

# Palya!

**STRONG PEOPLE HEALTHY COUNTRY and WATER**

*Anangu Kunpu, Ngura Kunpu munu Kapi*

## Southerly Sandhill Dunnarts

School students join the search for dunnarts in the dunes

## Mystery Rat in the APY Lands

Suspicious scats lead to candid rat snaps

## New Faces on AW Board

New members and a new chair for the AW board





## See you on our socials



We keep you up to date with news from the AW region on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Click or scan the QR code to see our Facebook page.

## Learn more about AW



For more information on AW's programs and projects, head to our website. Click or scan the QR code for information about our board and region.

[www.landscapesa.gov.au/aw](http://www.landscapesa.gov.au/aw)

## Remote weather stations



Solar-powered weather stations provide vital weather information to remote communities across the region. Click or scan the QR code for updates.

# From the General Manager



2023 ushered in a new era for AW, with four new board members and a new Chair. I'd like to welcome the new members announced by Minister Close

in January: Julieanne Campbell, Peter Burgoyne, Jeremy Lebois and Wanda Miller. Along with the 'new' members who joined the board late last year, Tapaya Edwards and Duane Edwards, they bring a diverse mix of experience and expertise to the board, under the leadership of new chair and long-time board member Mick Haynes.

I'd also like to acknowledge the many years of dedication from our former Chair Parry Agius, who did so much to make the board what it is today. Thanks too to our outgoing members Kristy Richards, who represented the board on the South Australian Wild Dog Advisory Group, and Sally Scales, whose artistic endeavours have deservedly achieved national prominence.

One immediate goal of the board under Mick's leadership is to emphasise the cultural knowledge and connections to Country of our board members. The board has drafted a cultural statement, which will no doubt become valuable words when

negotiating for Healthy Country outcomes with potential funding bodies.

As Australia's only all-Aboriginal landscape board, we're uniquely placed to highlight the vital and ongoing relationship between people, Country and culture. I'm excited about having this refreshed and amazing board to guide us.

The end of the financial year marks the end of a five-year federal government funding cycle. I'm enormously grateful to our staff, the communities and rangers of the AW region who have delivered on all of the goals of this funding cycle, and exceeded many of them. In spite of challenges including a global pandemic and its ongoing lockdowns and restrictions, and some extreme weather events, the combined efforts of AW staff and partners shows what can be done with commitment and teamwork.

I'm proud of what we've achieved and there is much to look forward to as we enter the next five years of funding certainty. Enjoy this issue of Palya, and make sure to follow us on social media and check our website as there will be plenty of exciting tales to tell!

*Kim Krebs*

Kim Krebs  
General Manager  
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

# Contents

4

New Chair and members for board



5

Two boards meet in Port Lincoln



6

Who's who of the AW board



8

Most southerly dunnart find



10

Yalata coast shorebird survey



11

Yalata Rangers on patrol



12

Mystery rat snapped in APY



13

Warru trapping at Wamitjara



14

Maps and meetings in APY Lands



15

Camels collared in Great Victoria Desert



16

Tech boost for buffel battle



17

A letter to the Minister about buffel grass



18

Landscape SA conference



19

Land and Sea: First Nations' forum



20

Back to school for AW staff



21

Driver training in Ceduna



22

Firesticks: women's cultural burning



23

AW on air: spreading the word on radio



24

Using lasers to protect malleefowl



25

Staff muster, energy forum, Wild Eyre



26

Out and about with the AW board



27

Staff hellos and goodbyes



# From the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2023 issue of Palya.

Firstly, I want to express how proud and honoured I am to have been appointed Presiding Member of the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board.

I look forward to working with the board and staff with a strategic focus on raising awareness about the important role we play in protecting the region's unique flora and fauna across our diverse landscapes.

Early in my career I worked for the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (back when Charlie Perkins was Secretary), before the department transitioned to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). I then had the good fortune to work for ATSIC with West Kimberley communities in Derby, Broome and Fitzroy Crossing. After also working for a short time in Kalgoorlie, I returned to my home town of Ceduna to take up a position as Regional Manager with ATSIC.

My focus has always been, and remains, improving the lives of Aboriginal people.

As Chair, I intend to work constructively with the board to build strong partnerships and work with all our stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for the Aboriginal people living in our region through caring for Country.

My aim is to create a strong, united voice by ensuring that the board's dialogue is inclusive of all the people we serve across our region. I see the way to do this is to yarn the right way and speak from the heart.

I congratulate and welcome our newly appointed board members: Julieanne Campbell, Jeremy Lebois, Wanda Miller and Peter Burgoyne. (More about board members pages 6-7) Our board members are dedicated and knowledgeable Traditional landowners and I'm excited about us working together to chart a positive future for the AW region.

I would also like to sincerely thank the outgoing Chair, Parry Agius. His strategic leadership will have a lasting impact on our board and the region we serve.

*Mick Haynes*

Mick Haynes  
Presiding Member  
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

## Where we are and what we do

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape region covers the northwest quarter of South Australia.

In Pitjantjatjara, alinytjara means north and wilurara means west.

The region spans over a quarter of a million square kilometres, and has a population of approximately 3000 people, many of whom identify with the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Kokatha, Mirning or Wirangu peoples.

As the only all-Aboriginal board in Australia responsible for managing a Natural Resource Management region, the AW Landscape Board's aim is the protection of the land for the mutual benefit of the country and its people.







L-R: Tapaya Edwards, Mick Haynes, Julieanne Campbell, Peter Burgoyne, Wanda Miller, Jeremy Lebois, Debbie Hansen, Duane Edwards.  
Absent: Peter Miller, Julie O'Toole

# Looking to the Future

With four new members and a new Chair, the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board continues to work for healthy Country.

Over the past six months the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board (AW) sought nominations from across the AW region for candidates who possessed a strong commitment to, and clear understanding of best practice natural resource management and how it relates to the region and the broader community. As an all-Aboriginal board, it was imperative that they have cultural knowledge to represent and be a voice for the people of their Country. This includes having male and female representation for each sub-region to ensure decisions are culturally appropriate. In January 2023, the Minister for Environment and Water, the Hon. Susan Close approved four new members from a strong field of candidates and Michael (Mick) Haynes, a long-term member of the board, was appointed Chair. In March, the new look board, including two members appointed in late 2022, met in Ceduna where new members were welcomed and introduced to each other and to the reappointed members. AW's General Manager Kim Krebs shared important information relating to the board's operational and business activities, including statutory obligations.

"With members new and old listening to each other with interest and contributing their thoughts on our future direction, the enthusiasm in the room was truly inspiring," said Mr Haynes. Some of the key topics discussed included best ways to work with cross-border land managers, particularly in relation to buffel grass, developing a strategic plan that other organisations or groups might adopt for buffel grass management, revisiting the board's Aboriginal employment strategy, and nominations for members to represent the board at the SA Aboriginal Land and Sea Management Forum and as a member of the SA Wild Dog Advisory Group.

**In gratitude**

Mr Haynes, the newly appointed Chair, acknowledged and together with all board members, applauded the outstanding contribution made by the previous Chair Mr Parry Agius. During the 12 years he sat as the board's Presiding Member, Parry successfully guided the board and its staff through many challenging times, including the unforeseeable fallout from COVID and its impact on staff and operations, and the AW Natural Resources Management Board's transition to a Landscape Board.

Among Parry's many achievements, he instigated and supported the highly successful *Adelaide Meets the Bush* project, built and effectively strengthened many strong partnerships, constantly championed Aboriginal employment and recognition of culture, and showcased the region and the board's work through on-Country trips and connection with his extensive network. "Parry played a significant role in building the reputation of the board to where it is today, a respected, competent body that continues to be held in high regard regionally, statewide, and nationally," said Mr Haynes.



Mick Haynes addresses the first meeting of the new-look board in March



## Two Boards Meet in Port Lincoln

Eyre Peninsula and Alinytjara Wilurara agree to work together towards shared goals.

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board met in Port Lincoln in June to provide the opportunity for members to meet with the AW region's southern neighbours, the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board (EP). AW board members were delighted that all the EP board members, its General Manager Jonathan Clark and several staff members attended on the second day of the meeting, many of whom also joined them for dinner. With the two regions sharing many common aspirations and challenges, the two boards had productive discussions about building on our current partnership to work more closely together in the future. "The Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board very much appreciated our combined meeting with the AW Board," says EP Chair Peter Treloar. "Aside from board members getting to know each other on a personal level – which is invaluable – the two boards share a common boundary, resources and goals. To have the opportunity to discuss mutual issues and aspirations makes for a productive and valuable working relationship now and into the future. It's an initiative we'll look to continue at regular intervals." The meeting also featured a presentation from Regional Development Australia, which has an operational focus that overlaps both landscape boards' boundaries.

