

# Palya!

**STRONG PEOPLE HEALTHY COUNTRY and WATER**

*Anangu Kunpu, Ngura Kunpu munu Kapi*

## **BUFFEL BATTLE BOOST**

New recruits, tech and tools in the war on weeds

## **WARRU RETURN TO KULITJARA**

After 60 years, warru are back in the Everards

## **APY FLORA SURVEYS**

Generations see changes over 30 years

## **JULIE O'TOOLE**

Connected to Country

## FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER



It's almost five months since I took on the role of General Manager and I've used this time to learn about our region, our people and our Regional Landscape Plan. There have been so many great achievements.

As we enter Summer, I would like to reflect on some of the 2022 achievements of the board, who have guided us through a strong year where we've seen Healthy Country Plans turn from words to action.

Achievements include the warru translocation, through partnerships with APY Land Management, Zoos SA and others. This has seen warru successfully returned into the landscape after 60 years. Another achievement is the significant ramping up of the board's buffel grass campaign to keep the Great Victorian Desert buffel-free. Of course, the AW Board's achievements can be seen in the growing partnerships with the ranger teams across the AW region, where staff and ranger teams are monitoring threatened species populations, managing pest animals like cats and foxes, and of course their ongoing buffel control work (amongst many other things).

Our partnership with the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) continues to grow. The recent IDA conference at Yulara saw AW join APY and FWCAC rangers in connecting with the desert ranger network, and learning about different ways to care for Country. There were many inspiring stories

from ranger teams across the desert.

Congratulations to AW Board member Mick Haynes for being reappointed as the male South East Ward representative on the IDA Board.

Thank you to staff, board and our partners in making me feel welcome. I am grateful to be part of such a strong and dedicated team. Most significantly, I would like to say thank you to Mr Parry Agius. As a leader of both AW NRM and AW Landscape Board, he has grounded the strategic heart of this organisation. People like Parry are few and far between, where they straddle the divide between what's been and what's possible.

I hope that everyone's Christmas and end of year celebrations are special. Thank you everyone for your contributions in 2022, and I'm looking forward to being in 2023 with you all, as we continue to deliver on your Healthy Country Plans.

Palya!

Kim Krebs  
General Manager  
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

## FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to the 2022-23 Summer edition of Palya.

The Australian Government's recently announced budget and resulting National Landcare Program funding remains central to our strategic planning for delivery of our Landscape Plan and Healthy Country Plans over the next five years.

Placing Aboriginal people at the centre of caring for Country is a key objective of the AW Landscape Board. With strong connection to and cultural knowledge of Country, combined with skills in modern land management practices, there is no doubt that Indigenous rangers are best placed to effectively manage their land.

Well-established Indigenous ranger groups, along with fledgling groups are working across the AW region on threatened species, invasive weeds, feral animal control and sustainable pastoral practices. AW remains committed to supporting every opportunity for ranger groups to expand and increase their skill base.

AW is proud to be taking a leading role in managing the ecological transformer weed, buffel grass. Working with landholders across the region significant progress is being made. This remains a high priority for our team. With constant promotion and awareness raising the magnitude of this problem is finally gaining momentum nationally.

On behalf of the board and staff, I would like to welcome our new board member Mr Tapaya Edwards.

Representing the APY Lands, Tapaya is very highly regarded across the region and brings with him a unique combination of youth and experience. Working as an interpreter and cultural advisor he is also a well-renowned dancer who performs at venues across Australia and internationally. We look forward to working with him.

On behalf of the board, I wish you a safe and enjoyable festive season. We look forward to continuing to serve the people and Country of the AW region in the new year.

Parry Agius  
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.



Cover image: Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation ranger Charlie Coleman sprays buffel grass in the Great Victoria Desert

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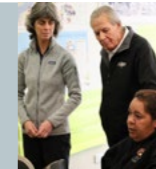
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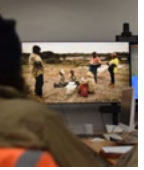
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L-R: Debbie Hansen, Julie O'Toole, Kristy Richards, Wanda Miller, Mick Haynes, Peter Miller at the Iluka mine site

## ALINYTJARA WILURARA LANDSCAPE BOARD MEET IN CEDUNA

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board continues to keep a watchful eye over developments in the AW region, ranging from a trip to the Iluka mine to view revegetation in progress to plans and discussions with the Regional Development Authority. Further consideration is also being given to the impacts on Country of Southern Launch's Koonibba Test Range activities.

In late September the board meeting was held in Ceduna on South Australia's west coast. Here, the AW Chair Parry Agius informed the board that at a recent meeting with landscape board chairs from all the regions, the incoming Minister for Climate, Environment and Water said she supports landscape boards in revisiting the State Landscape Strategy to realign with each board's landscape plan. Mr Agius pointed out to the group the importance of including an Aboriginal perspective when considering agricultural management strategies.

Mr Agius also informed the board that he and General Manager Kim Krebs had met with the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, Ms Erma Ranieri, to follow up with her previous discussions with the board regarding developing alternative role descriptions to encourage Aboriginal uptake of employment opportunities. A board workshop is planned to be held in early 2023 to consider more inclusive approaches to employment.

Although the board currently has a functional agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service SA (Parks), the strong co-working relationship prior to the board's separation from the Department for Environment and Water has greatly diminished. The board proposed re-establishing a closer alliance with Parks to share knowledge and resources and achieve better outcomes in areas of common interest.

Under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019, the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape

Board is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the extent of success in achieving the objectives of the regional landscape plan and policies. The AW team have undertaken an evaluation process and are in the process of developing Australian Government funding applications for the next five years based on AW's regional priorities.

The board were pleased to be informed that two of the three expressions of interest from the AW planning team in Round 3 of the state-funded Landscape Priority Fund were invited to be submitted for Stage 2 consideration. One looked at developing a multi-agency strategic response to managing buffel grass at a state-wide level, the other related to establishing Indigenous fire management practices and knowledge sharing.

### Iluka mine visit

On 28 September, the board and Traditional Owner and Chair of the Yumbarra Conservation Park Co-management, Wanda Miller, spent many hours on the road to visit Iluka's Jacinth-Ambrosia mine and view its impact on Country, including the proposed new mining site at Atacama.

Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation (FWCAC) Chair and AW board member Peter Miller explained about current negotiations in place between FWCAC and Iluka, including compensation for cultural safety, the protection of cultural knowledge, and protecting the broader environment.

The board were impressed by the directives given and supported the FWCAC's ongoing interactions with Iluka. This also included employment of Far West Coast people at the mine site and support for accommodation, education and financial support to Aboriginal employees.

Board member Debbie Hansen expressed how the site management has succeeded in bringing together the cultural knowledge and strong cultural significance for Tjuntjuntjara, Oak Valley and Far West Coast people.

Throughout on-site discussion, board and staff expressed concern about effects on groundwater quality. Iluka acknowledged the lack of water in the area and their representative said they are seeking to establish further bore sites to support the new mine. As this is of key interest to the board they were pleased that Iluka offered to share their research and plans related to water with the board.

The board would like to extend its thanks to Iluka for hosting their visits with particular mention to Iluka employees Joanne Lee and Matthew Harding for their support throughout the day.



Board members were briefed on revegetation at the mine



L-R: Peter Miller, Helen Donald, Parry Agius, Amanda Bowne



## Board member spotlight Julie O'Toole

Julie speaking at an AW board meeting in September 2022

"We don't own the Country. The Country owns us." For Julie O'Toole, sharing the importance of caring for Country is paramount.

