

Palya!

Strong people, healthy Country and water
Anangu kunpu, Ngura kunpu munu kapi

Students dig in

School's in for sandhill dunnarts

Brand new plan

Board sets out strategy to care for Country

Rangers head for the hills

AW hosts state ranger gathering

Fox on the run

Trialling dingo-friendly fox control



From the General Manager



It's an exciting time at AW as our second five-year landscape plan begins. From the initial planning stages, through an extensive consultation process to its completion, the board and staff are proud of this new blueprint for working with our partners towards healthy Country in our region. (See story p10)

We thank all of the boards, councils, committees and land management teams who got involved and helped us define our role in helping communities care for Country. We plan to meet and exceed your expectations!

The board's strategic leadership means AW is heading into the 2026–27 financial year with one of our strongest budgets in many years, and some exciting new projects in the pipeline.

I would also like to thank Brenz Saunders for his short but impactful tenure as Chair. It was a privilege to work with Brenz as he explored some enduring pathways for the board and its partners, including:

- the disaster readiness work that is now starting
- developing a Green Economic Plan to create investor confidence and diversify our income potential

- creating a new service model, Tjungunkgu Palyalpai, which positions the board as a strong enabler for our landholding authorities and their land management programs.

On behalf of the board, I wish Brenz well in his future endeavours and know that caring for Country remains a strong commitment. I'm sure our paths will stay connected.

And finally, a big thankyou to all the AW staff who give their all in making sure our projects are delivered with such high and safe standards. Working in remote SA is picturesque but often fraught with challenges and I admire the spirit in which staff work through them every day.

Kim Krebs
General Manager

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Bird flu update

Australia confirmed its first cases of H5 bird flu in June.

This serious strain of bird flu has been circulating overseas. There have been isolated cases of the H5 bird flu in wild seabirds on the Australian coast, including in South Australia.

The risk to people is low, but you should avoid contact with sick or dead birds.

If you see sick or dead birds, stay safe – don't touch the birds, their feathers, droppings or eggs, or the area around them. Keep dogs away too – don't let them touch, sniff or eat the birds.

It's important to report any sick or dead birds. If safe, take photos or a video. Remember to keep your distance and record these details:

- date and time
- location (GPS pin, nearby roads, or landmarks)
- type or description of birds
- how many birds are sick or dead
- what they look like (e.g. freshly dead or just bones, signs of disease)



Then call the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline: 1800 675 888.



Click on the QR code for up-to-date information on H5 bird flu.

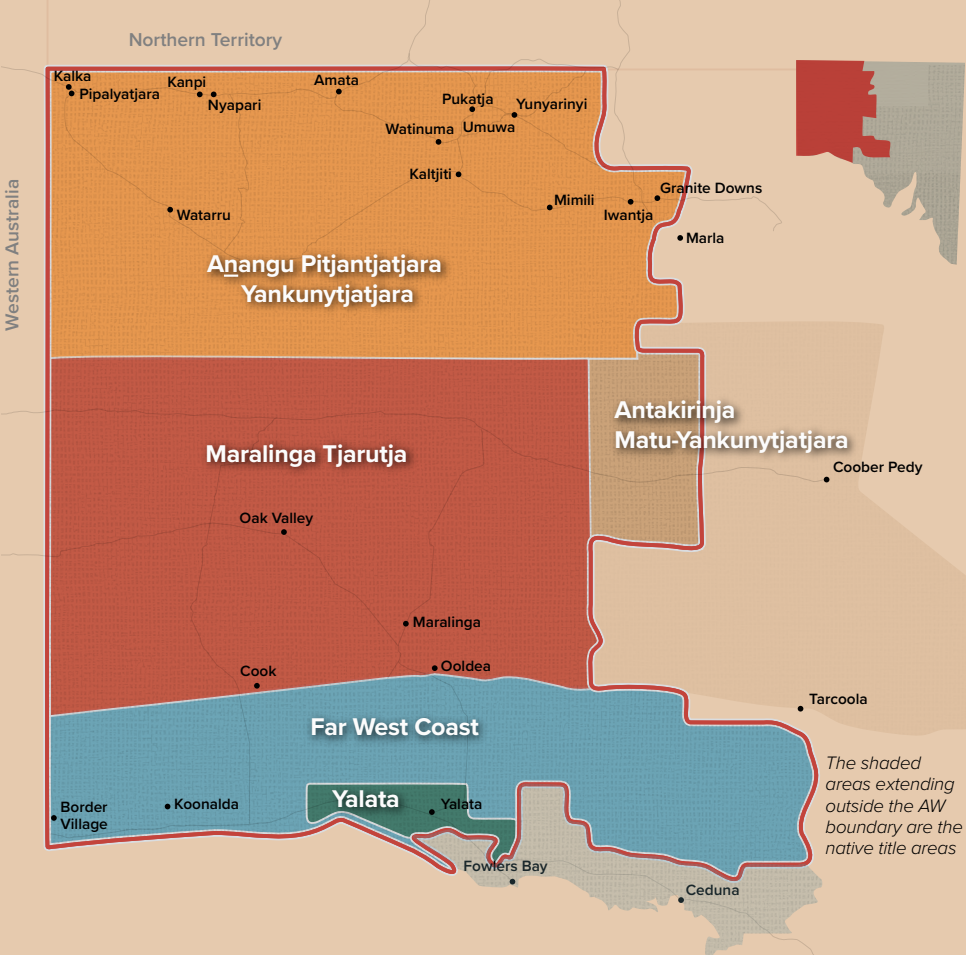
Our region

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape region covers the far north and west of South Australia.

