kiwirrkurra have skillfully looked after country surrounding Karrkurradinytja (Lake Macdonald).

They undertook two trips around the salt lake where senior traditional owners passed on their knowledge and helped to plan how to care for the ecologically and culturally significant sites surrounding the lake.

During the first trip the rangers searched for habitat of the threatened night parrot and recorded the impact of feral cats, foxes and rabbits. The traditional owners visited significant cultural sites and shared the associated stories with the rangers.

The knowledge shared on this trip informed an aerial incendiary burning trip. Rangers and traditional owners based themselves at the Mantardi outstation and, using a helicopter, carefully dropped incendiary capsules to create fire breaks around potential threatened species habitat. The cool-season burn was highly successful in protecting a vast swath of remote and ecologically sensitive country against large summer fires. Burning occurred on both sides of the Northern Territory/Western Australia border and the work set the stage for further cross-border ranger collaboration. The greatest success of these trips

was the knowledge exchange between the ranger groups and the traditional owners.

From Mina Mina the 40-strong group drove to Yirrinti Warrku Warrku (Lake Mackay) to collect song meters, audio recorders the Warlpiri Rangers had deployed earlier to find evidence of critically endangered night parrots, the data is still being analysed and the results will be shared with traditional owners.

The group burned around the soakages at Pirlinyanu, Mina Mina and other sacred sites. When the aerial incendiary machine which drops fire capsules failed they still burned in the sand dunes around Mina Mina, and used the helicopter to visit inaccessible sites.

The traditional owners enjoyed searching for waterholes and performed ceremony.

Rangers and traditional owners planned burning work during the Mantardi trip and the Newhaven wildlife sanctuary spent a week at Mina Mina to teach and learn about this very significant Walpiri site.



Warlpiri Rangers

Yuendumu to Mina Mina

About thirty Traditional Owners and 10 rangers from Nyirripi, Lajamanu and Yuendumu, as well as the rangers from Newhaven, all travelled to Mina Mina over 6 days. Mina Mina is one of the most culturally significant sites for Warlpiri people.

From Mina Mina, we travelled to Yirrinti Warrku Warrku and collected Song Meters bird and wildlife audio recorders that had been deployed earlier by the Warlpiri Ranger team. The Song Meters are used to record any bird noises in the hope of hearing noises from night parrots which are a critically endangered species.

On this trip we also did cultural burning around the soakages at Pirlinyanu, Mina Mina and other sacred sites. We had a helicopter to do aerial burning, but unfortunately the Incendiary Machine which drops the fire capsules failed. We still burned in the sand dunes around Mina Mina, and used the helicopter to visit far away sites that Toyotas can't get to.

Traditional Owners enjoyed looking around for waterholes, and the women performed ceremony.

This was a great ranger exchange field trip, and it was really good to have everyone together and seeing fantastic country.



Traditional Owner Alice Henwood at Yirrinti Warrku Warrku



RANGER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and development is essential to ensure that rangers can carry out their work in a safe, effective and professional manner. When tailoring quality training to the needs of its rangers the CLC has to overcome significant challenges, such as the limited availability of local training organisations and the lack of appropriate remote training delivery.

Professional development activities are designed to be relevant to ranger work plans. Rangers can advance from certificate II to certificate IV in conservation and ecosystem management according to their aspirations.

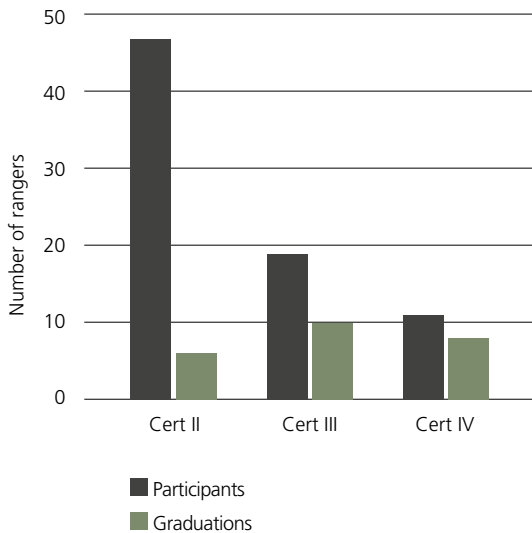
Twenty-five rangers received one of these certificates. They have to complete units for each certificate level over a number of years, participating in courses as they become available.