Julie is a member of the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, representing the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara area. She joined the then-NRM board in 2018 after 20 years on the board of the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC).

She is also a current member of the Breakaways Conservation Park Co-management Board which includes management of Tallaringa Conservation Park.

"I was born in Coober Pedy, Coober Pedy is my Country," Julie says. "I've lived in my Country since birth. To be born on the *munda* (earth), means in Aboriginal culture, I am connected to the land. That's why I feel for the Country. Spiritually the Country heals me."

"My mother and father taught us well, our culture. I'm grateful to my mother and father, my grandmother and grandfather too, for teaching me how to retain and tend to our Country, because the Country looks after us. I want to pass that on to my grandchildren."

Julie wants to see young people develop a love for Country. "Not many children are

born the traditional way now," she says. "We tend to forget Country and worry about things that mean nothing to us. I grew up the traditional way – Country fed me and my people. When my people go out on Country they love it, they really love it. It's like a healing, spiritually it heals us when we go out on Country together."

Julie was motivated to be on the board by seeing the environmental damage done by mining. "I saw the difference between mining and caring for Country," she says. "I chose Country."

After four years with AW, Julie says she has built the courage to say what she thinks and do what's right for her people and Country. Earlier this year she enjoyed working on the Healthy Country Plan for the AMYAC region alongside her people, and representatives from other organisations such as Tatia Currie from AW and Chevahn Hoad from Coober Pedy Council.

While she brings her deep knowledge of Country and culture to her role on the board, Julie says her time on the board has been a great learning experience. "I'm grateful to the board and the team for leading me back to my roots," she says. "Spending time with the board has opened my eyes to my Country, my life, my passion for my Country."

Julie believes it's vital that people work



Julie and fellow AW board member Debbie Hansen take a moment to relax on a field trip



Julie outlining plans at the AMYAC Healthy Country Planning workshop in June 2022

together, regardless of their backgrounds. "We need to learn to respect each other, black or white, it doesn't matter, we're all people. It's about being human, making things happen. Even when we disagree, we need to work together. I come back from the board meetings to work with my town and say we need to work with the government. But instead of them leading us, we need to lead them."



# A BOOST FOR THE BATTLE AGAINST BUFFEL

Paula Modra (left) and Ashlee Benc with the new 4WD. Photo: Andrew Sleep

*The battle against buffel grass is intensifying, with the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board fighting the damaging weed on several fronts. AW is tackling buffel in the field with new staff, new equipment and new technology, while also advocating for a national approach to buffel management alongside our allies in the struggle.*

## New recruits gear up to battle buffel

AW has employed two full-time staff devoted to combating buffel grass, recognising the vital importance of controlling it in the Great Victoria Desert. Both positions are funded by the board.

Paula Modra has been appointed as Buffel Grass Coordinator, tasked with overseeing the board's buffel grass program. Paula comes to AW with a wealth of project coordination experience and a history of buffel grass control in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

"This is an exciting opportunity," Paula says. "AW has been working on this issue for many years and these two new positions reflect how seriously the problem of buffel grass is being taken by the board. I'm looking forward to working with our partners in the region to take the battle against buffel to the next level."

She will be supported by Buffel Grass Officer Ashlee Benc, who has worked on landscape projects in Kangaroo Island and Christmas Island, as well as being a project fire fighter and tour guide.

AW has been working to limit the damage caused by buffel grass for more than a decade, before it was declared a weed in South Australia. AW has collaborated with regional partners including the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Oak Valley Rangers, Spinifex Rangers, APY Land Management, Yalata Rangers, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australian Rail Track Corporation,

Department of Infrastructure and Transport, and the Indigenous Desert Alliance's Ten Deserts Project. The combined effort has resulted in the southern Great Victoria Desert being one of the last desert regions in the rangelands to have a limited distribution of buffel grass.

Buffel grass is an ecological transformer, overwhelming native vegetation, crowding out native wildlife and exacerbating fire risk. The battle against the invasive grass is complicated by a lack of consistency across state borders, with the plant still being sown as fodder in some states.

## Truck, tech and trailer

Along with the two new staff members, AW has also acquired a new vehicle and a custom-designed trailer is being built, dedicated to battling buffel. A competition will soon be run in local schools to name the new rig.

New technology is also being implemented in the field to assist in the buffel control effort. Dataloggers fitted to spray units are activated by the squeeze of the spray trigger, marking a spot on a map each time a weed is sprayed. The maps can then be viewed at different scales, from a broad view showing concentrations of buffel infestation across large areas, down to individual plant locations.

This data will be valuable in assessing and responding to buffel infestations across the region.

## TELLING OUR STORY – ADVOCATING FOR BUFFEL GRASS MANAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL WEEDS CONFERENCE

Ollanta Lipcer, AW Community Programs Coordinator

The small teams of rangers, AW staff and contractors in our region spend a lot of time doing hands-on buffel grass management in very remote areas of the Great Victoria Desert (GVD). It's heavy on resources, takes a lot of logistics, lots of travel and then lots of time spraying and cleaning up.

With all this action we rarely get the time to sit down together and reflect on why what we do is so important.

In September this year we were asked to present at the Australasian Weeds Conference in Adelaide. We couldn't attend the conference in person because we were preparing for our spring buffel season, but we didn't want to miss out on the chance to tell our story – the story of a few small teams that are working hard to keep buffel grass out of the southern GVD for everyone's benefit. We also wanted to show that, with commitment, as well as a legacy of good past management, it is still very possible to make this part of the GVD buffel free.

So we set out to make a video presentation to tell this story. We sat down together, to talk about buffel grass

and what could happen if we weren't holding it at bay from spreading down south.

Buffel legends from AW and the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation (FWCAC) first decided on the important messages we wanted to put out – what it takes to manage buffel grass, that it's hard and takes commitment, but that it is possible. We wanted to show what remote buffel grass management looks like, how hard we and others are working, and hopefully gain more support to keep doing what we do.

After a day of talking and filming, we ended up with a good presentation for the national stage. Our presentation played in after buffel grass researcher Ellen Ryan-Colton talked about her research into the impact the weed is having on people, country and culture in the APY Lands. We got some great feedback from the audience at the conference about the presentation; people even told us that it moved and inspired them.

The strong voices on the impact of buffel grass at this national weeds conference

have re-connected a network of people from across the desert regions on policy, advocacy and research. It's also starting to help garner more support for the on-ground effort we and others are putting in to stop the spread of buffel in this part of the GVD.

Spending time together as a team on this presentation also helped us to see that for many of us, buffel grass is not just a job to do, it's a cause, an alliance and a commitment.



Scan or tap to watch the video.



Charlie Coleman, Brandon Willis and Alex Fraser in the video presentation



Participants in the buffel training workshop at Ceduna

## BUFFEL TRAINING WORKSHOP

Ollanta Lipcer

In September, we held our first regional buffel grass pre-season workshop for operators. This bi-annual workshop is in answer to the need recognised by our partners in Oak Valley, Far West Coast and Eyre Peninsula for better regional information sharing on buffel grass management.

We gathered the ranger teams from Yalata, FWCAC, and National Parks, as well as AW and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff

and our excellent local spray contractors for a very hands-on practical day to teach, learn, share and plan for buffel grass management together.

In between going over equipment, maps and spray unit set-ups we were lucky enough to have a video call from buffel grass guru Troy Bowman (PIRSA) who volunteered his time to talk to us about the chemical trials he has run in the past for buffel grass control, as well as modes of action of chemicals and application rates.