In Pitjantjatjara, alinytjara means north and wilurara means west.

It spans more than 250,000 km² – around a quarter of the state – stretching from the Northern Territory and Western Australian borders south to the Great Australian Bight. The regional boundary extends to the edge of state waters, three nautical miles offshore.

The region has a population of approximately 4,000 people, many of whom identify with the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, Kokatha, Mirning or Wirangu peoples.



Click or scan the QR code to learn more about the region and the board's work on our website.

Buffel spreads online

Our most popular Facebook post of the year is a short video showing ten years of buffel grass invasion in the APY Lands, which was seen by more than 15,000 people.

Botanist Andrew Schubert captured images from the same spot in the APY Lands from 2016 to 2026, conducting groundcover surveys.

The photos show a dramatic transformation as buffel grass completely took over the survey transect.

It's devastating to see such a rapid transformation, but we're pleased to see a growing public interest in tackling this persistent crisis.



Click or scan the QR code to see our Facebook page, or check us out on Instagram, LinkedIn and Bluesky.

The Sustainable Pastoral Development project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

Board endorses new plan



At the Hahndorf meeting, L-R: Duane Edwards, Wanda Miller, Debbie Hansen, Peter Burgoyne, Tapaya Edwards

Meeting 23: December 2025

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board met in December in Adelaide. The then Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, Hon Lucy Hood MP, joined the meeting to discuss key matters including the board's achievements and challenges.

The board discussed the AW region's footprint, which spans 25% of the state, 340km of coastline and five landholding authorities, and is home to approximately 4,000 people. The board noted their leadership in the battle against buffel grass and its environmental, social and economic impacts on communities, culture, and Country.

Cross-border issues were raised as a concern by the board where a potential solution could be to have an Anangu cross-border commissioner or group to help with programs that span borders such as camel control, buffel control, and protecting threatened species.

Ben Bruce, Chief Executive of the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), also attended the meeting and informed the board that as yet there had been no progress on the buffel grass strategy developed by AW following the Ministerial Roundtable



Wanda Miller speaking with Minister Hood in Adelaide

in 2024. Other discussions centred on funding, Aboriginal cultural input into environmental legislation, and ongoing partnership between AW and DEW.

Another guest at the meeting was Fiona Pemberton from Matrix on Board, who delivered a presentation on a performance review undertaken by board members.

The review found that overall AW is a strong and effective board, with a strong culture and care for Country, good communication and respect between board and staff, a good mix of skills and experience, and a high level of understanding of the board's purpose.



Minister Hood catches up on the news

Meeting 24: March 2026

The board's March meeting was held in Hahndorf, after a busy week hosting the SA Aboriginal Ranger Land & Sea Conference (see story p12).

Peter Burgoyne chaired the meeting, following the resignation of former Presiding Member Brenz Saunders the month before.

The main focus of the meeting was reviewing and endorsing the final draft of the board's new five-year regional landscape plan.

AW's Manager, Strategy and Sustainable Landscapes, Damon Ezis, briefed the board on the community consultation that formed the foundation of the new plan, as well as providing some background information on what landscape plans are required to include.

After a detailed examination of the draft plan, the board endorsed the plan, which came into effect on July 1 after receiving ministerial approval (see story p10).



Damon Ezis presents the draft landscape plan to the board in Hahndorf



The board endorsed the final draft of the landscape plan in Whyalla

Meeting 25: June 2026

Board members and staff travelling from Ceduna and Adelaide met in the middle at Whyalla for the board's June meeting.

Board membership, recruitment and succession planning were discussed, with General Manager Kim Krebs leading a workshop with board members to outline the skills, experience and attributes required by all board members. These include cultural understanding, fairness, listens to people, knowing how to connect people and culture, having connections to the region, Anangu knowledge around tjukurpa, truth telling, being kind and collaborative, and having two-way skills – the ability to deal with Pirinpa (non-Anangu) and Anangu.

For the role of Presiding Member (chair), the board added to the list: a strong advocate, an enabler and a good communicator.

The board noted that the Landscape Plan 2026–31 had been provided to the Minister for approval, and reviewed and endorsed the draft Business Plan for 2026–27.



L-R: Kim Krebs, Debbie Hansen, Tapaya Edwards, Jeremy Lebois, Peter Burgoyne and Duane Edwards at the Whyalla meeting

Program Coordinator Jess Burdon presented to the board about the new Disaster Ready Planning project. Her presentation included discussion about what constitutes a disaster, the purpose of the project, the technical expertise required for the project and likely stakeholders and individuals who could take part, what groups and areas the plans will be developed for, as well as the roadmap for the implementation of the project.

Planning and Reporting Coordinator Leah Kyriacou and Ecologist Brett Backhouse updated the board on the

progress of all of AW's current projects, from sustainable agriculture in the APY Lands to feral predator control on the Yalata coast.