Most accredited training takes place in Alice Springs, requiring some ranger teams to travel for 10-15 hours on remote roads. This training model, implemented due to the reluctance of registered training organisations to deliver training in the remote communities where the rangers are based, can deter rangers from attending the training. Many avoid regional centres and prefer to stay in their communities. The draw-backs of the 'away from base' model includes extended family demands, feelings of loneliness, separation from children, access to entertainment and alcohol as well as lack of relevance of classroom learning for real-life remote contexts.

Computer literacy among CLC rangers is general low and the rangers require support with various administrative

systems. In 2021 the CLC co-designed an accredited training package for literacy, numeracy and digital skills with a training provider. It delivered this training in stages, with 33 rangers from the Tjakura, Kaltukatjara, Anmatyerr, North Tanami and Murnkurrumurnkurru groupstaking part during the reporting period.

Figure 6. Conservation and Ecosystem Management Participants and Graduation



Ranger Camp

After a break due to COVID, the annual CLC ranger camp returned in 2023. The camp at the Ross River Resort, 90 kilometres east of Alice Springs, attracted 180 participants, including 123 rangers. Fourteen CLC ranger groups attended, as well as rangers from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands, the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Division, the Ngaanyatjarra lands and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

The camp brings together rangers from Central Australia and beyond to share knowledge and take part in training. Thirteen training workshops offered over two days covered four-wheel driving, first aid, skid steer and all-terrain vehicle operation, mapping and digital media. Non-accredited training in snake handling, tracking, smartphone video production and aerial incendiary machine operation was also on offer. Two workshops focussed on mental resilience and team building. As always, many rangers took advantage of ear and eye health checks that may not be available in their home communities.

Mentoring Support

The CLC ranger mentoring program offers confidential workplace support to rangers. It aims to develop their personal and professional goals and to resolve issues that may affect work readiness, attendance or on-the-job performance. Mentoring support may include coaching, advocacy and referrals to personal and professional development services.

While the rangers reported fewer instances related to domestic and family violence during this period, they often raise family wellbeing and community safety. Addressing individual and family wellbeing remains an ongoing challenge within the ranger program.

In addition to case management and support for rangers, the mentors significantly contribute to the broader goals of the ranger program. They participate in ranger recruitment, guide new rangers during the first weeks of employment and assist with traditional owner ranger advisory committee meetings, training events and other work plan activities.

The mentors often notice gaps in the CLC processes that have broader implications for rangers. Having identified the ranger recruitment process as a barrier for job seekers from remote communities, the mentors this year contributed to a streamlined recruitment process. Advisory committee members are now more involved in ranger recruitment, with committee members using their local knowledge and language skills to help select applicants.



EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND RANGER RETENTION

The CLC offers a variety of employment options to accommodate the responsibilities of, and demands on, remote community residents. Eight rangers and ranger support officers were in fulltime positions on 30 June 2022, 46 were part-time and 43 were casuals. Many casual rangers work for new ranger groups which are not yet able to offer permanent positions.

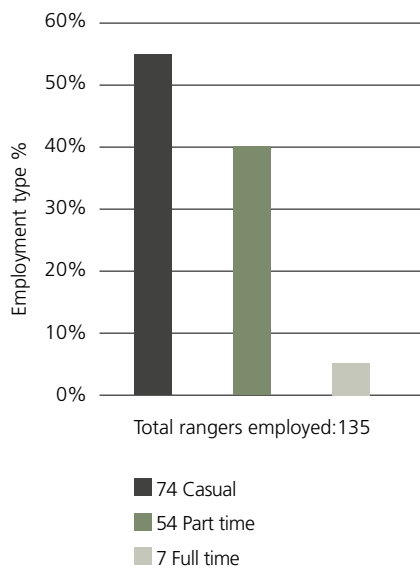


Figure 7. Ranger employment type, 2011–22

Over the past decade there have been almost 1000 CLC rangers. They have been aged between 16 and 67 and have had a wide range of knowledge and skills. The reporting period saw seven CLC rangers take long service leave.