Oak Valley Rangers could not come to the workshop but gave great input in the leadup,

including practical information on best practice treatment for remote areas, their 'triple whammy' chemical mix application rates and observations based on years of experience killing buffel grass.

The workshop was a great success and another example of how our small teams are working well together to keep buffel grass from spreading in the GVD. The very next day, inspired by the workshop, Yalata rangers went out inspecting the Eyre Highway for potential buffel grass infestations and FWCAC rangers have asked that we hold additional workshops to keep strengthening our on-ground buffel network.

# DESERT IPA RANGERS STATEMENT ON BUFFEL GRASS 2021 (UMUWA)

*The Umuwa Statement was presented by the APY Warru Rangers to the 2022 IDA Conference in November, where it received unanimous support. We are hopeful this statement will galvanise environmental groups and governments across the country to step up their efforts against the insidious threat of buffel grass.*

*We're publishing it in full in both Pitjantjatjara and English and hope that our readers will help spread this message far and wide.*

By Langaliki Robin, Joanne Ken and Dom Barry

Nganana Anangu tjutangku tjanpi kuranya nyanga palunya ngalya katinytja wiyatu. Palu kuwari tjanpi kuranya nganampa mantangka ngaranya munu nganampa ngura kurani munu community munu culture kulu.

Tjanpi kuranya ngalya katingu puluka tjutaku kutju mai munu ulpuru kulu wiyanytjikitjangku. Panya kuwari tjanpi kuranya ala lipiringu munu iluntanu nganampa ngurangka. Ka nganana kuwari putu ngurini mai putitja tjuta. Panya tjala, malu, kumpurarpa, wiriny-wirinyapa, ultukunpa, wangunu, kaltu-kaltu, arnguli, kurku munu punu putitja kutjupa tjuta kulu panya kuwari nganana putu ngurini munu nganampa tjulpuntjulpunpa munu inunytji kulu wiyaringu. Tjanpi kuranya warpungkula pulkaringkupai warungku kampanyangka munu kapingku puyinyangka. Ka nganana nyanga palunya ngalya katintja wiyatu panya tjanpi kura nyanga paluru panya witu-witu pulka mulapa. Ka nganana mukuringanyi alpamilantjaku nganampa ngura malangkungku wiru kanyintjaku.

Ka kuwari tjilpi pampa tjuta ulanyi ngura nyanga palumpa. Panya kuwari ngura pulka tjuta anganu tjanpi kuralu panya punu wiru tjuta pakantjitjangka. Panya nganana kuwari tjitji tjuta katintja wiyaringu putikutu panya tjanpi kuralu iwara patinu munu punu nganmanypa pakantja tjuta wyanu. Ka nganampa tjitji tjutangku kuwari putu nyanganyi panya tjanpi kuralu uwankara patinu munu kuwari witu-witu pulka ngaranya panya nganampa tjitji tjuta nintintjaku. Ka nganana nyanga palunya ngalya katintja wiyatu. Panya nganampa culture kuwari kurani, ka anangu tjuta kuwari tjituru-tjituru nyinanyi.

Ka nyanga palunya nganana mukuringanyi tjanpi kuranya alpamilantjaku. Munu tjanpi kura nyanga paluru anu ngura winkikutu, munu tjimitiringka tjarpangu, munu tjitji tjutaku inkapaingka kulu. Ka tjitji tjuta nganmanypa para-wirtjapakalpai pukulpa munu inkapai, ka kuwari wiyaringu. Ka tjanpi kura nyanga palula, liru tjarpapai munu kumpilpa ngaripai ka tjilpi pampa tjana kulu kulira nguluringkupai tjanpi kuralu anganyangka ka nganana nyanga palula-tjanalanguru pikatjararingkupai, ngaalytjararinganyi panya tjanpi kuralanguru warungku kampara pikantangkupai. Panya nganana tjanpi kura nyanga palunya ngalya katinytja wiyatu. Panya nganampa anangu tjuta kuwari nguluringanyi pikatjararingkutjakutawara Panya nganana mukuringanyi pulkara alpamilantjaku nganampa ngurangka.

Ka nganana kuwari pulkara mukuringanyi goverment uwankarangku nganananya kulintjaku munu alpamilantjaku tjanpi kura nyanga palunya wiyantjaku. Panya nganana rawangku wangkangi tjanpi kura nyanga palunya palu mula-mulangku nganananya kulintja wiyatu. Ka nganana nyanga palunya mula-mula wangkara palyantjaku ngaranya, ngura nganampa, culture munu community kulu kunpu ngaranytjaku. Ka nganana mukuringanyi, govermentu tjanpi kura nyangapalulanguru alpamilantjaku. Munu nganana kuwari mayatja pulka tjutangku tjapini nyanga palunya nyakuntjaku, panya kuwari kurani tjanpi kuralu nganampa ngurangka munu nganampa ngura pulka tjuta kulu. Nyanga palunya ngura nganampangka wiyantjaku.

Ka nganana Anangu tjuta tjunguringkula tjungungku palyanma tjanpi kura nyanga palunya wiyantjikitjangku. Panya warka pulka mulapa nyangatja ngaranya tjanpi kuranya wiyanytjaku. Ka nganana mukuringanyi govermentu kulu nganananya mula-mulangku pulkara alpamilantjaku.

We the First Nations people of the desert did not bring Buffel grass to this land. But it is here, and it is killing our country and threatening our communities and culture.

Buffel grass was brought to our country to feed cattle and keep down the dust. But it has spread across much of our land. It is choking our country. We can't get bushfoods where we used to. Honeyant, Malu (kangaroo) and our native plants are getting harder to find. Our wildflowers are disappearing. The Buffel grows too fast and burns too often for our country. It's the first plant that grows after rain and fire. While we didn't bring it here, we live with the consequences. We need support to get our healthy country back.

Older people mourn the country that used to be. The plants and animals, the special and sacred places are covered in Buffel where once many native plants grew. We can't take our kids out to learn culture, the hunting tracks are covered and the plants that sustained us for thousands of years are disappearing. Our kids are growing up seeing only country with Buffel grass and it's getting harder to teach our kids the stories for this country. It is threatening our culture, we didn't bring it here and our people are suffering the consequences. We need support to keep our culture strong.

Buffel grass is all around our communities. It grows right up to our houses, in our backyards, front yards, our kids' playgrounds and our cemeteries. Kids can't run around like they used to. The Buffel hides snakes and makes it hard for our old people to get around safely. We can't escape it. We suffer health problems like asthma from the Buffel flowers and the smoke from the fires. Our homes, communities and special sacred places are at threat from fire from Buffel grass. We didn't bring it here and our people are at risk. We need support to protect our communities.

We are calling on governments at all levels to recognise the impacts and the threats that Buffel grass has on us, the First Nations people of Australia. For too long we have been pushed to the side when making decisions about this tjanpi kura (bad grass). We need serious action taken to reduce this threat to our country, our culture and our communities. We need support from governments and people to help us manage this dangerous weed that is taking over the deserts. We call on Federal, State and Territory Governments to recognise the threat of Buffel grass to our country, our culture and communities and do what is needed to stop the march of this weed across our country.

We stand together with desert people across Australia calling for support on this problem. Buffel grass is a dangerous threat to us, and we need to be resourced to manage it.

## BUFFEL TACKLED ON THE ANNE BEADELL HIGHWAY



The battle against buffel grass expanded into Tallaringa Conservation Park in October, with a spraying operation along the Anne Beadell Highway.