The board also held a workshop on the cross-border land management framework they had discussed back in December, to identify the key principles that could guide the establishment of an Anangu-led model, and define what its primary objectives could be. The board agreed it was important to identify the key partners in any such program, and to include Elders in the conversations.

Board business



Wanda with the returned space capsule. Photos supplied by Southern Launch

Overseeing space operations

AW board member Wanda Miller witnessed the operations of aerospace company Southern Launch at a recent re-entry and recovery of a satellite on the Koonibba test range.

Wanda was present as a cultural monitor, part of Southern Launch’s Aboriginal heritage management.

The satellite returned from orbit and landed softly with a parachute, and was collected by Southern Launch staff with a helicopter.

Southern Launch says the helicopter and recovery crews undergo a cleaning and inspection process prior to entry into the reserves to ensure nothing is carried onboard, such as buffel grass or other weeds.



The satellite is inspected after landing

The capsule is then supported in a harness beneath the helicopter for its extraction from the landing site.

Southern Launch informs AW of their launch and re-entry activity so staff are not put at risk working in the field during these operations.



Wanda prepares for takeoff with fellow cultural monitor Wendy Ware



The capsule with its parachute

The royal whisperer

In our last issue of Palya, we reported that AW board member Tapaya Edwards had travelled to London and met the British king to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Uluru-Kata Tjuta being returned to Anangu ownership.

Now Tapaya has had another brush with European royalty, this time greeting Danish King Frederik and Queen Mary at Uluru.

Tapaya was there in his role as chair of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park’s board of management.

It’s clearly a great honour to meet someone of such high standing in his Country – who will want to meet Tapaya next?



Working on the railroad

The east-west rail corridor is the main vector for buffel grass entering the southern Great Victoria Desert and managing this threat is a high priority for the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board (AWLB) and the landholding authorities affected.

In March, senior executives from the Australian Rail Track Authority (ARTC) met with the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board and representatives from Maralinga Tjarutja Council, Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Nullarbor Park Advisory Committee, Yumbarra Co-Management Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The aim of the meeting was to inform ARTC of the need for urgent action to control buffel grass, especially as recent rains promote fresh germination and regrowth of the weed, and to learn what ARTC planned to do in the short and medium term. Land managers neighbouring the rail corridor have been frustrated by issues including access to the corridor and a lack of buffel surveillance and control within the corridor, which threatens to undermine their longstanding efforts to limit the movement of buffel grass onto their lands.

The meeting followed a letter written in March 2025 by AWLB to ARTC expressing disappointment at how buffel grass was being managed on their land, and requesting a collaborative path forward. AWLB General Manager Kim Krebs opened the meeting by recalling the letter AWLB wrote to ARTC, noting that as land managers everyone needs to play their role. She also noted that a response had been received but was considered underwhelming, and the group was seeking a way forward together.

The senior ARTC executives, Sarah Wilson, Costas Kokkoni, Marnie McKew and Heather Parry, were informed by the meeting’s delegates of the profound impact buffel has on culture, environment and community across the region, and reminded of their responsibility to manage a declared weed on the land they control.

The tone of the meeting was professional, although it was clear that there was a high level of frustration about the way ARTC had been



AW GM Kim Krebs with ARTC executives Marnie McKew, Heather Parry and Sarah Wilson



Buffel grass is spreading along the rail corridor managed by ARTC

managing the issue, especially relating to access, disproportionate health and safety requirements, lack of clear communication, and an apparent lack of active control along the line.

AWLB’s mapping data clearly show the increase of buffel along the rail line over the past 15 years, and landholders at the meeting were keen to hear how that would be addressed.

After hearing about how buffel affects communities, Country and culture, the ARTC executives made a number of commitments about improving access, sharing their strategy and planned actions, investigating a biosecurity approach to prevent buffel

coming in on trains, and improving communication.

All parties agreed to meet again in two weeks, and then monthly after that, given the urgent nature of the threat.

After the March meeting, representatives from AWLB, Far West Coast and Maralinga Tjarutja met twice with ARTC, in June, to attempt to make progress in resolving access to the rail corridor, and to assist ARTC with their prioritisation of on-ground action on buffel grass on the land they are responsible for.

The discussion is ongoing and stakeholders are awaiting action.

AW staff roundup



Buffelpalooza

by Jess Burdon

Paula and I went to Alice Springs, Northern Territory in February for a NT Government-led, buffel get-together, Buffelpalooza. The timing was great, after their inundating rain highlighted the intensity of the buffel around the town.

The NT Government has three staff based in Alice Springs whose roles are focused on working with the community towards on-ground control of buffel grass.

We had some interesting presentations of different management styles across the region, with Oak Valley and Maralinga Tjarutja presenting their fantastic work online and Paula and I presenting in person.

It was great to hear different perspectives on herbicide use in the Northern Territory, with their recent higher rainfalls affecting their choices. With similar weather to the APY Lands, it is an interesting perspective on how we could change our methods for different environments.

There is some great work happening in the Territory and it was fantastic to share ideas.

Thanks for having us on Arrernte Country.