Of great interest to both boards was a presentation by a representative from the space launch company Southern Launch. The company is developing two launch facilities, one at Whaler's Way and the other in the community of Koonibba. The two facilities are located within the EP region, and rockets launched from Koonibba land within the AW region. Aside from providing general information about their undertakings, Southern Launch fielded some pointed questions from board members about consultation with Aboriginal communities and the

risks to Country and cultural sites. While in Port Lincoln, AW Chair Mick Haynes, board member Peter Burgoyne and General Manager Kim Krebs took the opportunity to visit the ABC Eyre Peninsula studio for a live on-air chat (see page 23). On the last day, the board checked out the new AW operations vehicle and gave their tick of approval to its freshly applied livery. There'll be no confusion about who is on the road delivering a healthier environment in our region now.





# The Who's Who of AW

*The members of the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board share a wealth of professional experience, proven life-long commitment to caring for their Country and a deep understanding of culture. They are uniquely capable land managers who are committed to the health of their Country and their communities. The following is a brief introduction to each member.*

## Presiding Member



**Mick Haynes** was appointed to the board in 2020, having been a member of the AW Natural Resources Management Board since 2013, including serving for 12 months as its Presiding Member. Mick is a descendant of the Far West Coast's Kokatha and Mirning tribes and has a solid background in governance roles including Acting Deputy State Manager and Ceduna Regional Manager of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and CEO of Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation.



**Julieanne Campbell** represents the APY Lands and was appointed to the board in 2023. Her ancestral Country covers the Mimili, Fregon, Watarru and Mintabie areas. She has been a member of the APY Lands Executive and Mimili Community Council. Julieanne has been involved in landcare projects for many years. She has experience in business administration and management of fire, weeds, feral predators and rockhole health.



**Jeremy Lebois** represents the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands. He was appointed to the board in 2023. Jeremy has extensive experience working on feral animal and weed control, managing rockholes and soaks, marine animal and fisheries and revegetation work. He also has a solid track record of board roles, including as Chair of Maralinga Tjarutja, Maralinga Piling Trust, and the Mamungari Conservation Park Co-management Board.



**Julie O'Toole** represents Tallaringa Conservation Park and the surrounding region. Nominated by the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation, she was appointed to the board in 2020, having been a member of the AW Natural Resources Management Board since 2018. She is a current member of the Breakaways Conservation Park Co-management Board which includes management of Tallaringa Conservation Park, and is an active member of the Tallaringa Healthy Country Planning Group.



**Tapaya Edwards** represents the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and was appointed to the board in August 2022. He has a deep knowledge of and authority in cultural lore. In addition he has long and varied experience in roles caring for Country and his people including working as an interpreter related to anthropology, health, education and the arts. Tapaya is a member of the APY Land Council and has sat on many other boards, including the Central Land Council and for the National Museum of Australia. Tapaya is also a highly acclaimed performing artist.



**Wanda Miller**, representing the Far West Coast, was appointed to the board in 2023. She has a long history of advocacy and involvement in community affairs, aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of her people. She served on the Aboriginal Heritage Board in the 1980s and was the only woman elected to the newly established Far West Heritage and Park Management Consultative Committee in 1990. Wanda was a member of the Iluka mine negotiations working group and Chair of the Yumbarra Conservation Park Co-management Board from 2015-2022.



**Peter Burgoyne** was appointed to the board in 2023, representing the Far West Coast. His previous experience includes as Port Lincoln Aboriginal Community Council CEO, and former Chair of the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Community Health Service. He was also a member of the Sydney Olympic Games Organising Committee. Peter's current roles include Director on the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation's Investment Board and committee member of the Iluka Mine Liaison Committee.



**Duane Edwards** represents Yalata and was appointed in June 2022. He is Chair of the Yalata Aboriginal Corporation and is a member of numerous boards and organisations, including the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Maralinga Piling Trust, and Tullawon Health Service. He is also a past member of the Maralinga Tjarutja Council. Duane has been involved in Healthy Country Planning for the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area and in cultural water protection and management and establishing primary production in Colona and Pintumbie areas of the Yalata lands.



**Debbie Hansen** represents the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands. Appointed in 2020, she had been on the AW NRM Board since 2015. Her previous roles include Director, Pila Nguru Aboriginal Corporation; Chairperson, Spinifex Art Project Aboriginal Corporation; Director, Maralinga Tjarutja; board member, Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation. Debbie takes a leading role in supporting natural and cultural heritage management, connecting community and government to influence policy direction, and supporting opportunities for young people to work on Country.



**Peter Miller** was appointed to the board in 2020, having previously served on the AW NRM Board since 2016. Peter, representing the Far West Coast, is a highly respected Elder and community leader whose long list of significant roles include being Executive Chairperson of Aboriginal Health Council of SA, during which time he signed the first Framework Agreement between the State and Federal Government in Australia in 1996. He is currently the Chair of Ceduna Aboriginal Corporation and was named NAIDOC SA Male Elder of the Year in 2022.



# Dunnarts in the Dunes

*AW fauna survey finds sandhill dunnarts further south than ever before.*



*A sandhill dunnart being released*

Sandhill dunnarts have been found further south than ever before in one of two fauna surveys carried out by AW in Yellabinna this year. In the first survey, along Goog's Track, the AW team was joined by three teachers and four Year 12 students from Ceduna Area School. The school group helped dig in the pitfall traps, setting up six lines of six pits on the first day. The students were thrilled when a sandhill dunnart was found in a trap on the first morning, with a second sandhill dunnart

trapped on the final day. These finds extend the known range of the species further south, just 50km north of Ceduna. "Both of the sandhill dunnarts caught were sub-adults, born either late last year or early this year," says AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse. "They're only the second and third of their kind recorded in the Yumbarra Conservation Park, the first being caught in our survey in 2019." There were many of other exciting finds for the school group, including sandy inland mice, Mitchell's hopping mice,

little long-tailed dunnarts and a southern ningau, a tiny marsupial carnivore. Three western pygmy possums were also caught, which were a real crowd pleaser. With warm days and mild nights, reptiles were well represented, with plenty of skinks, a knob-tailed gecko and the odd dragon. Once the traps were checked each morning, the students helped measure spinifex cover, checked some trail cameras and inspected a malleefowl mound with Brett, before heading back to school.



*Southern ningau*



*Little long-tailed dunnart*



*Western pygmy possum*



*Pygmy desert monitor*



*L-R: Ashlee Benc (AW), Jonty Doudle (student teacher), Riley Blackham, Callum Tonkin, Thomas Clayton (teacher), Jasmine Hoffrichter, Brett Backhouse (AW), Knud Kelly, Vivian Deed (teacher), Alex Fraser (AW)*



*Brett talks about malleefowl*



*Digging the traps*



*Bagging a dunnart*

A second survey trip took place near Immarna two weeks later and had similar success, with plenty of mammals found in the pits. Little long-tailed dunnarts, multiple hopping mice, sandy inland mice and 10 western pygmy possums were recorded, along with a whopping haul of 21 sandhill dunnarts, seven more than in any other year. The team found a small patch of 11 buffel grass plants at a site that had previously been treated in 2018. "No plants had been

seen here since being treated almost five years ago," Brett says. "It highlights that many areas considered clear of buffel might still be at risk, and shows the need for vigilance and continued monitoring." The small infestation was treated straight away with glyphosate, flupropanate and pine oil. "We've had seven years in a row where we have located the species at new sites, many of these further south and east of older records," Brett says. "These surveys rounded off a highly successful project

that has extended the known range of the sandhill dunnart significantly, as well as reinforcing our understanding of key sandhill dunnart habitat." This project is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



# See Birds? Shore Did!



Ashlee Benc, Alex Fraser, Brett Backhouse, Paul Gregory

In late January, a team of AW staff led by Ecologist Brett Backhouse visited the Yalata coast for our annual shorebird survey. The survey, funded by AW, contributes to the national Beach-nesting Birds project (Birdlife Australia) which aims to identify, monitor and improve populations of beach-nesting birds. The data from these surveys will support future programs to alleviate key threats to their breeding success and protect their coastal habitats. It takes place along the coastal section of the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). The Yalata IPA consists of 450,000 hectares of mallee scrub, open woodlands, sandy plains and rugged coastline west of Ceduna on South Australia's Far West Coast. The IPA is managed by the Yalata Anangu Aboriginal Corporation.