Contractors travelled a 100km section of the road, conducting surveillance and treating buffel grass along the roadside from Coober Pedy to Mabel Creek and Mount Clarence stations.

Roads are a conduit for the spread of buffel grass, with seeds spread by vehicle movements.

The buffel operation was a project that came out of the Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara (AMY) Healthy Country Planning workshop held in Coober Pedy in June.

Participants in the two-day workshop discussed a range of projects during the workshop, with the threat of buffel grass chosen as a priority for action.

This project is supported by AW Landscape Board with funds from Indigenous Desert Alliance's Ten Deserts project. The Healthy Country Plan is being undertaken in partnership with Conservation Management, AW Landscape Board and District Council Coober Pedy.

If you see buffel grass in the AW region, please contact our Buffel Grass Coordinator Paula Modra on 08 8463 4860.





# WARRU RETURN TO KULITJARA

*Warru are roaming the rocky outcrops of the Everard Ranges for the first time in 60 years, following an intensive week of trapping and translocation in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in August.*

In August, the Warru Recovery Team (WRT), comprising Traditional Owners, Anangu Warru Rangers, APY Land Management, staff from the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, Zoos SA and independent scientists, set out to trap warru in the northern APY Lands. The warru were to be released about 100km further south to establish a new population at Kulitjara in the spectacular Everard Ranges.

Warru were taken from the Pintji, a fenced haven for warru where they acclimatise to life in the wild, free of the threat of foxes and feral cats. Traps were also set at nearby New Well, a wild population where warru have been surviving among feral predators outside of the safety of the fence. Sourcing animals from the two areas provides genetic diversity for the new population, as well as including individuals who have experienced the threat posed by cats and foxes.

All of the trapped warru were assessed for suitability, with older and younger animals excluded to ensure a fit and feisty group were sent to their new home.

The translocation was a success, with the maximum number of 40 healthy warru translocated to Kulitjara.

Each wallaby was fitted with a radio tracking collar and Warru Rangers from the nearby community of Mimili, with guidance of WRT scientists, followed the movements of the new residents as they settle in. The Mimili Rangers had prepared for the translocation by conducting feral predator reduction work in the area in the weeks leading up to the release, to give the warru the best possible chance of survival. They have been continuing this work since.

Radio tracking in the weeks following the initial translocation confirmed almost all of the new arrivals had remained in the area. This was an encouraging sign as it is

important for the solitary animals to be able to find each other and breed successfully.

Two warru seem to have fallen victim to predators, with one collar found near a dingo den. The other warru is suspected to have been taken by a fox. Both missing warru were Pintji animals that had left the hill they were released on and appear to have been caught on the flats where they are most vulnerable.

"It's always difficult to lose any animals after translocating them," says AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse. "However, the main thing is the greater population that has persisted and appear to be happy on the hills. As long as a viable breeding population is maintained, the animals can once again be part of the ecosystem in this area, which provides a more robust meta-population for the entire species in South Australia"

Importantly, this new translocation to the Everard Ranges will establish a third



Mimili Warru Rangers radio tracking at Kulitjara



Measuring a captured warru

isolated population in SA. This will assist the species by building resilience against natural disasters such as fires and climate change, which could affect individual colonies. The translocation also provides an opportunity for Anangu communities in the Everard Ranges region to start working with this culturally important species.

The total wild population of warru is difficult to determine, but data from trapping surveys show a substantial improvement in numbers since the recovery project began in 2007.

The project is driven by Traditional Owners, with support from multiple WRT stakeholders. In 2020-21, more than 50 Traditional Owners were engaged in

consultations to decide on the translocation sites and population management of warru into former habitats within the APY Lands, and 34 Indigenous rangers participated in on-ground activities as part of the warru project.

More than 25 people were involved in the translocation in August. The lessons learned in this program are being provided by the rangers as far away as the Kimberley and Docker River.

"Being a Ranger is important work," says Grant Nyangu, a long term Warru Ranger who helped build the Pintji. "The old people told us to get around the land and look after the land. Now the old people are happy because the warru population's

growing. Old people love to see young people working on lands and protecting their own lands and looking after Country."

This project is supported by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



Scan or tap to watch the warru video

## WARRU THE SUBJECT FOR TWO WAY SCIENCE STUDENTS

The Warru Recovery Team took time out from trapping to welcome students from the Kenmore Park Anangu School, who visited the Pintji as part of their Two Way Science program.

The students helped set traps, check traps and measure warru, watched as a warru was released and were shown a video of a tracking collar being fitted. AW's Amanda Bowne spoke with the class about her pathway through school, university and work, encouraging them to pursue their interests.

Anangu Coordinator Lois Fraser and Principal Charlie Klein lead the school at Kenmore and believe the Two Way Science approach has enhanced learning for Anangu children, providing a culturally appropriate approach to science teaching and learning that students enjoy and engage with.

"Two Way Science utilises Country as a legitimate learning place," Charlie says. "This year, two of our high school students achieved A grades in science, benchmarked against the national curriculum, which is excellent."

The integration of learning on Country has also had a positive effect on other subject areas, including Pitjantjatjara and English language learning, mathematics, technology and the arts.



Amanda Bowne talks to the students



Students watch the warru video



Brett Backhouse on stage with Dr Louise Duxbury from the National Landcare Network

The 8th annual NRM Knowledge Conference was held in Margaret River in Western Australia in November, drawing delegates from around Australia to discuss Natural Resource Management issues, strategies and innovations.

The AW Landscape Board was represented by Regional Planning Coordinator Tatia Currie and Regional Ecologist Brett Backhouse, who was invited by the conference organisers to give a presentation.

Brett's presentation, entitled "In it for the Little Guys: Working Towards Saving Endangered Small Mammals in South Australia", utilised video of AW's activities in the region, including the Warru Recovery Project and fauna surveys for sandhill dunnarts.

The presentation (scan the QR code to watch it) was very well received by the audience and was followed by a lively panel discussion.

The three-day conference began with a presentation by Stuart Hicks AO and Wadandi Elder Wayne Webb. They spoke on the importance and value of cultural knowledge for NRM, as it is based on 60,000 years of landcare, acknowledging the value of continued landcare and the importance of NRM groups working

together with First Nations people.

"Talking with many of the delegates it became clear that engaging with Traditional Owners is not always done well in many regions," Brett says. "Many NRM regions around Australia may be interested in how we approach this at AW. There are varying degrees of collaboration with community, and NRM organisations that engage more broadly get better results."

Key themes emerging from the conference were transforming through climate change, the importance of engaging youth, and the vital role of data in understanding landscapes.

"Many groups working on threatened species are focusing on using technology such as GPS collars, drones and thermal scopes to gather data to guide their strategies," Brett says. "But while data is being collected in many ways, much of it ends up being ignored as groups only have the time and resources to focus on a narrow range of data – the things that pay the bills."

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Stephen van Leeuwen, Indigenous Chair of Biodiversity and Environmental Science at Curtin University. Professor van Leeuwen

highlighted the need for including Indigenous Protected Areas and traditional knowledge in developing solutions to environmental challenges, saying that First Nations people do not just want to be in the bus, they want to be driving the bus.

Former Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, Dr Ken Henry AC, gave an emotional presentation on why we need to benchmark our regions' natural assets by using Accounting for Nature (AfN) accredited framework to produce regional Environmental Accounts for Natural Capital Investment opportunities.

"The shift towards a nature positive environment is happening and there's a lot we can do at a regional scale," Tatia says. "Also, there's significant NRM work being done by Indigenous rangers on Indigenous Protected Areas across Australia and I look forward to these projects being included at the next conference."