The ranger program aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment for female rangers through targeted initiatives, knowledge sharing, and fostering health and well-being. It empowers women and gives them opportunities to advance their careers within the ranger program.

Among the strategies to enhance the participation of women in the program and support their progression into senior roles it is exploring strategies such as sourcing dedicated women’s vehicles to facilitate women’s natural and cultural resource management projects. An example was a visit by 23 women to the Little Putta Putta outstation on the Katiti Petermann Indigenous Protected Area to transfer knowledge related to an important songline.

Another was a health and wellbeing camp for CLC’s women rangers in August 2022 at Tilmouth Well. The rangers discussed demands impacting their attendance at work, such as jealousy, child care obligations and other family matters. Guest speakers addressed nutrition, budgeting, exercise and awareness of

internet scams. Staff were surprised to learn how much the latter is affecting the women and their families.

The women’s land management facilitator integrated gender equity strategies into the revised ranger recruitment processes. One female ranger has progressed to lead ranger in 2022-23 and her team will receive funding to increase women’s employment.

Forty-five female rangers and traditional owners from 12 communities participated in the Strong Women for Healthy Country forum at Ross River. They formed an advisory group called Message Sticks to discuss issues and support for Aboriginal women in land management, members attended bi-monthly meetings, including near Darwin. Female Ltyentye Apurte and Akityarre rangers assisted traditional owners from the Bonya region to visit and protect women’s sites, collect recordings and plan how to manage an important women’s story.

A recruitment drive aimed at employing more women rangers, including a social media advertisement, saw the number of women employed on permanent contracts jump from 16.4 per cent in November 2022 to 21.3 per cent in May 2023.

Some planned women’s events have not occurred due to a lack of female support staff, vehicles and equipment and bad weather.

School-based capacity building

The rangers demonstrate the value of ranger employment to students in remote community classrooms and on country, and in their interactions with junior rangers, traditional owners and parents. They contribute to learning outcomes and motivate students to continue their schooling.

The Lajamanu Rangers, for example, taught students about safety around snakes. The Murnkurrumurnkurru Rangers undertook one overnight field trip and held three classroom days with the junior Kunpulu Rangers from Kalkaringi. The rangers taught the students about cultural sites and the management of waterways and fire, as well as wildlife survey techniques.

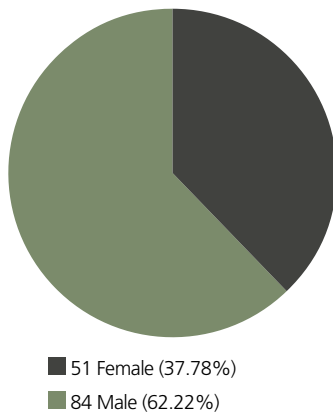


Figure 8. Percentage of male and female rangers



Ranger Works

Ranger Works undertake fee-for-service natural resource management contracts across remote Central Australia. Ranger Works draws its skilled and experienced workforce from 11 established CLC ranger groups operating across more than half a million square kilometres.

Ranger employment develops not only individual rangers but also the capacity of traditional owners to oversee ranger work plans. Commercial ranger contracts involve traditional owners in generating income for the ranger program.

During this reporting period, Ranger Works completed two cabbage palm protection projects with the NT Parks and Wildlife Division on the Ntaria Aboriginal Land Trust. Under the guidance of a traditional owner a team of three Tjuwanpa rangers removed heavy loads of buffel grass to protect the palms from fires.

Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife contracted Ranger Works to help clean up along the Ellery Creek access track to Boggy Hole in the Finke Gorge National Park following heavy flooding. The rangers removed flood debris and damaged fences and repaired the access track. The Ranger Works supervisor worked on this project with three Tjuwanpa Rangers.



Partners and supporters

The CLC acknowledges the major funding bodies of its ranger program: the Australian Government's National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation.



Other funders and supporters of the CLC are:





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