Entry to this area requires a permit and strict conditions apply. Yalata Rangers patrol the beaches daily, checking permits and working to protect the shorebirds and the fragile coastal environment. The trip struck a hurdle about 150km west of Ceduna, when one of the 4WDs had a technical issue, prompting a return to Ceduna to swap vehicles. Facing an hours-long delay for half the team, with a 70km stretch of coastline to survey, Project Officer Paul Gregory and AW new recruit Ashlee Benc pressed on to set up camp and undertake the first of three sections of beach survey. From the campsite west towards the start of the Bunda Cliffs, Paul and Ash rode in the ATV, noting their observations along the way. In a quiet start to the survey, they

saw few birds on the beach, with larger flocks further west. Species recorded included sooty and pied oystercatchers, sanderlings, red-capped plovers and a few white-faced herons. Birds were few and far between, but there were plenty of dog and fox tracks, which could be seen along most of the beach and going in and out of the dunes. Paul and Ashlee also collected a load of rubbish in the back of the ATV, mostly ropes from ships offshore. When they returned to camp, Brett and Community Project Officer Alex had arrived and begun setting up camp and preparing for dinner. The crew woke to an unseasonably cool day and headed out to the next two



Red-necked stint

survey sites, dropping Paul and Ash at the easternmost point before backtracking about 10km for Brett and Alex to start the next 12km stretch back towards camp. The quietness of the first day repeated on day two, with small flocks of species including a lone penguin and a pair of hooded plovers that had been captured and banded by an AW team in 2018, and one with a band dating back to 2017. Brett and Alex had a similar experience on their transect, seeing very few birds, and large sections that were almost empty. Again, fox and dog prints were seen, along with a camel print further back in the dunes.

Fishers were sparse on the beach too. The few that were seen reported poor results in their efforts to bring in big mullet and very few fish frames evident around the campsites. It was the last field trip with AW for Project Officer Paul Gregory, and he took the opportunity to check on work he began in the area as far back as 2009.

The board has worked with the Yalata community over many years on projects such as establishing formal campsites and rationalising the tracks through the dunes to minimise damage to the environment. Signage has been installed to educate fishers and encourage them to look out for beach nesting birds, especially the hooded plovers, which are particularly vulnerable to threats such as quad bikes being ridden up the beach. A trial of composting bins for fishing waste is also being carried out, to help avoid attracting cats and foxes to the campsites.

Paul talks about this work in our video covering the trip, which can be seen by scanning the QR code. The video also features Brett discussing the survey and shows some of the spectacular coastline of the Yalata Indigenous Protected Area. We look forward to working closely with the Yalata Rangers in future. Read more about their work opposite.

Click or scan to watch the shorebirds video



## Yalata Rangers on Patrol

By Andrew Alderson: Yalata Ranger Coordinator

Yalata Rangers had a very successful summer season patrolling and monitoring the Yalata coastline and campsites. Yalata Rangers are responsible for over 100km of coastline with duties ranging from weed removal, pest control, rubbish and marine debris removal, through to campsite and tourist management. Yalata is blessed with some of the best fishing and coastal dune camping in Australia and is proud to offer tourists the opportunity to access roughly 50km of this coastline. Entry is strictly by permit only and can only be accessed by booking one of our 15 campsites. There are many conditions of entry that permit holders agree to that ensure visitors meet the expectations of the community and look after our lands and wildlife while staying as guests.

This year Yalata Rangers were extremely active in enforcing our permit conditions by working closely with the South Australian Police who we guided along with our regular patrols. As usual, most camping groups were a pleasure to deal with but unfortunately some tried to avoid our "no drugs or alcohol" entry conditions and were found to be carrying these items during vehicle and campsite searches. Yalata Rangers confiscated approximately 15 cartons of beer, over 50 litres of spirits and a large assortment of wines and liquors. We also

found illicit drugs, to our surprise. These items were all destroyed with the guidance of SAPOL. Yalata Rangers are proud and take breaches of entry conditions very seriously. We have a zero tolerance approach especially when it comes to drugs and alcohol. Safety of our guests and rangers is not negotiable: we issue instant lifetime bans from our lands to each member of the offending groups. Yalata Rangers and community welcome visitors to come and enjoy what the land and sea has to offer but also want to keep bad behaviours away.

Palya.



A Yalata Ranger disposes of confiscated beer



Red-capped plovers



Hooded plovers





# Mystery Rat Caught on Camera

Could a bait bandit be a sign that native species are making a comeback to the APY Lands?

By Layla Moseby-Read

Last August, the Warru Recovery Team translocated 40 warru from the northern Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, further south to Kulitjara in the rocky Everard Ranges. This translocation was a significant milestone in the long-term protection of warru as it was the first time these elusive macropods had set foot in the Everard Ranges in 60 years. “As a whole the population has settled into their new home, and there is even evidence of pouch young who have become independent,” APY Lands Conservation Officer Oska Mills says.

An unexpected outcome from this trapping trip was the discovery of a mystery rodent, found sneaking around and stealing bait from the warru traps around New Well, the biggest South Australian warru population and the source of many of the translocated animals.

Oska says, “I noticed something was up when we came across a warru cage trap where the apple used as bait was gone, but the trap wasn’t triggered, and unfortunately no warru were caught.”

There were also unfamiliar *kuna* (scats), smaller than a warru scat, in and around the trap that inspired him to set up a motion sensor camera, hoping the bait bandit would strike again that night.

Sure enough, the following morning when Oska and his team checked the traps, the culprit was caught red-handed on the motion-sensing camera with apple protruding from its mouth. The animal was too small to set off the weight-sensitive trap mechanism, but big enough to take off with all the bait. Later, by the crackling campfire the group passed around the photos, trying to identify the mystery animal.

One potential option, the critically endangered Centralian rock rat found further north in the MacDonnell Ranges, was ruled out because the mystery rat’s tail was not thick and hairy. Rather, the images revealed a rat with a short scaly tail, long fur and rounded ears, a description matching a native species that hadn’t been officially recorded in this area since 1975.

The photos were sent to AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse, who was unable to attend the trip. “The most likely species would have to be the long-haired rat (*Rattus villosissimus*), due to the species characteristics and geographical location,” he says.

The long-haired rat is a unique and endemic Australian species with a grey, shaggy coat covered in long, coarse guard hairs. This species is also known as the

plague rat due to its mass irruptions after seasons with good rain and plant growth. Although they haven’t been officially recorded around New Well for a few decades, there have been several tantalising observations.

In 1985, ecologist Peter Copley discovered a rat skull and jaw bones in owl pellets when on a mammal surveying trip of the APY Lands. These were later identified as *R. villosissimus*, but may have been the owl’s prey many decades, even centuries, before.

Then, a few years ago when dissecting a feral cat shot to protect warru, ecologist John Read also found parts of a rat, but again, there wasn’t sufficient detail to make an identification.

However, this photo and scat observation in August is a more promising record, and just last September and November, there was more photographic evidence of multiple individuals of the same species found on Aeroplane Hill near the Pukatja community, 20 km south-west of New Well.

Oska says, “The reason we may be seeing these critters bounce back into former areas could be due to the ongoing cat and fox control, in combination with a species boom from the last few wet years.”



The tell-tale rat scats



The bait bandit checks out the trap

Although these images can’t be classified as an official record, the collected scats have been retained in the prospect of having a permanent record made.

“In the last year there have been more presumed sightings of this species in the APY Lands than ever before,” Brett says, “It would be really good to see another official record of the long-haired rat around this area, as it shows that the work we’re doing for the warru is having positive cascading effects on other species.”

This mystery rat has shown promising and exciting signs of species recovery in the APY Lands, and makes the issue of a pesky bait bandit not a bad problem to have!

This project is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.

## Catching Warru with the Kimberley Crew



Nyikina Mangala Rangers from the Kimberley joined the Warru Recovery Team as they set out to trap and survey warru at Wamitjara in May.

A group of rangers from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands had visited Nyikina Mangala Country in September 2022 as part of an exchange program, and this was the chance for them to play host to the Western Australian team.