Buffel heading south

Jess Burdon travelled to Mambray Creek in February to meet up with Northern and Yorke Landscape Board staff Paul O’Leary and Jared Palmer, to check out buffel grass incursions spreading along the road and rail corridor from the north.

Joining the landscape board group were Taigen Ryan and James Johnston from the Invasive Species Council, and a journalist from ABC radio. The Invasive Species Council is campaigning to draw attention to the buffel grass crisis in the lead-up to the Australian Government’s decision on the Weeds of National Significance submission.

The plants were not looking very prominent due to the lack of rain in the area, but the small amount of rain the region had recently received had already encouraged further growth.



Buffel heading further south

Jess Burdon again met up with the Invasive Species Council’s James Johnston, this time joined by Chris Brodie from the State Herbarium and Green Adelaide, and buffel researcher Sofie Costin in Adelaide in February, checking known buffel locations to monitor control efforts.

Buffel is often overlooked because it is currently concentrated in remote areas, but it is on the move towards more densely populated areas and farming land and is even found in inner metropolitan Adelaide.



Buffel delegation to Canberra

Voices from the desert were heard in Canberra in March, taking the fight against buffel grass to Parliament House.

Lois Fraser, Zibeeon Fielding, Breana Lovegrade and Neil Collins from the APY Lands were joined by AW General Manager Kim Krebs and representatives from the Central Land Council and Arid Lands Environment Centre in a delegation organised by the Invasive Species Council.



Anangu delegates delivered heartfelt accounts of how buffel is killing Country and culture as the group met with Australian Government ministers Murray Watt (Minister for Environment and Water), Malarndirri McCarthy (Minister for Aboriginal Australians) and Julie Collins (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) ahead of a decision on whether buffel would be listed as a Weed of National Significance (WoNS).

Continued next page...



Greens senator for South Australia Sarah Hanson-Young gave a media conference after meeting with the group.

Independent senator David Pocock spoke in parliament about the need for the government to invest in invasive species management to protect our unique natural ecosystems.



The delegation also met with Threatened Species Commissioner Dr Fiona Fraser.

“The voices of Traditional Owners were compelling,” Kim Krebs says.

“This was a terrific opportunity to speak directly with the ministers who are best able to take real action against buffel grass and we hope that message was received.”



Leadership in action

AW’s leadership group met in Ceduna in February for a strategic planning session, mapping out how strategy is reflected in action on the ground.



Reconciliation Week Breakfast

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board was represented at the 2026 Reconciliation Week Breakfast by Adam Wood, Damon Ezis, Kim Krebs and Jess Burdon.

This year’s Reconciliation Week theme is ‘All In’, calling on all Australians to commit wholeheartedly to reconciliation and take action to create change.

At AW, this is part of our daily lives, working to support Anangu communities towards their goals for healthy Country.



All in for Reconciliation

AW staff joined forces with Far West Coast Rangers for Reconciliation Day to show off our shared work to school students from Ceduna Area School and surrounding schools including Penong, Karcultaby and Streaky Bay.

With displays of photos and field equipment used in threatened species monitoring and predator control, students and teachers had the chance to talk to AW staff and rangers to learn more about what we do and why it matters.

The day also included cooking malu wipu (kangaroo tail), school-bred barramundi, and local wombat, providing an opportunity to share food, connect, and have meaningful conversations.

A gruesome lesson

AW staff got together with Far West Coast Rangers and National Parks and Wildlife Service staff for a two-day Remote Area First Aid course hosted at the Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation workshop. The training provided participants with practical skills and knowledge to respond effectively to medical emergencies in remote environments, where professional medical assistance may be many hours away.



Working across some of Australia’s most isolated landscapes means that staff must be prepared to manage a wide range of incidents, from vehicle accidents and heat-related illnesses to bites, fractures and other medical emergencies. The course reinforced the importance of early intervention, effective communication and teamwork when responding to emergencies in remote settings.



A highlight of the training was the use of semi-realistic role-playing scenarios that challenged participants to apply their skills under pressure. These practical exercises included simulated remote area incidents requiring assessment, treatment and evacuation planning, helping build confidence and preparedness for real world situations. The training also provided a valuable opportunity for staff from different organisations to strengthen working relationships and share experiences.



AW's Taylah Pitfield and FWC Rangers Jezmilyah and Ashlyn set up a canid pest ejector

Fox on the run

Targeting foxes, keeping dingoes safe

Protecting nganamara requires many different tools and approaches. AW's long-running nganamara project has used technology including aerial LiDAR surveys and Felixer automated predator control devices, along with traditional methods such as pitfall fauna surveys.

The latest addition to the toolbox is the dingo-safe canid pest ejector (CPE). The CPE is a simple mechanical device that is embedded in the soil. It contains a bait which is spring-loaded, delivering the bait when an animal with sufficient strength pulls on it.

CPEs are commonly used in other regions to target foxes, wild dogs and

dingoes. However, in the AW region, dingoes are a culturally and ecologically important species. They help keep fox and cat numbers down, and also prevent kangaroos from becoming overabundant, preventing overgrazing of native flora.

To protect dingoes but still target foxes, AW is conducting a trial of specially modified CPEs. These have been fitted with a dingo excluder, which restricts access to the bait. Foxes' narrow muzzles can fit into the gap, but the broader nose of the dingo can't fit, limiting access to the bait.