Scan or tap to watch the presentation

## JUNIOR RANGERS ON THE AGENDA AT 10 DESERTS

AW board member Mick Haynes travelled to Adelaide from SA's Far West Coast in August for the 10 Deserts Steering Committee meeting. AW General Manager Kim Krebs also attended.

The Steering Committee discussed regional priorities and shared collaborative project activities from across the desert regions.

Attendees workshopped future priorities using illustrated posters to guide discussions. This workshop formed part of a Steering Committee initiative to develop a communication product that shows the long-term focuses for Indigenous land management collaboration across the desert, and how projects are connected.

Mick put forward a proposal for a junior ranger program, recognising the importance of young and old people getting on Country together so that knowledge can be passed down. There was also a discussion about how being on Country is good for mental health. This led to his proposal for a junior ranger program being passed.

"There's still a long way to go with the proposal and I hope some investment is made to progress the idea of developing a junior ranger scholarship program," Mick says. "The Elders are getting older and we need to look at ways of developing skills and knowledge in young people so they can be prepared to step into leadership roles. Funding support could support students in remote communities to improve their individual school attendance and pave the way for land management well into the future."



The Ten Deserts steering committee

## CONNECTING THE DESERT

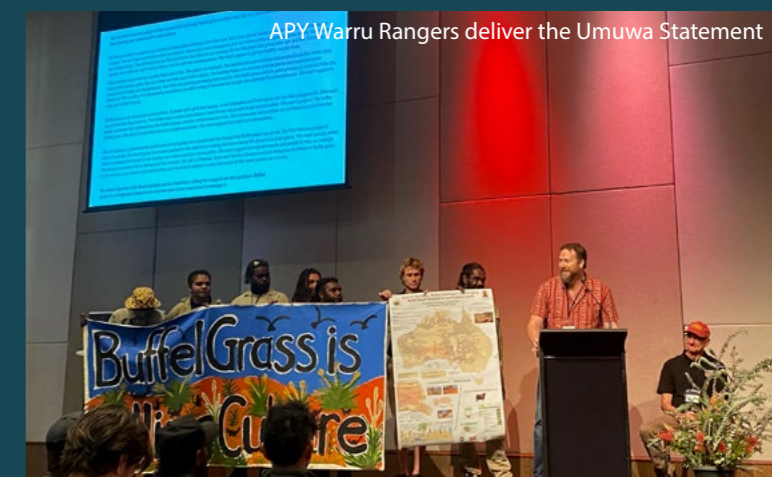
AW Board member and IDA director Mick Haynes travelled with AW's General Manager Kim Krebs and Community Programs Coordinator Ollanta Lipcer to Yulara in November for the Indigenous Desert Alliance Conference.

Mick, Kim and Ollie joined our partners from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, members of Far West Co-Management and APY Land Management rangers in a conference that had over 400 Indigenous rangers and people working in land management from across Australia's deserts.

During the conference, Mick Haynes facilitated 'Elder to Elder' sessions where Elders could share and learn from each other's experiences and visions for their country.

AW's delegates also listened closely to the priorities from the ranger to ranger sessions so they could take some of those insights back to AW's partners in SA, especially Oak Valley and Yalata rangers who couldn't be there this time.

Everyone from AW loved hearing from rangers across the desert, especially when everyone raised their hands in support of stopping the spread of buffel grass! (We have printed the Umuwa Statement in full in this issue – see pages 8-9.)



APY Warru Rangers deliver the Umuwa Statement



Kim Krebs and Ollanta Lipcer at Uluṛu

# GENERATIONS OF CHANGE IN APY FLORA



L-R: Peter Canty, Edward Dodd and Doug Bickerton with junior rangers. Photo: Ellen Ryan-Colton

In the 1990s, as part of the Biological Survey of South Australia program, a collaborative team of Anangu elders and SA Government ecologists conducted surveys of animal and plant life across the APY Lands, documenting scientific records and traditional knowledge of species in the region. Over a ten-year period, the team, including ecologist Peter Canty, collected data at 253 one-hectare sites, known as quadrats, spread out across the expansive region. They also captured photographs at set locations known as photo points to provide a visual record of each location.

This year, Peter was lured out of retirement by a request from APY Land Management to repeat the surveys, but with a focus on plant species. This was an invitation he was happy to accept. In July, Peter returned to the APY Lands with Luke Ireland and Doug Bickerton from Wattlesed Ecology, who have both had experience working with Anangu ranger teams and elders on Country in the APY Lands in recent years.

“One of the advantages of being an old bugger is that you get to see changes that have happened over a generational timescale,” Peter says. “Using the methodology of the original biological survey and finding exactly the same sites

means we can capture hard data and compare it to what we found before.”

One of the challenges faced by researchers is the sheer scale of the region. “The APY Lands are twice the size of Belgium,” says Ellen Ryan-Colton, who is studying for her PhD researching the impacts of buffel grass on these unique environments of the APY Lands. “The diversity of ecosystems, vegetation types and fauna habitat that covers is immense.”

The July survey was the first of eight surveys planned over the next four years, all revisiting quadrats surveyed almost 30 years ago. Repeating these surveys at more sites will provide clues as to how Country is changing over a broad and diverse area, as opposed to the ‘snapshot’ view of a single survey.

By studying long-term changes to Country across such a large region, many different families and communities are able to collaborate with the survey team to help realise their aspirations for Country. For many elders, it is a rare but sought after opportunity to visit some of the survey sites in remote areas. Being on Country recording data and knowledge about plants and looking at long-term changes allows Elders to not only maintain their traditional knowledge and pass this on through the generations

but also share this with scientists so we all can help support land management programs.

“The fact that you have the same surveyors come back 30 years later is quite unique,” Ellen says. “Some of the Anangu families worked with Peter in the 1990s and now their kids are working on the same sites.”

Finding those sites is another challenge for the survey team. The original surveys were done without the benefit of GPS. Sites were defined using landmarks, compass bearings and pacing out distances from tracks to create mud maps. “It took a bit of detective work to find our original photo points,” Peter says. But having this photographic record along with the plant data has proved invaluable to reveal the changes that are occurring to plants and habitats over the long term.

Having located and examined their positions from years before, the survey revealed some surprising results. Turnover of species – those that have disappeared and those that are newly recorded in any given quadrat – was around 40%, a much higher rate than was anticipated.

Some *tjanpi* - native tussock grasses - have increased in cover by more than 10%, while some species of spinifex (*tjanpi*) and saltbush (*iriyia*) have declined by a similar amount. Two species of spinifex, which are normally thought of as tough plants due to their spiky habit, have experienced significant dieback since the drought years of 2019 and 2020, which was unexpected.

Significantly, the sites within Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) were in the best condition, thanks to the efforts of Anangu rangers and IPA coordinators.

Before the team set out to do the repeat survey in July, they carried out a different kind of study in the Everard Ranges near Mimili in June, gathering information on rare plant species in the area ahead of the upcoming warru translocation. (See story on page 10.)

“This was a focus on some of the rare and threatened plant species that have been observed and collected there over the

years, as along with being a new home for warru, the Mimili community know that their Country, the Everard Ranges, is an important hotspot for many special *punu* – in this case, plants” says Doug Bickerton. “Particularly because they had good summer rains in the last year, we wanted to go back and work with the ranger teams to see how those plant species were doing and get a feel for whether there had been declines or increases in those species. We also used that trip as a pilot for what it would be like for the repeat biological survey.”