It made for a very large camp and changed the dynamics of the trips, with new eyes eager to see and learn.



Nick Weigner (WWF), Cat Johnson, Brett Backhouse and exchange ranger Rehmal Skeen

The visiting team were involved in setting and checking traps, and paid visit to the *Pintji*, the large fenced area where warru live free from feral predators. They also watched a demonstration of the Felixer feral predator control devices around Wamitjara.

“Overall, it was a great week,” says Regional Ecologist Brett Backhouse. “We caught 31 individuals in total, with a few retraps along the way.”

The team did have one unexpected issue with the trapping – native long-haired rats stealing bait and chewing their way out of traps. The native rats had not been seen in the APY Lands since the 1970s until they were caught on camera during a warru trapping exercise in August 2022 (see story opposite).

“The warru capture rate may have been a little lower than it should have been,” Brett says. “These are native rats, so it’s not as bad as if they were feral, however it still had an impact on our survey.”

While signs are good for warru (and the returning rats), buffel grass continues to be of growing concern. Brett noted that the buffel at

Wamitjara was exponentially worse than his last visit, with massive tracts of grass around the slopes, feeding off the runoff from the hill. Some areas have extended up to 200 metres from the base of the hill, forming a monoculture of buffel.

Brett sprayed some buffel on the top of the hill with a knapsack, but more work is needed.

“I did see some of the work the spraying contractors have done, with sick-looking pink-dyed plants in a creekline, but it’s probably too soon to see the end results,” he says. “It highlights just how well the southern region is doing with the buffel along the rail line, as that is being held at bay or slightly reduced, whereas Stuart Highway, Coober Pedy, Cadney, Marla and APY Lands have greatly increased yet again. We need to celebrate the work AW, the landholders and our partners have done down south over the past decade or so. We would have a much larger issue there if this work had not been done so consistently.”



# Maps, Monitoring and Meetings in the APY Lands



Adam Wood, Kieran Vanhoren, Kim Krebs, Ethan Dagg

Pastoral land management and ground cover monitoring were the focus of a recent trip to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in May. AW General Manager Kim Krebs travelled to Umuwa with AW's Adam Wood, Coordinator, Data & Information Management, in May for training, workshops and meetings with AW's partners in the APY Lands.

"It was a terrific chance for us to catch up with the people leading AW's federally funded pastoral projects," Kim says. "We had some interesting discussions with the APY Pastoral team about future projects to put to the federal government for the next five-year funding period."

Adam spent time with Kieran Vanhoren, the new Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator (RALF) in the APY Lands. Kieran had previously marked a number of points on a map, showing infrastructure such as water points and fences, and Adam taught him how to use FarmMap4D software to turn that information into a detailed property plan.

"It was great that Adam could share these mapping skills with Kieran," Kim says. "Kieran's a natural, he picked everything up so quickly and these skills will be incredibly useful for him in his work with APY Pastoral."

An important element of the mapping is the location of the five Landscape and Livestock Management Centres, specially designed stockyards used for stock movements and management of large feral herbivores such as camels, donkeys and horses.

Kim, Adam and the APY Pastoral team then headed out to the field to take part in a ground cover monitoring survey.

Andrew Schubert is an ecologist who has been running a long-term project on the pastoral lands, monitoring 36 transects annually to gather data on changes in ground cover of native plants and weeds, as well as the condition of the native vegetation.

Andrew examines the same transects each time, laying out a 50-metre tape and recording any plants that lie directly under the tape. A radial transect is also assessed, recording plants within a 20-metre circle of specific points. A drone is then deployed to get broader context for the survey sites, such as stock movement paths and rocky outcrops that might be present.

Ground cover monitoring is part of the Sustainable Pastoral Project work AW carries out with APY Pastoral. The surveys provide data on the percentage of bare earth, weeds, and native vegetation, alive and dead.

This allows AW to measure the impact of the sustainable grazing practices implemented as part of the project. The data is entered into FarmMap4D along with paddock infrastructure and water points to determine the ideal cattle stocking rate to ensure the continued good health of the paddocks.

Kieran introduced Kim and Adam to Ethan Dagg, a former Ranger Coordinator for the APY Lands who is now an independent contractor working on feral predator management. Ethan showed Kim and Adam around the *Pintji*, the fenced enclosure that protects a population of warru from predation, and

showed how he uses a thermal imaging drone to spot and monitor animals.

"I was super impressed with Ethan's piloting skills," Kim says. "It's great to see the 'Playstation generation' channelling youthful enthusiasms into emerging land management techniques."

Kim and Adam also met with Richard and Tania King and Rex Tjami from the APY Executive. Together they discussed the work undertaken together over the last five years and thought ahead to the next five, considering feedback and discussing aspirations for the next five years, including exploring ways that AW may be able to support APY Rangers.

"One outcome is that AW's Chair and General Manager are welcome to attend APY Executive meetings in future," Kim says. "It was a very positive meeting that built on our already strong relationship and I look forward to collaborating even more closely with the APY team."



Kieran at the controls of the drone

# CAMELS COLLARED



Senior Veterinarian Nigel Baum with a collared camel  
Photo: Scott Jennings



Camels travel vast distances in the desert  
Photo: Scott Jennings



A camel being unloaded in Pt Augusta c1893  
Photo: State Library of SA

Camel management took a step forward in April, as several organisations joined forces to track down these large feral herbivores that continue to wreak havoc across the region.

Helicopters took to the skies to locate herds of camels during the ten-day operation. Skilled marksmen were on board to target selected animals with tranquiliser guns so they could be fitted with specially made GPS tracking collars.

The team fitted collars to 17 camels, which will provide up-to-date data about the camels' movements, giving valuable insights into the vast distances they cover and how they respond to climatic events.

Along with collaring and releasing selected camels a culling operation was carried out to remove more of these damaging animals from the environment.

Camels were introduced to Australia from 1840 to help with inland exploration and by the late 1800s were well established as beasts of burden, carting wool bales and other goods across the interior. Cameleers were commonly known as Afghans or Ghans, although many of them came from India, Egypt and Turkey. As motorised transport took over in the 1920s, many camels were released into the wild, where they thrived.

A century later, feral camels have become a major environmental problem in arid Australia, which may have the largest wild camel population in the world. Camels will eat more than 80% of plant species and cause damage to important bush food plants such as quandong trees by trampling and eating them.

Able to smell water sources from up to five kilometres away, camels gather in large numbers when water is scarce, damaging infrastructure such as fences, taps and pumps in their search for a drink. Important water sources such as rockholes are often contaminated by the carcasses of dead camels, reducing water availability for people as well as other animal species.

Wetter than average weather in recent years has led to a rise in camel numbers, so a multi-agency team was organised to track and cull the animals.

AW funded the operations through the South Australian Government's Landscape Priority Fund and Australian Government's National Landcare Program. AW staff also provided logistical and on-ground operational support, working alongside marksmen and other staff from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Biosecurity SA sent Senior Veterinary Officer Nigel Baum to carry out the

immobilisation and collar fitting.

"The expedition was such an excellent blend of technology, practicality, local knowledge, science and project management that it was both a pleasure and an honour to be a part of it," Nigel says. "All the people involved in the planning and delivery are to be congratulated."

Over ten days in the field, the team covered over 16,500 aerial kilometres and surveyed almost five million hectares, beginning on the Nullarbor and sweeping across the Great Victoria Desert. The two Robinson R44 helicopters spent almost 150 hours in the air, with the four marksmen successfully targeting 2706 camels between them.

"Culling animals is never undertaken lightly," says AW Operations Manager Yasmin Wolf. "Unfortunately, camels are another example of introduced animals causing extensive damage to vulnerable Australian ecosystems, as well as to important cultural sites and infrastructure. We're grateful for the cooperation of all of the agencies involved in this successful operation, which will have positive effects across a large part of our region. Data from the GPS collars is already giving us some important insights, which will inform our management strategy in future years."



# Tech Boost for Buffel Battle



AW's Ashlee Benc and Tiah Pepe check out the drone

## A donation from BHP provides new weapons for the battle against buffel grass

The battle against the spread of the ecological transformer weed buffel grass across the southern Great Victoria Desert has been boosted with Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board's (AW) investment in new technology, thanks to an \$82,000 donation from BHP's Community Donation Program.

The funds have allowed the board to purchase a specialised drone, 10 high-definition 4G-enabled cameras, two remote area weather monitoring stations and tablet devices for data mapping.