AW staff worked with Far West Coast



Each CPE is monitored by a trail camera



Trailcam image of a fox taking the bait from a CPE



AW's Brett Backhouse and Paul Gregory demonstrate the CPE

Rangers to set up CPEs loaded with non-toxic baits at key sites along Googs Track. An automatic trail camera was set up to capture still and video imagery of any animal interactions with CPEs, to monitor whether the dingo excluders were effective and whether foxes could still access the baits.

The trial will run for several months using the non-toxic baits. If it is successful, the CPEs can be rolled out using active baits.

Baits will not be laid during dingo breeding season. Although dingo pups are generally believed to lack the strength to trigger the CPE, a cautious approach will ensure their safety.

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.

Click or scan the QR code to see a video of a fox trying to take the bait from a CPE.

Coastal predator traps



AW staff travelled to Yalata in April with the Yalata Rangers to carry out maintenance on the network of 4G-connected feral predator traps along the coast.

AW's Talyah Pitfield and Les Mundy performed a system update on the hub and individual nodes of the network's communication system, cleared overgrown vegetation from around the traps, and swapped batteries and SD cards in the cameras that monitor each trap.

Meanwhile the Yalata Rangers checked out an onion weed infestation that is being managed in the dunes.

Talyah and Junior returned to the Yalata community and checked the camera images with the Yalata Rangers to see recent activity around the traps and plan future work along the coast.

One of the trail cameras had snapped a cat with a hopping mouse, showing the need to protect native species.

This project is funded by the South Australian Government's Landscape Priorities Fund.



A brand new plan for AW



A new five-year strategic plan has been developed through extensive consultation with community

The Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board has released its new strategic plan, which took effect on July 1.

The new Landscape Plan 2026–31 replaces the previous 2021–26 plan and sets out a practical framework for the board for supporting healthy Country over the next five years.

Development of the plan began in early 2025 with the board’s approval of a strategy aimed at ensuring effective consultation to craft a plan that aligns with existing Healthy Country Plans and supports the aspirations of communities in the region.

Over the past year, more than 200 people have been involved in the

consultation process, including community members, Indigenous ranger teams, landholding authorities, partners and stakeholders.

Board members played an active role in the development of the plan. From the initial consultation strategy through to the final design, board members brought their individual experience and knowledge to the table to ensure the plan provides a solid foundation for the next five years.

The plan is centred on five landscape priorities: people and partnerships, land and sea conservation, climate change readiness, pest plant and animal control, and sustainable agriculture.

These priorities reflect local strengths and challenges, knowledge and conditions, and were identified through listening to community views on what’s needed and where support will have the greatest impact.

Climate change readiness is a new landscape priority, reflecting the board’s commitment to strengthen the region’s ability to prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

With an emphasis on building and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships, the plan outlines the ways the board will enable, support and advocate for effective land and sea management, recognising that a region



of 250,000km² requires flexible and diverse approaches to meet the varying needs of communities.

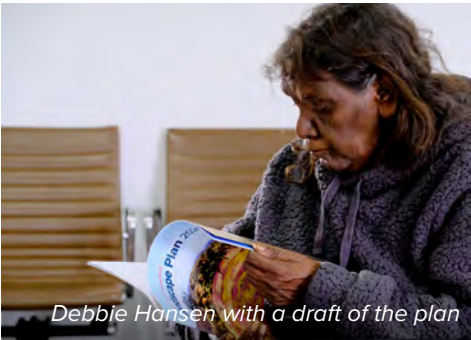
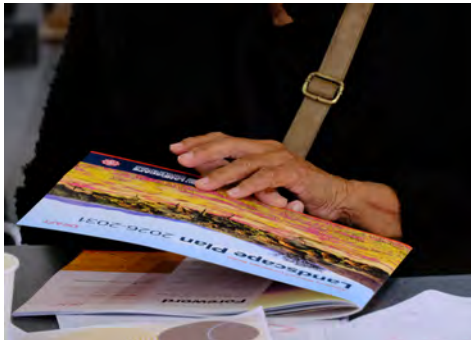
The board-endorsed plan was approved by the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, the Hon Emily Bourke, and took effect from July 1.

AW staff are now developing works plans and a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework to put the strategy into effect on Country.

You can see the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board’s Landscape Plan 2026–31 on our website.



Tapaya Edwards and Peter Burgoyne discuss the details of the plan



Debbie Hansen with a draft of the plan

Click or scan the QR code to see the new landscape plan on our website.



Ranger teams came from across the state for the conference

Rangers head for the hills

Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board hosts inaugural South Australian Aboriginal Land and Sea Ranger Conference

Aboriginal rangers from across South Australia gathered in Hahndorf in March for the inaugural South Australian Aboriginal Land & Sea Ranger Conference.

