



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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## **\$31.1 MILLION FOR WORKING ON COUNTRY PROJECTS**

Eight Indigenous communities, ranging from the arid Western Desert lands in Western Australia to the blue waters of the Torres Strait in Queensland to bushland and granite country in Guyra New South Wales, will receive \$31.1 million over five years to conserve and protect our natural assets for all Australians.

Announcing the grants Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, said the eight Working on Country projects were funded under the Government's \$2.25 billion Caring for our Country.

Mr Garrett said the projects provide ongoing jobs and training for over 80 Indigenous rangers and builds on the 130 Indigenous ranger positions already created under Working on Country.

"With these latest projects we continue to provide real employment opportunities for Indigenous people in remote and regional communities," Mr Garrett said.

"Indigenous men and women from South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales will be part of unique ranger groups who work in some of Australia's harshest and most remote environments that cover millions and millions of hectares.

"Within these environments there are some really complex eco-systems and landscapes that are a millennia old," said Mr Garrett.

"In the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands of South Australia, the rangers work includes a recovery plan for the threatened and culturally significant *Warru* - the black-flanked rock wallaby. Over in the Western Desert of Western Australia, the rangers will provide environmental services across two million hectares of culturally significant country that contain seven known threatened animal species.

"Working on Country enables Indigenous people to combine their traditional knowledge with modern land management practices, to better manage and protect our ecosystems in a changing climate.

"Covering over 32,000 square kilometres, the environmental services of eight Torres Strait Island communities includes monitoring turtle and dugong populations and surveying significant terrestrial ecological environments.

"These projects across Australia contribute to the Government's goal to engage with Indigenous people to manage our land and seas and attain greater independence through employment.

"Working on Country is part of our whole of Government approach towards 'Closing the Gap' for Indigenous Australians and an investment that will bring long-term environmental benefits for the country as a whole," Mr Garret said.

For more information visit [www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/workingoncountry](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/workingoncountry)

## WORKING ON COUNTRY DESCRIPTIONS

**COUNTRY:** Nimbin Rocks, New South Wales

**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$1,782,400.00

Nimbin Rocks is an Aboriginal sacred site of the Bundjalung people located near the town of Nimbin in NSW. It was an initiation grounds for young boys.

This Working on Country project is to protect and restore the health of the natural assets and biodiversity on two properties that surround this important sacred site.

On the two properties lie a diversity of flora, with five threatened or vulnerable flora species and two vegetation communities listed as Endangered Ecological Communities under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Habitat for the glossy black cockatoo listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* has also been identified on these properties.

The rangers will remove heavy weed infestations including lantana, a dense impenetrable thicket, which is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness and negative impact on economies and the environment.

The rangers will also collect and propagate native plant species that are suitable for bush food or other traditional uses. These plant species will be part of a demonstration site to help restore and share cultural knowledge amongst the local Indigenous community.

**COUNTRY:** Wattleridge IPA, Guyra, New South Wales

**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$1,693,500.00

This Working on Country project is on the Wattleridge Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) and the Tarriva Kurrukun property. These properties are situated near the New England township of Guyra in New South Wales.

The rangers will provide environmental services that cover 1848 hectares of botanically diverse bushland growing on outcropping granite country. Wattleridge IPA contains a range of rare and endangered flora species and the only recorded axe-grinding groove sites and fully recorded art sites in the local area.

The rangers' work includes developing a seed nursery for revegetation of degraded areas, feral animal mapping and control and water quality testing.

This project assists the property owners, the Banbai people, to continue protecting the land's wildlife habitat, educate visitors on the conservation values and promote the biodiversity of the area.

**COUNTRY:** Torres Strait Islands, Queensland

**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$11,289,500.00

The Torres Strait Islands, Queensland, lie in the Torres Strait, the waterway separating far northern continental Australia's Cape York Peninsula and the island of New Guinea.

This Working on Country project encompasses eight Torres Strait Island communities: Badu, Boigu, Erub, Iama, Kaiwalagal, Mabuiag, Mer and St Paul with community based ranger groups providing environmental services.