"This is a foundational arsenal of technology that will help us in the fight against buffel grass," says AW General Manager, Kim Krebs. "It's impossible for our teams to constantly be on-ground monitoring and managing infestations across this vast area, so having use of this

new equipment will most certainly enable us to be more effective."

Buffel grass is an introduced tussock grass that is posing an existential threat to arid ecosystems across Australia. It is fast-growing, outcompetes native grasses and shrubs, and hampers the movement of animal species. It burns hotter than native vegetation, killing larger shrubs and trees, and regenerates more quickly after fire events, creating a monoculture that decimates natural ecosystems and damages Aboriginal cultural sites.

Buffel grass was declared a weed in South Australia in 2015 and the AWLB and BHP have been proactive in managing the threat. While AW's efforts have focussed on the southern section of the Great Victoria Desert, BHP has been monitoring and



An AW spraying operation along the railway line



A BHP worker spraying buffel near Roxby Downs



Buffel grass spreads along road and rail corridors

eradicating buffel grass around Roxby Downs since 2000.

"The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board leads the field when it comes to tackling buffel grass," says Kimberley Solly, Principal Biodiversity at BHP. "Although we don't operate within their region, we understand the scale of the threat and how a coordinated approach could create better impact. Currently, BHP manages existing roads and tracks relating to our operations. As off-road driving contributes to the spread of buffel seeds, it's fantastic to contribute to new ways of detecting infestations. Providing funding for this work is part of a bigger picture at BHP, as we move our focus from a no-net-impact approach to a nature positive outcome."

AW is leading a multi-agency taskforce against buffel grass in the southern Great Victoria Desert, partnering with neighbouring landscape boards South Australian Arid Lands, Eyre Peninsula, and Northern and Yorke, along with Indigenous ranger teams and other stakeholders to keep the weed at bay.

"In addition to employing new staff dedicated to buffel grass control, we're collaborating with our neighbouring landscape boards and regional partners to deal with this insidious threat to our environment," says Kim Krebs. "This new technology adds a powerful string to our bow and our team is looking forward to seeing the on-ground benefits it will provide. It's encouraging to receive this support from BHP. We hope that other mining operations will be inspired to recognise the significance of looking after Country more broadly and add their support to keeping it healthy."

# A Letter to the Minister about Buffel Grass

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board continues to advocate for a national approach to the buffel grass crisis.

In January, the board started the year by sending an open letter to Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, urging her to urgently review the status of buffel grass to prevent an ecological disaster.

Signed by the entire board, the letter informs the Minister that buffel grass is an ecological transformer weed that does and will continue to impact threatened species recovery plans, including the Warru Recovery Project.

The following are excerpts from the letter.

*"We stand with all desert people across Australia as strong voices to emphasise the threats the rampant buffel grass invasion is having on culture, biodiversity and ecosystem function across arid rangelands and deserts."*

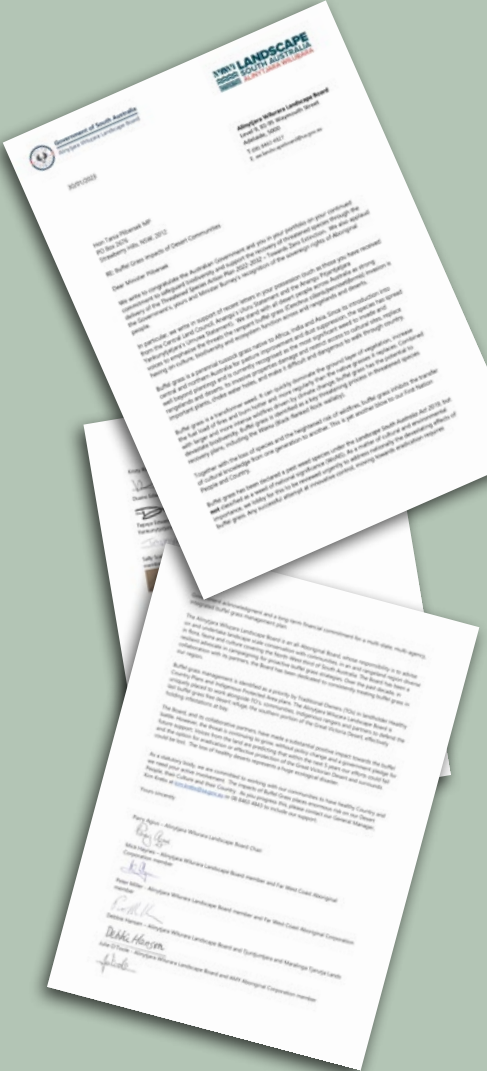
*"Together with the loss of species and the heightened risk of wildfires, buffel grass inhibits the transfer of cultural knowledge from one generation to another. This is yet another blow to our First Nation People and Country."*

*"Buffel grass has been declared a pest weed species under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019, but not classified as a weed of national significance (WoNS). As a matter of cultural and environmental importance, we lobby for this to be reviewed urgently to address nationally the devastating effects of buffel grass. Any successful attempt at innovative control, moving towards eradication requires Government acknowledgment and a long-term financial commitment for a multi-state, multi-agency, integrated buffel grass management plan."*

*"The Board, and its collaborative partners, have made a substantial positive impact towards the buffel battle. However, the threat is continuing to grow, without policy change and*

*a government pledge for future support. Voices from the land are predicting that within the next five years our efforts could fail and the option for eradication or effective protection of the Great Victorian Desert and surrounds could be lost. The loss of healthy deserts represents a huge ecological disaster.*

*As a statutory body, we are committed to working with our communities to have healthy Country and we need your active involvement. The impacts of Buffel Grass places enormous risk on our Desert People, their Culture and their Country."*





# All A-Board in Murray Bridge

By Olivia O’Leary-Fletcher

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board members travelled from near and far to attend the inaugural Landscape SA Conference in Murray Bridge in March. The conference brought together all of the landscape boards and members throughout SA to network, share insights, and hear from speakers including AW’s Presiding Member Mick Haynes.

AW had strong representation at the conference, with nine of our 10 members attending. The board ventured to Murray Bridge on Sunday to prepare for the conference with a good night’s sleep.

The two days were action-packed listening to each of the landscape boards present on a nominated topic. It was a great chance for the board to make connections with our neighbours and network with the members of other boards. Board members appreciated the opportunity to get a sense of the strategies and priorities of the different regions.

The board enjoyed hearing from guest speakers including Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, the Hon. Susan Close MP; CEO of Natural Resource Management Regions Australia, Kate Andrews; Director, Native Vegetation, Pastoral Land Management and Landscape Services, Department for Environment and Water, Merridie Martin; and Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions, Prof Mehdi Doroudi PSM GAICD.

The keynote address from Minister Close set out her priorities for landscape boards, her thoughts on successes and failures of landscape boards and her aspirations for the boards over the next four years.

Following a busy morning schedule, attendees enjoyed an afternoon field trip, where the board saw how the close-knit community of Clayton Bay are getting involved in assisting the reproduction and reintroduction of southern bell frog. The group also visited Nomad Farms, which has an ethos of improving landscape health and has received awards for both landcare work and the quality of their produce.



Julie O’Toole, Wanda Miller and Debbie Hansen take a break



Kim Krebs, Mick Haynes, Debbie Hansen, Peter Miller and Wanda Miller

On the second day, Mick presented alongside AW’s General Manager Kim Krebs about the strength in a Traditional Owner-led board. Mick talked about the ways in which AW is leading the way in working alongside Aboriginal people to look after their Country.

“An open invitation was extended to all the other Landscape Boards to visit our region in the near future to share our

culture and to experience the diversity and beauty of our region,” Mick says.

“It’s an opportunity also for AW and communities members to showcase our successes and highlight the challenges we face across our region.

“We also asked for *ngapartji ngapartji*, that they share with us as well.”

# Land and Sea Workshop a First for SA

Aboriginal ranger and Traditional Owner groups from around South Australia came together in April, with more than 75 people gathering in Hahndorf for the South Australian Aboriginal Land & Sea Management Workshop. It was the first time such a large group from the South Australian Aboriginal land and sea management sector has come together to consider how the state government can better support traditional owners caring for Country.

Delegates included Aboriginal rangers, Indigenous Protected Area managers, Aboriginal land and sea management staff, and Traditional Owner groups looking to start caring for Country work.