Hosted by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board with funding from the State Government’s Landscape Priorities Fund, the conference was an opportunity for rangers to build networks, develop skills and share successes and challenges. Around 200 rangers attended the three-day conference, which was held in Hahndorf, in the Adelaide Hills. The conference program was co-designed by rangers, to meet the needs

of rangers. Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation Yarlurwar-Ruwe Ranger Coordinator Daryl Clarke was engaged to deliver the event, and a guiding working group was set up that included Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, the Indigenous Desert Alliance, Arabana Aboriginal Corporation and Country Needs People, along with AW’s General Manager, Kim Krebs. “We surveyed the state’s ranger teams, and the responses to the survey determined the content of the event,” Kim says. “Understanding the needs of ranger teams was vital for the event to be a success, and the co-designed program was very well received.”



The National Indigenous Australians Authority, which funds most ranger teams across the country, also provided support for the event. On day one of the conference, ranger teams shared examples of their work, and keynote speakers from across Australia gave terrific examples of the power and strength that comes from working within networks.



The traditional fire workshop was popular with rangers



AW board members and staff with FWC Rangers and National Parks staff from Ceduna

At a local scale, APY Rangers wowed the audience with their presentation on their Nganngi Kanyini (looking after frogs) project, monitoring a rare species of frog in a remote rockhole, and their successful and long-running Waru Recovery Project. Far West Coast Rangers presented on several aspects of their work, highlighting the variety of projects they are involved in. Day two was focused on training and skills, with practical workshops on traditional fire, biosecurity, revegetation and feral cat management. On the final day, rangers worked on ways to maintain momentum, with

workshops developing content for a proposed state Indigenous Ranger Strategy. “The idea was for this to be more than a conference,” Kim says. “Building a strategy gives the gathering longevity, an outcome that goes well beyond the three days spent together here.” Throughout the conference, AW board members were there to watch and participate, taking some time out on the second day for an important meeting with Australian Rail Track Corporation executives (see story p5), and following the conference with a board meeting (see story p3). “This was a busy week for board



Kim Krebs delivers the host’s presentation



AW board members attended each day



AW staff and FWC Rangers in a workshop



Zoos SA deliver a biosecurity workshop

members,” Kim says. “They instigated this conference, then took part and witnessed its success. It was impressive to see everyone come together, engage deeply with the program, and leave ready to take the next steps to build recognition and professionalism among rangers across the state.”

Click or scan the QR code to see a video of the conference.



30 students from Yalata Anangu School were part of the team cleaning up Mexican Hat Beach

Teamwork defeats debris

A team of more than 50 people gathered at Mexican Hat Beach to clean up marine debris in May.

Alinytjara Wilurara staff coordinated a marine debris survey on the beach, which is a popular camping destination for Anangu. Joining the effort were 30 children from the Yalata Anangu School, Far West Coast Rangers, Yalata Rangers and Yalata Youth.

There are more than 40,000 pieces of plastic in each square kilometre of ocean, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. Up to 23 million tonnes of debris enter the world's waterways each year, most of which is plastic.

Ocean currents can carry floating waste across large distances before it reaches Australian beaches. Once collected, the material is sorted and weighed, and the results added to the Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMDl) database. This information can then be used to identify the sources, understand the impacts, inform policy and plan reduction programs.

AW Project Officer Taylah Pitfield rounded up the students from their recess break for a quick discussion on the importance of marine debris surveys and explained the task that the students were there to help with. By cleaning up the beach and sharing the data, the



Les Mundy collecting debris



Taylah talks to the students before the survey starts



Much of the rubbish was found in the dune



Not all rubbish – this well-preserved leafy seadragon was found during the survey



FWC Rangers sorting debris



Paula Modra, Taylah Pitfield, Yasmin Wolf

students help to restore and protect the animals and plants that live along the coast, not just here but around Australia.

The adults then split up, with some helping to collect marine debris and others helping to set up and prepare lunch.

After walking a 1.5km transect up the beach the schoolteachers then helped the children with setting up rods so they could have a go at fishing. Then it was time for everyone to enjoy a barbecue and salad lunch.

The collected debris was then sorted, weighed and recorded back in Ceduna by AW and Far West Coast staff.

The team effort resulted in 277 pieces of rubbish, weighing 15.88kg.



A sea lion playing in the shallows was a hit with the kids



A sandhill dunnart captured in the survey

Deluge doesn't deter dunnart detectives

Pouring rain couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of Ceduna Area School students on the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board's annual sandhill dunnart survey.

The Year 12 Outdoor Education students had travelled to Googs Lake to join AW staff and Far West Coast Rangers in the search for the elusive dunnart, in what has become a fixture on the school calendar.

Throughout the trip, students helped with setting up pitfall traps for the survey, as well as joining in on nganamara (malleefowl) mound assessments, and the canid pest ejector program (see story p8).

Weather conditions during the survey were variable and unpredictable from day one, when rain delayed the setup of pitfall lines.

In the early hours of the morning on day three, a thunderstorm, which was not forecast, brought widespread rainfall, requiring all pitfall traps to be cleared of animals and temporarily closed until the rain eased mid-morning.

Despite this isolated event, daytime conditions were generally warm, with temperatures in the mid to high 20s and mild nights.

Seeing water in Googs Lake was a rare treat for everyone, after several dry years in the area.

While the wet weather made conditions difficult, with lots of flies and mosquitoes, the survey was a success, with three sandhill dunnarts captured. All three were sub-adults, indicating a stable population that is successfully breeding.