Of particular concern is the growing prevalence of buffel grass, which was identified as a threat in both surveys.

“Buffel is invading extremely rapidly in arid environments,” Ellen says. “In just a few years in the Everard Ranges it has travelled a kilometre upstream, expanding into the hills where control is very difficult. It’s sounding the warning bells. The Everard region is an amazing centre for biodiversity and culture, this range system set among the desert landscape with so many rockholes and *Tjukurpa* sites, endemic plant species and fauna. But buffel is starting to take over. We know what will happen if nothing is done, and that would be a real travesty. It’s a call for a strategic approach. The Anangu rangers are out there doing the work, but at a landscape scale it’s not fair on them to expect them to deal with it alone.”

These ongoing biological surveys support land management in the APY Lands, providing solid ecological information that is key to the work of ranger teams in their fire management, waterhole management, protection of threatened species, habitat restoration, buffel grass control and state of the environment reporting.



Ellen Ryan-Colton talks to children from Mimili Anangu School. Photo: Peter Canty



Ranger Charlie Coleman and Alex Fraser with a malleefowl mound

## DOING THE ROUNDS OF THE MOUNDS

Malleefowl are an important species in the Alinytjara Wilurara region. Known as *nganamara* in Pitjantjatjara, these ground-dwelling birds are vulnerable to habitat loss and predation by feral cats and foxes.

For more than 15 years, AW has monitored populations and behaviour in our region, including the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, and the Yellabinna parks.

In 2019, we began conducting LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys across sections of the known *nganamara* habitat.

LiDAR surveys use a plane fitted with a LiDAR sensor which is able to record extremely detailed and accurate imaging of the topography of the ground. Locations that appear likely to be malleefowl nest mounds are checked by on-ground teams and continue to be monitored.

In November, Brett Backhouse and Alex Fraser from AW were joined by rangers Les Mundy and Charlie Coleman from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation to survey mounds near the railway line east of Barton.

The crew checked 22 mounds, 11 known and 11 new ones identified by a LiDAR flight in July. Checking the mounds involves a lot of walking, with many of the mounds requiring a round trip walk of more than 2.5km. Brett clocked up an impressive 25km on one day of the survey.

Surprisingly, only two of the known mounds and three of the newly identified mounds were active.

“I was expecting that with the rains in the region that there might be more active mounds,” Brett says. “However, we did note many malleefowl footprints, so there’s a possibility that the LiDAR wasn’t directly over the new mounds, or that the birds have moved on and made new mounds since July.”

A previous survey along Googs track earlier this year showed several active mounds, adding up to a total of 11 active mounds from 33 that are being monitored.

“Malleefowl are quite marginal in our region, so this is quite impressive,” Brett says. “The data we’ve collected is a good base to expand our project, and it highlights the effectiveness of the LiDAR surveys.”

AW conducts the malleefowl project with funds from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program (NLP2). LiDAR surveys were funded by the Australian Government’s Regional Land Partnerships program (RLP).



# WALTER TJAMI – RALF MAKES A MOVE



Walter Tjami receiving his NAIDOC award from AW's Bruce Macpherson in 2017



Walter presenting at the IDA Conference



Spraying Athel pine

## After nine years, Walter Tjami reflects on his time as a Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator and looks forward to new challenges on Country.

In 2013, Walter Tjami took on a new role as a Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator (RALF) in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Formerly a maintenance worker, Walter stepped into the world of sustainable pastoral management, combining on-ground activities such as pastoral mapping, weed control and ground cover monitoring with cultural liaison and translation services.

The job presented plenty of challenges, such as learning how to safely use herbicides, but one of the hardest for Walter was public speaking.

“One of the biggest things for me was getting up in front of people and talking at conferences,” Walter says. “But it got easier as the time went on and the leadership training taught me to be prepared before going in.”

During Walter’s time as a RALF, he was involved in the construction of five Landscape and Livestock Management Centres (LLMC), specialised stockyards designed for handling cattle that can also be used to attract and then remove large feral herbivores such as camels.

He also mastered the use of FarmMap4D software to map paddocks and carried out maintenance on bores, fences and other infrastructure for the pastoral operation.

One of Walter’s proudest achievements is the effort to control Athel pine, a weed of national significance. “Before, there was too much, but we cut down all the trees and sprayed them,”

Walter says. “Going out and seeing them all dying off slowly, I was proud to see that.”

Walter’s efforts earned him the inaugural NAIDOC Week Caring For Country Award in 2017, but he says the most rewarding part of his work was the connection to Country.

“I enjoyed getting out on Country and working with the older Traditional Owners, looking at the trees and animals, knowing what was from here and not from here,” Walter says.

One of the Traditional Owners is Charlie Antjipala, Walter’s uncle and the APY’s oldest ranger. Through Charlie, Walter has a family connection to Watarru, the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) where Walter has taken on his new role.

As an IPA Coordinator, Walter will continue to work on keeping Country healthy, bringing with him all he has learned as a RALF. He leads a team of three rangers, who will work on projects such as buffel grass control, cultural burning, rockhole cleaning, feral animal control and surveys for threatened species including malleefowl and *tjakura*, also known as the great desert skink.

One of Walter’s first tasks in the new job was to do a presentation on the *tjakura* at the IDA conference at Yulara in November. “I was pretty confident going into the new job,” Walter says. “Meeting new people, going out on Country, presenting at the conference, reporting, I learnt all that from being the RALF.”

## SUSTAINING CONNECTIONS IN SUSTAINABLE AG



L-R: Steven Cunningham, Michael Clinch, Simon Goodhand, Adam Wood, Kieren Vanhoren

General Manager Kim Krebs and Data & Information Management Coordinator Adam Wood visited the APY Lands in September, hosting two staff from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Steven Cunningham from the Sustainable Agriculture Programs Section was the contract manager for AW’s RALF and Sustainable Agriculture project, and met with AW staff to monitor progress. He was accompanied by Simon Goodhand, who was formerly a contract manager for an AW pastoral project and is now Assistant Director of the Sustainable Agriculture Program in the Farm Resilience Division.

While in the APY Lands, the group met with APY Pastoral Manager Michael Clinch and Kieren Vanhoren, who is acting in the role of Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator since Walter Tjami’s departure for a new role (see story on previous page).

They visited the newly built Landscape and Livestock Management Centres (LLMC), stockyards designed for the management of livestock that can also be used to manage large feral herbivores. Five LLMCs have been built as part of AW’s pastoral project over the last five years. Michael and Keiren demonstrated to the group how the livestock management processes work with the yards and explained the use of watering points for rotational grazing.

Traditional Owner engagement, training workshops, building skills and adoption of sustainable pastoral practice were discussed.

Vegetation ground cover, water management including land hydration (from capturing the raindrops where it falls), feral animal management, soil management and weed control were also discussed, including buffel grass, which is always on the agenda.

Some large feral herbivores were seen in the flesh in the form of some inquisitive donkeys.

Back in Umuwa, the group had some engaging and very interesting conversations with Traditional Owners Donald Fraser and APY Executive member Rex Tjami.

DAFF periodically travel to each of their management units (in SA these are the landscape board regions) to monitor how projects are going on the ground, meet the people involved and gain a better understanding of the region. This visit achieved all of these aims, strengthening the relationships between DAFF, AW and APY.



Inspecting an LLMC

## ENOUGH GREVILLEA TO THRILL YA

Springtime is traditionally associated with flowers, and a flora survey on Mt Finke in September delivered blooms in abundance.

AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse set out with a team of AW staff and rangers from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation (FWCAC) to monitor the Mt Finke grevillea. Their intention was to count every grevillea on the mountain, but it soon became clear that this wasn’t going to happen – there were grevilleas everywhere.

Most written descriptions of the plants indicated that there were somewhere between 500 and 1500 individuals on Mt Finke, the only place the species occurs. But after a few days of trekking across the flanks of the hill, the team had to concede defeat after covering just one-third of the area and recording more than 3,400 individual plants.

“It’s safe to estimate that there could be 10,000 Mt Finke grevilleas,” Brett says. “Around 95% of the plants we saw were in flower and most were in good health. We also found many small plants, seedlings and juveniles, which is the first time we’ve seen this.”

The team measured the height of the juvenile plants and marked them using GPS so their future growth and survival rates can be monitored.



# FRIENDS IN THE DESERT



Main image: drone photograph from the Friends' survey  
Below: the two Friends groups about to depart from AW's Ceduna office

The Friends of the Great Victoria Desert had a busy winter, sending two groups of skilled and committed volunteers into the Maralinga Tjarutja lands in August, supported by the Oak Valley rangers, Maralinga Village caretakers and AW.

The first group to depart was a 10-person team conducting photographic vegetation surveys which contribute to a long-term vegetation monitoring study in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands.

Six of the team carried out surface photography on existing vegetation site photo points. This process is repeated every four years. The other four team members covered the vegetation sites from the air with a drone. Windy conditions meant the drone operations were limited on two of the days, but overall the trip was a success and all of the ground-based work was completed.

It is hoped that the use of the drone will enable the vegetation survey sites to be assessed for structural changes after processing is completed on a computer. This should add some valuable insight over time to the vegetation, on a fine-scale but aerial perspective.

Over six days, they covered 37 vegetation sites and, at the request of Oak Valley rangers, inspected two remote buffel grass sites to monitor for any new growth in the treated areas. All buffel plants were confirmed dead at these sites. The group found four live plants in a known site in the Tallaringa Conservation Park, which were reported back to AW.

The second group of 12 Friends set out the following week to contribute to the long-term *wayanu* (quandong) monitoring survey. This survey has been undertaken for over 10 years and scores the health of specific *wayanu* trees in the MT Lands, and in many cases, tracks the damage caused by camels to this important bush food species.



Armed with the Oak Valley rangers' iPad and survey instructions, the group split into two teams to tackle the transects and record the health of the *wayanu* trees against the previous year's photos. This inclusion of previous year's photos is an important improvement to the survey method made by the Oak Valley rangers.

The AW board is grateful for the efforts of the Friends, who give their time to support important work in the GVD.

# PARKS CO-MANAGEMENT UPDATE



## Nullarbor Parks Advisory Committee

The Nullarbor Parks Advisory Committee, including AW's Regional Planning Coordinator Tatia Currie, met on Country in September, travelling to the Nullarbor Roadhouse and then Koonalda Cave.

NPWS Rangers Tamahina Cox and Tayla Westley presented to the Committee the preliminary works carried out at the Nullarbor Roadhouse signage bay in preparation for the shelter and signage to be installed. The Committee is excited for the works to be completed after many years of planning and consultation with NPWS rangers.

The Committee met with researchers Dr Clare Buswell, Dr Kerry Walsh, Dr Leslie Vangelder and their team. The researchers presented preliminary findings from their anthropological and archaeological research, including images of the finger fluting artwork captured using photogrammetry technology, which involves capturing overlapping images to create a 3D digital model. This method allows researchers to continue studying the artwork offsite. The research aims to enhance the understanding of the social aspects and activity of Aboriginal people up to 22,000 years ago. The committee were very appreciative of the work, enhancing the understanding of the story and illustrating continued connection to Country and culture.

The committee were very appreciative of the work, enhancing the understanding of the story and illustrating continued connection to Country and culture.

## Far West Co-Management Represent at the Indigenous Desert Alliance Conference

Representatives from Yumbarra Conservation Park Co-management Board, Nullarbor Parks Advisory Committee and the Mamungari Conservation Park Co-management Board attended the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) conference at Yulara in November.

The conference continued the long-held traditions of Aboriginal communities coming together to strengthen connections and share matters of regional importance.

Co-management board members and support staff took the opportunity over the three-days to network with desert groups and share common land management themes, including pest plant and animal control, protection of cultural sites, threatened species programs and engaging with the next generation of Indigenous rangers and land managers.

"We've been attending the IDA Ranger conferences and Ranger forums for few years now, it's great to continue those connections and exchange knowledge about new and familiar land management practices," says ranger Tamahina Cox.

"I'm always blown away and humbled to be in the room filled with such experience and knowledge. A couple of highlights for me was the 'Reading the Country' and Ranger to Ranger sessions. The IDA Conference and week spent with our Desert Ranger families who have such appreciation, understanding, knowledge and connection to Country, always leaves me feeling inspired to go home and be the best that I can be in my role not only as a ranger with National Parks, but as a traditional custodian and member of my own community."



Front: Dale Furley (FWCAC), Jordan Miller (FWCAC Ranger), Kevina Ware (YCPCB Member), Dakota Were (FWCAC Ranger)  
Back Row: Ollanta Lipcer (AW), Tamahina Cox (NPWS Ranger), Belinda Margan (Executive Officer Co-management), Clem Lawrie (NPAC Chair), Kaylene Dyanawili Wombat (NPAC Member), Kim Krebs (AW), Mick Haynes (AW), Amber Bawden (NPWS Exec Assistant Co-management)  
Photo: Chloe Erlich

# OAK VALLEY RANGERS IN ACTION



New signage installed



Voakes Hill campsite construction



Another remote weather station completed

Oak Valley Rangers have been as busy as ever in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands, contending with frosty mornings, howling winds and finally, spring rains on patrol as the seasons progressed.

Rangers have installed two new remote weather stations, adding to the existing network. The rangers construct the fences – vital to keep out marauding camels and tourists – in their Ranger shed at Oak Valley, before transporting them for several hours to set them up.

Funded by the AW Landscape Board and the 10Deserts project, these remote weather stations will provide important data about rainfall, wind and temperatures in remote areas of MT Lands – over 10.6 million hectares. For the rangers, the ability to monitor weather in specific areas of their huge territory will help with many parts of their land management program, especially their effort to control remote buffel grass infestations. For example, some infestations can be up to a five-hour drive from the ranger base, so being able to monitor rainfall and temperature will help the team make management decisions,

such as which infestation to treat when.

On buffel in MT Lands, there are some very good signs that the Oak Valley Rangers' hard work, with continual follow-up, on some of the remote buffel grass infestations over the past two years is paying off. One example is a site on the Anne Beadell Highway, where what was once a patch of buffel grass only, is now a field of native wildflowers, with only a handful of small buffel plants.

These little plants are being monitored closely and managed as they retreat. This good result has come from 12 patrols that have included monitoring and managing this site since September 2020.

It's worth noting that patrols to this site are a 730km round trip – that's 8,760km so far for this site alone. Despite the distance and bumpy roads, the team have been consistent and committed, and will need to keep on it – this site will need treatment and monitoring for another three years before it can be claimed as buffel-free.

Oak Valley Rangers are part of a big effort in a part of the Great Victoria Desert that

is not yet swamped by buffel grass and where it is possible to kill infestations and turn the tide. It takes massive effort and resources, but with support and commitment it is possible.