From Coober Pedy to Port Augusta, the APY Lands to the Far West Coast, the River Murray and beyond, Traditional Owners gathered with the aim of sharing knowledge, aspirations and common challenges, calling for the South Australian Government to grow its support for community based Aboriginal ranger and caring for Country programs.

Unlike Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, South Australia has not yet developed a dedicated program to support community-based Aboriginal land and sea management. The Queensland government supports 200 ranger positions in Aboriginal-run organisations, has a dedicated support unit, offers grants and is investing approximately \$25 million per year. The Northern Territory has an eight-year grant program for projects and infrastructure, and Western Australia runs a grants program which has just been extended for another four years with over \$50 million invested.

On the last day of the workshop, the group met directly with Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water the Hon. Susan Close and Greens SA Parliamentary Co-Leader the Hon.

Tammy Franks and called for them to get behind Traditional Owners and grow South Australian Aboriginal ranger jobs.

“It’s time for the South Australian Government to step up and show its support for Aboriginal rangers and land and sea management,” said Paddy O’Leary, CEO of workshop hosts Country Needs People. “We’ve seen over the last few days how strong the grassroots support is from Traditional Owners across South Australia.”

“Aboriginal land and sea management is essential to protecting nature and sustaining culture. Community based Aboriginal ranger teams also provide

funding to cover our region, to employ more rangers to manage our program activities with communities.

“As a new member, I appreciated getting a better understanding of the concerns relating to species with grassy woodland habitats in the eastern and northern areas. I think the revegetation of Country to help reduce the risk of species decline is a positive program activity. This will need more lobbying and financial support from government to protect our species land and environment.

“Personally, I enjoyed the conference and I believe as a forum we need to continue having annual state landscape

conferences to support each other with new strategic ideas on managing our land, fauna and species.”

The two-day workshop was organised and sponsored by Country Needs People, an independent not-for-profit organisation with a growing network of 44 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across Australia who work

opportunities for people by creating valued locally supported jobs, enabling individuals to care for their families and generate a positive economic and social return for local communities. And that can be transformative.”

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board was represented by board members Peter Burgoyne and Julieanne Campbell, and General Manager Kim Krebs.

“I was very proud of the Alinytjara Wilurara board’s presentation as the only Aboriginal land management board in SA,” Peter says. “Our presentation highlighted our concerns for the region we represent, and to show how our board is working with communities to look after Country. Our presentation highlighted the size of our region, and that we receive less funding than all the smaller regions in the state. This indicates that we need more

and advocate for the growth, security and quality of Aboriginal land and sea management Australia-wide.

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board supported Country Needs People in organising the workshop, along with SA Native Title Services, SA Aboriginal Lands Trust, Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation and the Indigenous Desert Alliance.

The group committed to working together to grow Aboriginal land and sea management to protect and manage the natural and cultural values of South Australia into the future.

Click or scan the QR code to see a video of the workshop







# Back to School for AW Staff

The new year began with a return to the classroom for two AW staff members. Community Project Officer Alex Fraser and Communications Coordinator Noel Probert spent two weeks at the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Language and Culture Summer School at Uni SA.

The long-running summer school introduces students to the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages, while demonstrating the fundamental connections between language, culture and Country.

Learning a new language can be a challenge, and many of the students were concerned when they were told at the beginning to put away pens and paper so they could learn the same way Anangu children have for thousands of years. The first three words the class were introduced to became a mantra over the next two weeks: *Nyawa. Kulila. Arkala.*

(Watch. Listen. Mimic.)

Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara are very similar languages, sharing the same rules of grammar and many words. They have little in common with English, having developed entirely separately on opposite sides of the world.

They may have been daunted to begin with, but the 65 students were quickly swept up in their learning, with a packed curriculum that somehow managed to be entertaining, moving and funny as well as educational.

The course is run by Dan Bleby and Dr Sam Osborne, who have both lived and worked in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands over many years. Supporting Dan and Sam, and key to the success of the course across the years, are the Anangu tutors. Each tutor is matched with a small group of students for the duration of the course, supporting

them with patience, kindness and a passion for their culture.

Noel was pleased to learn that his tutor for the course was Tapaya Edwards, a member of the AW Board. Tapaya first became involved with education in 2004, working at the kindergarten in Amata, where he continued to work until 2015.

"A lot of organisations from South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia come through the summer school to learn language, build relationships and understand how to live in community," Tapaya says. Although his schedule is packed these days with national and international travel, Tapaya keeps coming back to teach. "To walk in both worlds is hard," he says. "It's important for me to keep my balance."

"One of the best things about the summer school is the way it centres the strengths of the tutors," says Dan Bleby.

"Anangu are always keen to be a part of it because it's such a positive experience. They get paid properly, they get to share their culture and counter some of the negative perceptions about their communities. Tapaya has been a tutor since 2005, and an important one – there are always many more female than male tutors. We're pleased to have Dom Barry joining us as a tutor this year after being a student of the course a couple of years ago."

The first Pitjantjatjara language school was established at Adelaide university in the 1960s by Wilf Douglas and Gordon Ingkatji, whose daughter Nyunmiti is now an experienced tutor.

"The majority of our students are from government and NGOs who work with Anangu, either on the Lands or in Adelaide," Dan says. "It tends to come in waves – in past years we've seen lots of road workers and people in landcare, this year we have a lot of students in the energy and power sector. Teachers have been one of our biggest groups for a long time."

The course covers much more than language, with stories, songs and dancing an intrinsic part of learning. Throughout the two weeks, Anangu women worked on traditional *tjanpi* weaving at the back of the room, sometimes joined by students as they created beautiful artworks which were available for sale on the final day.

Students spent the first week learning a simple dialogue, guided by their tutors. In the second week, the groups worked with tutors to create their own performances, devising stories, translating them and performing them on the final day. The result was raucous, funny and uplifting, with fluffed lines forgiven and plenty of singing and laughter.

As the summer school came to an end, the students left with heads swimming and hearts full, with new friends and a deeper appreciation of the richness of an ancient and resilient culture.

"It was an incredible two weeks – informative, enlightening and challenging," says AW's Alex Fraser. "Sam, Dan and the Anangu tutors were all fantastic teachers who worked as a team to create a warm and inclusive learning environment."

"The course struck a perfect balance between teaching technical language structure, history and cultural practices and expectations for working in the region. Although I'm not yet speaking fluent Pitjantjatjara (probably 10 years away), I hope that this is the start of my language journey that will help me build rapport and trust with Ranger groups and communities across the AW region."

## Drive to Survive



There was plenty of action in the dunes near Ceduna in June as AW staff took on specialised training in 4WD and side-by-side vehicles.

With so much of our work in remote areas, it's essential that everyone knows how to handle a vehicle safely in all conditions, and what to do if they do become stuck or break down.

The course covered techniques for driving in dirt, sand and mud, recovery techniques and basic technical skills such as clearing moisture from fuel filters and changing tyres.

The practical sessions were tackled with enthusiasm by the team, most notably by Community Programs Coordinator Ollanta Lipcer.

Olly, with plenty of off-road experience already under her belt, took on the course with such determination that she actually pulled a tyre off the rim during the sand driving exercise.



Alex Fraser, Tapaya Edwards, Noel Probert



Alex and his group put on their performance



Tapaya leads the men in a traditional dance







# Learning and Burning

*Women come together for cultural burning conference*

By Wanda Miller

Women from around South Australia gathered in Adelaide in March for the South Australian Women's Firesticks Conference.

Held on the grounds of the Living Kurna Cultural Centre under a large tent where we had our introductions and discussions, the conference was held to get more women in South Australia involved in managing fire and burning on Country.

Attending from the AW region were Lorna Dodd and Jeannie Robin from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and AW board members Debbie Hansen and myself.

The conference was facilitated by Firesticks Alliance – a group of women from North Queensland – and Kurna women in Adelaide. The guest speakers were Auntie Lynette Crocker (Kurna Elder and Welcome to Country), Dr Peta Stanley (QLD Firesticks Alliance training services and resource manager), Deb Swan (Firesticks Alliance Director) and Kylee Clubb (Firesticks Alliance Director). Thank you also to Ollanta Lipcer, AW's Community Programs Coordinator, for her great support.

There were around 20 women attending from different parts of South Australia. Over the three-day conference we shared information and our different fire or burning experiences with each other.

In our introduction, Debbie assisted Lorna and Jeannie, who shared their fire management experience as rangers on the APY Lands and how they had learnt firesticks management from their grandfathers.