The students also got to see some other mammal species, including the little long-tailed dunnart, western pygmy possum, sandy inland mouse and Mitchell's hopping mouse.

The warm weather meant reptiles were up and about, with 17 species recorded in the survey.

On the final day, the students set to work packing up the pitlines and tidying



Brett teaches the students about nganamara



Digging in: the students earn their keep



What's in the trap?



OMG! An SHD!

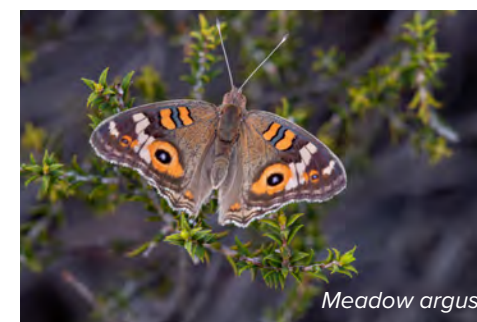


Off to work we go

up to leave the survey sites as they were found at the start of the week.

Ceduna Area School's continued involvement in this project strengthens community-led stewardship, building a durable foundation for future management planning. Combined with the long-term partnership between AW and Far West Coast Rangers, building knowledge and commitment among the next generation is a positive step that bodes well for long-term conservation outcomes.

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.



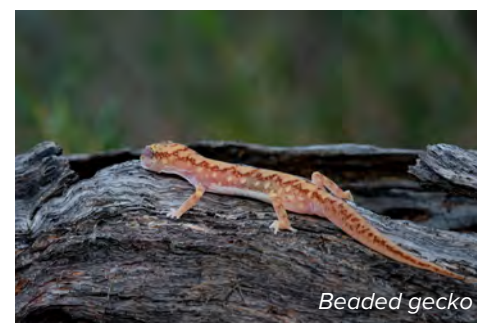
Meadow argus



Jans banded snake



Broad-banded sand swimmer



Beaded gecko

Maralinga Tjarutja Land Management update

Sam Doudle



The war against buffel grass in the Great Victoria Desert continues, but the nature of the battle has changed for the MT Land Management Program.

In the early years, our work focused on large, dense infestations where buffel dominated entire patches. Back then, our management was about broadscale treatment – spraying large areas to bring the weed under control. While those sites are still part of our ongoing program, the job now looks very different.

Today, the focus is on persistence and attention to detail. Rather than blanket spraying, Rangers are carefully searching through recovering native vegetation for the last remaining plants. These scattered “rogue” buffel individuals are often hidden among regenerating grasses and shrubs, making them difficult to detect.

This kind of forensic work is slow and demanding. Even though there are far fewer plants to treat, it can take just as long to work through a site as it did during the initial control phase. However, this stage is critical. If even a few plants are missed, they can quickly re-establish and return a patch to buffel dominance within a few years. This means we are not finished yet. Sites that once seemed under control still require repeated follow-up for



several seasons before they can confidently be declared buffel-free. The 2025–26 season has been a long one, beginning in October and continuing into June, with warm conditions and residual soil moisture allowing buffel to persist. The fight continues, and long-term commitment remains key to success.



Far West Coast Rangers update

Words and pictures: The Far West Coast Ranger Team



Although not part of the annual project plan, a combination of king tides and storm surge combined with high winds resulted in unprecedented amounts of marine debris washing up on the native title area beaches. This created a unique opportunity for the Ranger team to do environmental cleanup work and win some kudos with the community.

What started as just a few quick cleanups locally expanded to some of our more remote beaches and the stockpile of collected waste soon built up. Some things we were able to recycle but much of it simply went into landfill; here we enlisted the cooperation of the Ceduna District Council, for which we are very grateful. It was about at this time our Women’s Ranger Coordinator, Estelle Miller hatched a plan to utilise some of the marine debris to make an art installation with the rubbish to highlight the problem of marine pollution and microplastics.

We received generous sponsorship for the project from the Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board and soon set to work on creating our art piece. With these funds we were able to enlist the assistance of North Queensland artist Sue Ryan from the Ghostnets Art Project and local artists Pam Diment and Collette Gray, with the project led by our women’s ranger team. It was



decided to go with a sea lion, an iconic animal to the local Wirungu people. The name “Bulgarda” was adopted as this is Wirungu for seal or sea lion; pronounced Bul-ga-da, but nick-named “Gurdie” amongst the Rangers.

It is a large piece measuring 2.4m long and 1.4m high, with a skeleton made of cane, but the rest entirely of marine debris; cast off fishing net, old rope, nylon line and oyster pots.

With the sea lion nearing completion it was decided to give her her first public outing at Reconciliation Week celebrations at the Ceduna Area School in front of several hundred people. She has generated a lot of interest and will be displayed at the



Ceduna Visitor Centre, at ArtsUp, Streaky Bay and the Ceduna Oysterfest later this year.

We are very proud of our work and of the initiative shown by the team in planning, creating and displaying their work. In doing so, we hope to raise community awareness of the environmental hazard posed by man-made marine debris.

Needle in a haystack: seeking plains-wanderers



A pair of plains-wanderers. Photo by Saskia Gerhardy

The plains-wanderer is an odd little bird with some very specific needs.

