

WALIBURRU STATION FORGING AHEAD

Big things are happening at Waliburru Station, and it's the traditional owners of the property who are leading the way.

Already months ahead of schedule with development plans, Waliburru has no intentions of slowing down and admiring their progress, instead they're forging ahead with the next phase of development; improving infrastructure and increasing existing herd numbers.

"When I first started here, they - [Waliburru Cattle Committee] - were talking about somewhere around seven to eight thousand breeders - that's fully developed. We've got basically one million acres here, fully developed... with all the waters and fencing and everything developed and utilising all the country... I reckon you could probably bump that up to about 10,000 breeders," station

manager, John Geddes said.

John Geddes, is engaged by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) to oversee development and the day-to-day operations of the property.

"With the cattle we're ahead. We didn't plan to have any ILC cattle on the place until the end of the development period, but we've got 3,000 here at the moment with probably six to 6,500 by the end of this year," John said.

Head stockman, Roy Cresswell, has worked on many cattle properties in the Northern Territory in his 20 plus years in the saddle, but there's always something special about working on your own country.

"Working for your family is good; my grandmother; my grandfather; uncle; aunties," Roy said.

Starting from scratch, Roy and local colleagues

Phillip Watson and Lanser Joshua, have had a major hand in much of the development that has taken place on the station.

"We started off from scratch," Roy said. "We started working on the old fences and putting in new ones. We've done a bit of building."

"We built our kitchen then our horse yard and saddle shed."

Roy, Phillip and Lanser are full-time employees of Waliburru.

It's hoped that they're the first of many local residents the WCC can attract to stock and station work in the coming years.

But, rather than wait



for the next generation to come along, the WCC are already active with their recruitment campaign.

A one-week period in early April has been set aside to take five local participants through a training program on the basics required for station work. "The future is for the young

fella's to understand what we are doing now so when they finish school they might be able to work here - that's the future," Roy Cresswell said.

Waliburru, formerly Hodgson Downs Station, is home to some 600 residents in the nearby community of Minyerri.