The Kurna ladies invited us to visit Torrens Island together, a special place for the Kurna people. We talked about the land, and about needing to read the country before starting a fire. Methods explained were digging the soil by hand and squeezing it to check the moisture, checking the dryness of the grasses and other ground plants, feeling the wind strength and direction, and the temperature.

While at Torrens Island, the Kurna people also showed us an area that had been revegetated in the past in a thoughtless way as an example of what can go wrong and cause fire-related risk. They explained to us that when the land had been revegetated previously, the country and the landscape were not taken into consideration, not read properly.

Introduced species of quick-growing trees had been planted amongst the native grasses and undergrowth. Quick-growing trees are normally soft wood and burn easily. Apart from changing the landscape, planting the wrong kind of trees had also created a high fire risk situation.

Although not all of us have been involved in organised burning or had formal training, we know it as part of our life and culture. We have fire as part of our life every day, fire is part of where we live and hunt. Whenever we make fire, we are always aware and reading the indicators of the Country – it's part of our growing up, our experience and our cultural knowledge.

Every Country, landscape and climate is different. We will always need to read and consider the situation in our own areas, however, basic principles of safe fire management are the same. Light small spot fires that slowly burn to create firebreaks and reduce fuel load, in manageable small sections, allowing safety areas for animals and habitat. Read the ecological indicators before safely lighting a fire: the right season, vegetation growth and dryness, the weather, the wind direction and strength, soil moisture and any other important indicators to consider for the area you are in. This is part of reading the Country.

The workshop days were long and there was a lot of information shared. It was a very important workshop and we really enjoyed the learnings and the company. It was a good opportunity for networking and sharing experiences with each other. We were made very welcome by the Firesticks Alliance and the Kurna people.

## AW ON AIR



Tales from the AW region are hitting the airwaves every month thanks to ABC radio presenter Emma Lee Pedler.

Emma grew up on Nauo Country, on the family farm halfway between Yeelanna and Kapinnie, north of Port Lincoln.

After starting a radio station at school, she went on to study communications at Uni SA and came back to work at 5CC/Magic FM before making the switch a few years later to the ABC.

She's been at the radio station in various roles for the last 21 years and has spent nearly five years behind the microphone on the ABC Eyre Peninsula breakfast show.

Early in 2023, Emma approached AW and asked if we would be interested in a regular spot on her show to talk about our work. Needless to say, we were delighted to accept.

Usually the interviews are done by phone. AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse even managed to get enough signal to do one recent interview live from a fauna survey near Immarna.

"I'm inherently curious about our incredible Eyre Peninsula country and always want to know what lives on it, what its role in the landscape is and what

the community can do to preserve it," Emma says.

"Speaking to the people from Alinytjara Wilurara gives me an insight into country that's different to that which I grew up on, those wide desert expanses and the creatures that live there.

"It's a special and sometimes hidden part of our state. I want to help share the knowledge of the experts who work there.

"I always wanted to know more about First Nations history and interactions with nature.

"This is one way I can help fill a gap, not just for me but for our community."

In June, the AW board met in Port Lincoln – a perfect opportunity to visit the ABC studio and catch up with Emma in person.

AW Chair Mick Haynes, board member Peter Burgoyne and General Manager Kim Krebs had a great time chatting with Emma about their work.

ABC Eyre Peninsula can be heard on the AM band – 1485 on the EP or 693 out west. The AW segment airs on the third Thursday of the month at 8:45am.

If you miss it, keep an eye on our Facebook page for a chance to catch up.





# Lasers Locate and Protect Malleefowl



Lasers may seem an unlikely tool when it comes to protecting malleefowl, but in the air and on the ground, they’re being used to find and protect this vulnerable species. The shy ground-dwelling birds are hard to find, but their large nest mounds can be seen from the air with some high-tech help.

Malleefowl, *nganamara* in Pitjantjatjara, are notable for their large nest mounds, which can be more than a metre high and several metres across. Their mounds are built on a base of organic material that generates heat as it breaks down. The covering of sand on top provides insulation and the birds adjust it diligently to keep the temperature just right for the developing eggs inside. Although able to fly, they rarely do so, and are susceptible to predation by feral pests such as foxes and cats.

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board has been undertaking a highly successful federally funded malleefowl project for the last five years. Over the duration of the project, AW has surveyed more than 35,000 hectares of the Great Victoria Desert from the air using Laser Imaging, Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) and were thrilled to discover 36 previously unknown malleefowl mounds, with a third of these in active use. For this arid landscape that’s a high number of nest sites, with an active percentage much higher than the national average.

LiDAR can detect mounds but can’t determine whether they are active, so each LiDAR survey is followed up by ground truthing exercises where AW staff, supported by Indigenous ranger teams, categorise mounds as active or non-active.

Foxes and cats are well documented as threats to Australian wildlife and reducing their numbers is essential for the wellbeing of malleefowl and other vulnerable species, such as sandhill dunnarts, that share their habitat. AW is part of the National Malleefowl Adaptive Management Predator Experiment (AMPE), which is looking at the impacts of foxes and cats on malleefowl populations, while also assessing different techniques of control to address and mitigate these impacts.

With a sparse population spread over a vast region, technology is put into action to monitor the mounds and remove feral predators like foxes and cats, to give the *nganamara* a fighting chance. ‘Felixer’ devices use LiDAR and AI to distinguish foxes and cats from native species and remove the ferals from the ecosystem, helping the *nganamara* as well as other endangered species such as sandhill dunnarts.

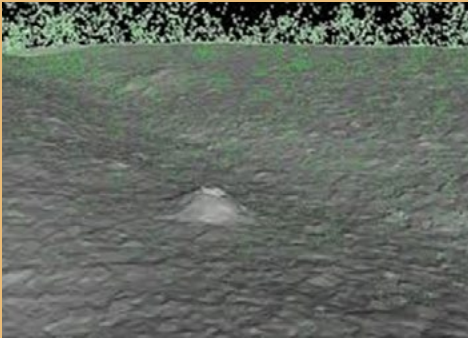
After extensive testing and delays brought on by COVID-19, the Felixers have been deployed across an area of more than 20,700 hectares and are targeting predators near active malleefowl mounds.

One of the most significant threats to malleefowl is slower moving than cats and foxes, but just as devastating. Buffel grass is an invasive tussock grass that transforms entire landscapes, forcing out native plants, preventing the safe movement and hunting habits of animal species such as sandhill dunnarts, and raising the risk of serious wildfires.

Since 2019, AW’s buffel teams, including AW staff, Indigenous rangers and contractors, have controlled buffel grass



Checking a Felixer in the field



LiDAR image showing a malleefowl mound

along more than 3,500km of roads and 550km of rail corridor. This is a huge effort which has minimised the spread of buffel grass within the AW region, thereby protecting vast areas of native habitat to ensure the survival of native and threatened species.

Malleefowl are only one of many threatened, endangered and at-risk species that benefit from activities undertaken within this larger malleefowl program. By maintaining healthy habitat corridors through pest predator, buffel grass and large feral herbivore control, the whole ecosystem has the chance to flourish.

AW’s fauna surveys, conducted as part of this project, have extended the known range of the elusive sandhill dunnart (see story page 8), while also increasing our knowledge of native flora such as the unique Mount Finke grevillea and Ooldea guinea flower.

This project is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.

# Eyre’s Walk on the Wild Side

Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula hosted a tourism marketing workshop in Port Lincoln on Thursday, March 30 at which the new tourism brand for the region was revealed in the company of the Minister for Tourism and Multicultural Affairs, Zoe Bettison, the newly appointed CEO of the South Australian Tourism Commission, Emma Terry, and the Member for Flinders, Sam Telfer MP.

The new brand invites visitors to come and discover ‘The Wild Side’ of South Australia and is the first new tourism brand in more than 15 years for the Eyre Peninsula.

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board’s Senior Communications Advisor Helen Donald joined the bevy of interested parties attending the reveal and workshop including those involved in marketing, tourism ventures, transport, accommodation and the local food and wine industry. Attendees heard from top industry professionals who provided a clear understanding of how they can leverage the new brand in marketing activities.

“It’s important, as Eyre Peninsula’s western neighbour, that we connect with the tourism approach experienced by travellers



heading across the peninsula towards Western Australia. This was a valuable opportunity to network and to consider nature-based tourism opportunities for communities in the AW region,” said Helen.