Small and quail-like, plains-wanderers are unusual among birds in that the male is smaller and plainer than the female.

Females have a black and white speckled collar and a reddish patch on their chest, and are also responsible for the species' mating call, a distinctive, deep, repetitive "oom" that can be mistaken for a cow's moo.

Once she has laid her eggs, she leaves to find another mate, leaving the male to incubate the eggs and raise the chicks on his own.

They favour open country and prefer a precise mix of open ground and low vegetation. Their fussy nature, combined with a tendency to run rather than fly when threatened, have left the once-widespread species critically endangered, through a combination of land clearing and predation by foxes and cats.

Researcher Saskia Gerhardy has been studying plains-wanderers for four years, looking for the cryptic species in the far north of South Australia.

She is currently working on a citizen science project in partnership with the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, which has recently confirmed the species for the first time near Marla, in the state's far north.

"It was thought they only lived in grasslands," Saskia says. "They're known as the Goldilocks bird because everything has to be just right."

But when she reviewed previous scientific studies, she was intrigued by the number of reported sightings of the birds in areas outside of their known range.

"It turns out they might not be that picky about the exact type of vegetation, but height, density and open space are the keys. To persist as long as they have, there must be some adaptability. They seem to be more robust than we were led to believe."

Plains-wanderers have never been formally recorded in the AW region but there have been credible sightings over the years, so AW Ecologist Brett Backhouse and Senior Project Officer Paul Gregory set up some Song Meter audio recorders on the Nullarbor to listen out for the plains-wanderer's call.

The automated devices are set to record audio at dawn and dusk. They have a range of about 100 metres, which is a very small area in the context of the vast Nullarbor Plain.

Locations have been chosen based on previous reported sightings, and areas where the density of groundcover look to be just right.

The recordings will be passed on to Saskia for analysis, and while the



Paul sets up a Song Meter on the Nullarbor

search may seem like looking for a needle in a haystack, she's optimistic the birds are indeed wandering the plains of the AW region.

"We have enough data to say they're living in a wider area than previously thought, there are multiple reports and sightings over time, but we just haven't been looking for them here," Saskia says. "We can't say for certain, but the likelihood is high that they're out there. We just need the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time."

Have you seen a plains-wanderer? You can be part of the project – click or scan the QR code to report your sighting.

Keeping a smart eye on warru

John Read



New technology, designed specially for Indigenous rangers, is being trialled at warru colonies in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

NintiCams (or 'smart' cameras) will be able to count warru and let rangers know immediately if feral cats or foxes are detected.

The cameras are smart because they have an onboard computer that only keeps images of interest. NintiCams also automatically mask human images to protect privacy and cultural sensitivities.

Founding Warru Ranger Jacob McKenzie (pictured with John Read, above) suggested the cameras should be called NintiCams, a name supported by Pitjantjatjara elder Peter Watson.

Warru Ranger Anna Young assisted with installing the first NintiCam near Kalka.

"We hunted around for a good spot that had connection to mobile tower and plenty of warru kuna (droppings), and sun, but not too much wind for solar panel", said Anna.

Thylation, the company that has developed the Felixer automated feral predator device, donated the first two NintiCams to the APY Warru Recovery Project. Thylation engineer Anthony Hill showed Ethan Dagg (pictured together top right) the live feed from the second NintiCam on his phone as it was installed in the Warru Pintji, the large predator-proof enclosure built to protect warru. Later he was able to share the images of warru, which will be used for further training the identification software.

"At present it takes several months before camera traps are downloaded and images processed, so it is impossible for me to know where to target my shooting," APY feral pest controller Ethan Dagg said. "Having access to NintiCam information from the previous few nights, or even hours, should help us control problem pests."

"These test NintiCams with separate 4G modems and infra-red lights will soon be replaced by smaller NintiCams with the lights and 4G connection inside," Anthony Hill explained.

Thylation has received support from an Australian Government Gamechanger grant to develop these cameras for a range of other applications, but this warru project is funded entirely by Thylation.

John Read is an independent conservation ecologist, a member of the Warru Recovery Team, and the founder and CEO of Thylation.



Farewell Les Mundy

Paula Modra



Recently, we said farewell to Les as he finishes up with AW and moves on to his next chapter. During his time with us, Les has been a valued member of the Operations Team and made valuable contributions to all our projects, especially through his work supporting ranger groups and getting

out on Country alongside communities across the region.

Les brought valuable knowledge, practical skills, and a strong connection to the work he was involved in. He played an important role in supporting ranger teams on the ground and was always willing to share his experience



and lend a hand where needed. It was especially rewarding to see his confidence and capabilities continue to grow over time, particularly in leadership roles working with ranger groups and community members.

Working on Country was something Les genuinely valued, and his connection with people and communities was evident in the relationships he built along the way. His contribution has been appreciated by colleagues, ranger groups, and the wider community alike.

We thank Les for his time with the team and wish him all the very best for the future and the opportunities ahead.



Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board

Serving the people, Country and water of the Alinytjara Wilurara region

Jeremy Lebois

Maralinga Tjarutja



Duane Edwards

Yalata



Tapaya Edwards

APY Lands



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