



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Rangers honing their skills at Indigenous Ranger Forum

3 September, 2019

Hundreds of Indigenous rangers travelled thousands of kilometres from across the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland to learn, grow and share their knowledge last week.

Held across the harbour from Darwin, on the Cox Peninsula and hosted by the Kenbi Rangers, the three-day 2019 Indigenous Ranger Forum was a positive reflection of everything it means to be an Indigenous ranger and the key role that rangers play in caring for country.

Organised by the Northern Land Council, in partnership with the Federal Department of Agriculture, the forum had a core focus on biosecurity, as Indigenous rangers play an ever increasing role as the eyes and ears of biosecurity management across northern Australia.

In recognition of their crucial role in biosecurity compliance, it was also announced in August by Minister Lauren Moss that NT Indigenous rangers would be recognised as conservation officers under changes to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976*.

Over 400 people from over 60 different Indigenous ranger groups attended the forum, participating in over 25 workshops held on a diverse range of topics, including aquatic biosecurity, microplastics and macro debris sampling, turtle monitoring and threat mitigation strategies, crocodile management principles and practice and biocontrol of weeds and insects.

The forum opened with traditional owner Zoe Singh inviting attendees to the sea for a welcome to country.

“Traditionally we’d like to greet you at the beach for a welcome to country by wetting your head with saltwater. Our ancestors know you’re on our country and look after you while you’re here.”

Northern Land Council chairman Samuel Bush-Blansi dedicated the forum to the late Mrs Daniels OAM, who was the founder of a group of four women rangers under the old CDEP (Community Development and Employment Programs) at Ngukurr community in the Roper Valley in the mid-90s.

Mr Bush-Blanasi said the work that Indigenous rangers are doing is “the most important thing we do on country”.

“Country is important to us, especially when we’re talking about sacred sites from the sea to the land,” he said.

Mr Bush-Blanasi said it was appropriate to have the ranger forum take place on Kenbi Land, which was handed back to traditional owners in 2016, 37 years after it was first lodged.

Mardbalk ranger Nicholas Hunter said he would take the skills learned from the forum back home to the Goulburn Islands to share with his colleagues. For him, the highlight of the forum was learning how drones can enhance a ranger groups’ capabilities in compliance, fire, biosecurity and erosion management.

“Using drones can save a lot of time and help with safety, for example if you’re fire burning you wouldn’t want to get trapped in an area where someone has been burning. You can send the drones in to check and they can take video shots or do live feeds.

“Also for protection of sacred site areas and ceremony grounds, drones can be useful.”

#ENDS

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