‘The Wild Side’ was developed over nine months of community engagement with the region’s 11 local councils. It is designed to capture the unique essence of Eyre Peninsula’s truly wild tourism destinations.

Annabelle Hender, Tourism Development Manager for Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula (RDAEP), said the new tourism brand encapsulates the experience of visiting the iconic destination – a little rough; a little rugged – an adventure you must prepare for but one you’ll never forget.

# Renewable Energy Forum

Aboriginal landowners and pastoralists attended a three-day workshop in March to advise government on new hydrogen and renewable energy legislation for South Australia.

The South Australian Aboriginal Renewable Energy Forum attracted over 100 people from across the state. This included Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) Landscape Board member Tapaya Edwards, AW’s Data and Information Management Coordinator Adam Wood, and representatives from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation’s Chair, Basil Coleman and General Manager Brett Miller.

“It’s good that the (SA) government recognises the needs to work with Aboriginal people in response to climate change. The Department of Energy and Mining hasn’t always worked the right way with Aboriginal people in the past, but this workshop allowed us a strong voice in the development of the proposed Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act,” said Tapaya.

During the workshop, it was highlighted that transforming current energy production methods to fully renewable energy will significantly impact on

land use across SA. Importantly, it was acknowledged that gaining early Aboriginal advice regarding where work should not be undertaken was important.

With the government’s stated deadline for completion of a green hydrogen power station, electrolyser and storage facility being the end of 2025, the pressure to engage and build relationships with industry and community is considerable.

Some of the key topics discussed during the workshop included: inclusiveness in the approval process; protection strategies for Country and cultural heritage; having Aboriginal legal rights built into the legislation; support for rehabilitation work; transparency (information to communities in language); use of plain English and employment of people to liaise with community.

The release of the draft bill will be accompanied by a guide for each stakeholder group, including one for Aboriginal people clarifying points of particular interest, advice on how to make a submission, and timeframes for response.

# Staff Muster

The AW team work closely together, in spite of being based in two offices over 700km apart in Adelaide and Ceduna.

Communication technology is fantastic for enabling teamwork over long distances, but there’s no substitute for getting together in real life, so in February, staff from both offices gathered together in one place for the first time since the pandemic began.

The 2023 AW staff muster was held in Port Lincoln and was a packed two days of teambuilding and planning.

With a new five-year cycle of federal funding just about to begin, the team worked through all of the proposed projects for the years ahead to determine how we could best support the region’s landscape priorities.

After a busy morning on the first day, everyone downed tools mid-afternoon for a little bit of healthy competition, dividing into teams and setting out on a cryptic treasure hunt.

With a long list of puzzles to solve, the two teams could be seen running through Port Lincoln’s streets and lanes in search of clues and answers, with the victorious team claiming the ‘Eternal Cup of Glory’ and a small box of chocolates, which were graciously shared with the losing side.

Day two began at dawn with a choice of stand-up paddleboarding or yoga, before getting back to another packed agenda.

After a day of discussion and deliberation, there was time for a quick farewell before the group split into eastward and westward travellers for the journey home.

It was a welcome opportunity for the Adelaide and Ceduna teams to work and play together, inspiring and energising them for a big year ahead.





# Board Members Out and About



## Tapaya's French Connection

Tapaya Edwards sent us some photos from his trip to Paris, where he performed for the National Museum of Australia's blockbuster exhibition *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, which is travelling across Europe. Fellow board member Debbie Hansen also contributed to the exhibition.

Songlines was most recently in Berlin before it featured at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris from April 4 to July 2.

It's a long way from the APY Lands to share one of the world's oldest living cultures in the heart of Europe, and we can't think of a better ambassador than Tapaya.



## Cook up on Country

Board member Debbie Hansen and former member Maureen Smart made damper at a recent ranger get-together near Mamungari Conservation Park.

## Bush Tucker Family Feast

Peter Miller got stomachs rumbling in the AW office when he shared his photos from a recent family day out.

Peter and his wife Rhonda took their grandchildren out to teach them about bush tucker.

After gathering quandongs from the bush, the kids watched Rhonda cook up a kangaroo tail. They went for a swim while it cooked in the fire and enjoyed a feast when they came out of the water.

The quandongs were taken home to make some seriously scrumptious pies. Served up with whipped cream, they didn't last long.

Peter is now under pressure to supply desserts at the next board meeting!



# AW Staff Hellos and Goodbyes

Taking care of business at AW: welcome to Jacinta Sweet who is backfilling the Business Services Coordinator position until 30 November 2023.

As part of AW's Business Administration team, she has seamlessly taken to the role of providing finance, human resources, procurement and administrative support for the AW Landscape Board.

Jacinta grew up in Gladstone, South Australia before finishing high school in Alice Springs where she later worked for the Central Land Council for several years. She has a strong understanding of the AW board's work and, as a Nukunu woman, previously served as a Director for the Nukunu Wapma Thura Aboriginal Corporation.

She also worked previously for the Department of Health, Flinders Medical Centre and as a Project Officer in Aboriginal Health working on Continuity of Care.

Glad to have you on board, Jacinta.



AW's newest Project Officer, Tiah Pepe is head over heels for seals.

After completing a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Conservation Biology, Tiah enjoyed the last five years working for National Parks on Kangaroo Island. Her first role with Parks was as an Interpretive Officer at Seal Bay, the third largest sea

lion colony in Australia.

During this time, she volunteered with University of Sydney on an Australian sea lion pup hookworm treatment trial and SARDI's fur seal mark and recapture survey. She then gained experience in fire management and machinery use as a Project Fire Fighter.

Tiah is experienced in flora and fauna surveys, and worked alongside the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board with the Kangaroo Island Dunnart Recovery Project.

Tiah says playing and working in nature is her deep passion and her greatest teacher. We're sure she will have plenty to love and learn about with AW.

Welcome aboard Tiah.

# See you next time, Paul

Everyone at AW was sad to say goodbye and good luck to Project Officer Paul Gregory from our operations team based in Ceduna when he left us in March. This was however, not the first time. Paul first started working for the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board back in 2009 before leaving in 2015 to work at Yalata Community where his wife was based.

After a seven-year break during which Paul worked in various positions, AW was fortunate to have him come back and join our ranks.

"Working with Paul across a huge range of projects was always a pleasure. His unwavering work ethic, incredible hands-on skills and practical knowledge were greatly appreciated by all who worked with him including the region's Traditional Owners.

The whole team was really pleased that he came back to work with us in 2021 with his efforts seriously boosting our work capacity. In addition, he devised improved methods of managing buffel grass treatment and was instrumental in the design of our new spraying equipment" said Operations Manager Yasmin Wolf.

Paul also put his skill behind the camera to good use when in the field and over the years provided a gallery of photographs that recorded the operational work he was involved in as well as spectacular fauna, flora and landscape images.





**Mick Haynes**

Presiding Member



# Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board



Serving the

**PEOPLE, COUNTRY, WATER**  
of the Alinytjara Wilurara region

**Wanda Miller**

Far West Coast



**Debbie Hansen**

Maralinga Tjarutja



**Peter Miller**

Far West Coast



## ADELAIDE OFFICE

Level 9, 81-95 Waymouth St  
ADELAIDE, SA 5000

GPO Box 1047  
ADELAIDE 5001  
Tel: 8463 4860

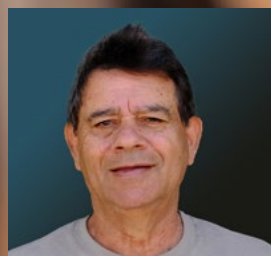
**Tapaya Edwards**

APY Lands



**Peter Burgoyne**

Far West Coast



## CEDUNA OFFICE

50B McKenzie Street  
CEDUNA, SA 5690

PO Box 569, CEDUNA 5690

[aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:aw.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)

[landscape.sa.gov.au/aw](http://landscape.sa.gov.au/aw)



**Duane Edwards**

Yalata



**Julie O'Toole**

Tallaringa



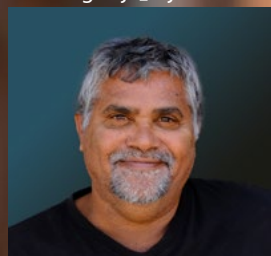
**Julianne Campbell**

APY Lands



**Jeremy Lebois**

Maralinga Tjarutja



Australian Government



Government of South Australia

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board



**LANDSCAPE**  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
ALINYTJARA WILURARA