The ranger groups will be responsible for identifying and implementing the sustainable management of dugong and turtle within their community based sea country plans. Dugong and turtle are important totems and have been a traditional food source for thousands of years.

Environmental works on both sea and land includes the rangers researching and surveying significant coastal and marine habitats, seed collection and plant propagation and managing sea country.

For many saltwater communities like the Torres Strait, the land and sea are intrinsic to identity and the work of the rangers is in many ways about maintaining country, identity and culture.

**COUNTRY:** Wellesley Islands, Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland

**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$2,693.600.00

Off the coast of North Queensland in the Gulf of Carpentaria lies the Thuwathu/Bujimulla sea country incorporating the Mornington, Wellesley and Bentnick Islands. Over the next five years, rangers will receive ongoing employment and training to provide environmental services.

The Wellesley Island rangers will harvest turtle and dugongs including monitoring and collection of data. On two of the islands they will undertake seagrass sampling and manage bird colonies.

They will undertake protection activities of cultural sites and will continue to record traditional knowledge for future generations.

**COUNTRY:** Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, South Australia  
**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$2,746,900.00

“Caring for Warru”

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands is a large Aboriginal local government area located in the remote north-west of South Australia.

Over the next five years, Anangu will build up to two teams of rangers to provide environmental services.

Their land management plan will have a particular focus on a recovery plan for the threatened and culturally significant *Warru* – the black-flanked rock wallaby and the surrounding ecological communities and habitats.

This species is listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Not only will the rangers monitor *Warru* colonies, they also aim to control feral predators and control buffel grass across the country.

An important part of this project is to educate the young people about the rangers' environmental works and to maintain culture through sharing the important role of the rangers whilst they care for country.

**COUNTRY:** Northern Flinders Ranges, South Australia  
**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$1,671,500.00

This Working on Country project will be implemented on the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area (the first Indigenous Protected Area).

Nantawarrina spreads across 58,000 hectares of rugged terrain between the Flinders Ranges and Gammon Ranges National Parks in South Australia. It is a key attraction for visitors as they pass through the ranges.

The rangers' work will include a focus on cultural and ecological conservation using both traditional knowledge and modern land management practices. They will survey, monitor, map and record the natural and cultural values of the property.

Previous land management practices have damaged the land and feral animals pose a major challenge. The rangers will implement a threat abatement plan to reduce or eradicate weed and feral animal populations.

Nantawarrina is of great cultural significance as a birthplace, traditional tribal territory and a place of mythologically important sites. The rangers' work will encompass revegetation and rehabilitation of landscapes intrinsic to the wellbeing of the community.

**COUNTRY:** Karajarri Lands, Kimberleys, Western Australia  
**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$2,310,600.00

The Karajarri lands lie 200kms south of Broome and includes 130kms of coastline stretching from Gordon Bay to Cape Missiessy and the top 20kms of the Eighty Mile Beach – a RAMSAR listed wetland. It also contains habitat for the nationally listed migratory shorebirds.

Their environmental work will focus on coastal management issues that impact on the natural and cultural values through visitor management to look after people and place.

Using both traditional knowledge and western land management methods, they will undertake biodiversity surveys and monitoring.

Many Working on Country projects cover vast lands and waterways and the Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge of country is important to the success of Working on Country.

**COUNTRY:** Western Desert Lands, Western Australia

**FIVE YEAR FUNDING:** \$7,040,500.00

In the Western Desert of Western Australia, the Martu Ranger group will deliver crucial environmental services across two million hectares.

In this region are seven known threatened animal species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This Working on Country project aims to protect and conserve as many threatened species as possible.

Given the Canning Stock Route passes through the region enabling tourist access, the rangers' work includes tourism management.

In the Western Desert, feral animals such as camels, cats and rabbits have the capacity to wipe out a diversity of native flora and also have a devastating effect on native animals. The Martu rangers will collect data on feral animals to inform ongoing control programs.

With an ever-changing climate, they will reduce the fuel loads using traditional fire management to initiate early season burning.