The development of the Voakes Hill Corner campsite took another important step with the installation of a bush toilet. Rangers put their new tractor to use digging the hole before building the structure. The campsite now features water tanks and a toilet, making the journey along the Anne Beadell Highway that bit more comfortable and safe for travellers.

Oak Valley also hosted Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change Susan Close MP, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Kyam Maher MLC and Minister for Education, Training and Skills Blair Boyer MP, who all spent a night in southern Mamungari.

Rangers also conducted a joint patrol with members of the Australian Defence Force from the Woomera Prohibited Area, installed some more new signs, conducted burns on Country and continued Two Way Science studies.

## WA RANGER VISIT TAKES 2-WAY MAP IN NEW DIRECTION

Rangers from the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation hosted a team of four rangers from the Esperance Tjaltjraak Aboriginal Corporation in Western Australia for a workshop on language and mapping using technology and traditional knowledge.

With the assistance of Daryn McKenny from Miromaa Aboriginal language and Culture Centre and the Far West Coast Language Centre, the group worked on ways to record information on Google Maps and create their own data maps.

The rangers learned how to add pictures, video and written information to digital maps, and also incorporated the two-way map the Far West Coast group created earlier this year with funding from AW's grassroots grant (see Palya Winter 2022).

Information can flow both ways between the painted map and the digital ones, with sites identified in the digital process added to the painted map, and features from the painted map added as icons to the digital versions.

The teams went out on Country to do a cultural survey and discussed land management issues faced by both groups.

Skills learned by both groups will assist in the ongoing work of caring for Country.



Daryn McKenny leading a session on data mapping



Reviewing footage of the cultural survey trip

## AMYAC MAKING MOVES

The Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC) celebrated some important milestones this year, appointing their first CEO and purchasing a new office building in Coober Pedy.

Michael Coughlan, formerly the Director of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in SA, was appointed CEO in February 2022. A Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri man, Michael has an MBA and a Masters of Aboriginal Studies, and has over 30 years' experience in Aboriginal community development and management roles.

A community barbecue was held in June to celebrate the purchase of AMYAC's new home base, the former Centrelink building at Lot 175, Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy. The building purchase was a longstanding aim of the AMYAC board, and more than 50 people attended the celebrations.

In October, the AMYAC board visited historic exploration drilling sites from the 1990s with representatives from Rio Tinto Exploration, assessing the rehabilitation of the sites. At some sites, the rehabilitation had been so successful that the actual drilling site could not be located or distinguished from the surrounding landscape.

AMYAC are currently in the process of purchasing a new light truck to provide a no-cost freight service to community members between Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Adelaide and Coober Pedy. The service is planned to be up and running by mid to late 2023.



AMYAC directors at their office opening barbecue in June

# A MEETING WITH THE MINISTER



The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board were pleased to host a visit from Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, the Honourable Susan Close MP, at the most recent board meeting in Adelaide in December.

There was lots of sharing of knowledge, listening and laughter during the discussion. Each member of the board enjoyed the opportunity to speak to the Deputy Premier, providing their insights and raising issues of concern and their priorities for the region. A full report on the December board meeting will appear in the Winter 2023 issue of Palya.

# BEACH BUDGIES



The Far West Coast was struck by an unusual phenomenon in spring, with flocks of budgerigars spotted along the coast and even out to sea. Their usual territory is the arid inland, not the Southern Ocean, but the gregarious birds have been seen in towns and on beaches along the coast, there are even reports from fishers and surfers of flocks far from shore.

The story was published by the Eyre Peninsula Advocate, featuring some quotes from AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse, who explained that the rare event was likely the result of abundant rainfall inland prompting rapid breeding.

“From all the rain up there, the budgies have ballooned right out,” Brett said. “Obviously they’ve bred up in really big numbers and now they’re dispersing – they’re really nomadic, so they’ll follow the water and keep expanding, pushing each other out.”

# REACHING OUT

These two warru were snapped holding hands by an automatic camera at Aeroplane Hill, north-west of Pukatja.

They are part of a wild population where no trapping takes place. There are five remote cameras and two water points here to help the Warru Recovery Team monitor this group.



# AW STAFF HELLOS AND GOODBYES



**Welcome to Paula Modra, Buffel Grass Coordinator.**

Experienced in conservation and fieldwork, Paula has previously worked on conservation projects involving warru, yellow-footed rock wallabies and wombats, along with feral predator management.

Paula also has considerable experience as a project coordinator and has worked on buffel grass control in the APY Lands. She will take on the considerable task of overseeing AW’s efforts to manage buffel grass in the region.



**Welcome to Ashlee Benc, Buffel Grass Officer.**

Ashlee has previously worked for Kangaroo Island National Parks and Land for Wildlife Kangaroo Island as a field officer, tour guide and project fire fighter.

She was also a field officer for the Christmas Island Landscape Board, where she worked on their Yellow Crazy Ant Project. Her experience in weed control, flora and fauna surveying, plant and vehicle maintenance and remote work will be put to good use in the fight against buffel grass.



**Welcome to Olivia O’Leary-Fletcher, Executive Officer.**

Olivia will commence her role in mid-January, providing support to AW board members and the General Manager.

Since earning her Bachelor of Psychological Science from Flinders University, Olivia has worked in the public and private sector, most recently at the Mimili Anangu School in the APY Lands. Olivia comes to AW with skills in administration and financial management, and experience in working with Aboriginal communities.

# AU REVOIR AMANDA!

As 2022 comes to an end, we bid a bittersweet farewell to Amanda Bowne.

Amanda came to AW in July 2019 as an Aboriginal Trainee. Over the following 12 months she excelled in her role and was offered a position as a Project Officer when the traineeship concluded. As a Project Officer, she enjoyed a range of experiences, such as working with our operations team on sandhill dunnart trapping, shorebird monitoring, Mt Finke grevillea surveys and her all-time favourite, working with APY Warru Recovery Team, Zoos SA and others on the Warru Recovery Project.

Amanda has been a well-rounded asset to the board and regularly worked across all teams within AW, supporting the business functions, programs team and where possible the operations team. She also has completed the Aboriginal Frontline Leadership Program and many other upskilling opportunities over the years.

During her time with AW, Amanda has also undertaken a bachelor’s degree in environmental engineering at Flinders University, opening the door to a new opportunity. In January 2023, Amanda begins the next chapter of her career as a graduate environmental project scientist/engineer on the land and water contamination team at environmental consulting firm JBS&G Australia – quite an achievement as she has not yet graduated!

“Starting my career in AW has been an exceptional experience,” Amanda says. “The connections I have made within AW and with wider stakeholders have created a network of experts I hope to further engage with in the future.

“I’d like to thank the board and AW staff, who have all supported me in kickstarting my career. The lessons I have learnt and being able to connect back with my culture and work on Country with them is something I will be forever grateful for.”

Everyone at AW is sad to see Amanda go, but delighted that she has earned this opportunity to put her considerable talents to work in pursuing her career goals. All the best, Amanda!



# ALINYTJARA WILURARA LANDSCAPE BOARD

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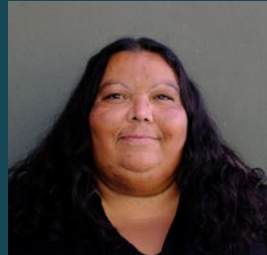
**Tapaya Edwards**  
APY Lands



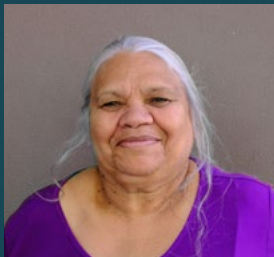
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