

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 199
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Director of National Parks
Programme: Agency
Topic: Indigenous employment programmes
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Senator Ruston asked:

Senator RUSTON: You do not have to answer now, but I would be interested even in a bit of an outline of the type of programmes that are in place to try to encourage Indigenous employment. It is obviously something that is a very strong focus of the current government, so I would be interested to know.

Ms Barnes: Absolutely. And definitely we are looking at what more we can do because it is such a strong focus.

Answer:

The Director of National Parks (DNP) supports a variety of programmes pathway to encourage employment of local Indigenous peoples through a range of education and employment opportunities, the use of direct and indirect employment and by supporting local Indigenous business ventures (for example, the current Kakadu management plan reserves some activities for Bininj operators only, such as the Yellow Water and East Alligator River boat cruises).

1. Education and Employment Programmes

The DNP also works in partnership with local education providers to provide an introduction to our work and encourage young people to consider working on park when they leave school. We do this through the following programmes:

- Junior Ranger and Middle School Programmes – operate in the three jointly managed parks. These programmes ensure youth remain committed to schooling, while also introducing them to the work in parks. In many cases, engagement in parks is aligned to meet school curriculum outcomes and provide participants with accredited training.
- School Based Apprentice – Kakadu National Park and Booderee National Park allow students to complete Year 11 and 12 studies through the secondary education system, while completing a vocational course and working a minimum of one day per week over two years in a workplace. We are currently hosting two apprentices at each park.
- Indigenous Cadets – Booderee National Parks offers Year 9 and 10 students opportunities to complete a combination of vocational studies and work placements as a part of their curriculum based work.

- Work Experience – all parks provide opportunities for Year 10 student to complete compulsory work experience. This provides students with the opportunity to experience the type of careers that exist in protected area management.
- Indigenous Traineeships – non-ongoing traineeship positions are available at Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee National Parks. Trainees are provided with a range of training and work experience in preparation for applying for ongoing APS positions upon completion of the traineeship period.

2. Direct Employment

All jointly managed parks maintain 'Special Measures' positions within their organisational structures. Special Measure positions are available to Indigenous applicants only. We have 24 positions across our three jointly managed parks ranging from APS 1/2 trainee positions to an Executive Level 1 Contract and Visitor Facilities manager position.

To assist with employment options, the DNP offers flexible work arrangements to increase work readiness of local Indigenous Australian people by building work experience and skills at a pace which suits their personal and cultural circumstances. These include part-time and casual work options.

The DNP has training and employment strategies that focus heavily on programmes that support Indigenous community engagement, recruitment and staff development, and support the sharing of cultural knowledge between generations of Indigenous community members and with non-Indigenous employees. To assist with implementing our training and employment strategies, we have Training Committees, whose membership includes Indigenous staff and members of our Boards of Management as committee members. Training Committees are responsible for implementing Training and Employment Strategies.

The DNP has also brokered significant support for Indigenous employment, training and development through external partnerships with Charles Darwin University, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Charles Sturt University and Australian Government training and employment agencies.

3. Indirect Employment and community partnerships

The DNP works in partnership with local organisations to provide opportunities for employment of indigenous people. In 2013-14 this has included:

- 10 Indigenous Rangers in Kakadu National Park who are externally funded through the Working on Country programme. This programme has employed 55 local Indigenous people since it was established in 2008.
- 52 local Indigenous people have been employed through the Mutitjulu Community Rangers programme, which is hosted in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, since June 2013.
- 28 local Aboriginal people are employed either full-time or in casual work to provide park services under contract with the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community in Booderee National Park.

The DNP also participates in the planning and development of education and employment strategies in local areas with key stakeholders. For example, Booderee National Park supports the Learning for Life group that has formed to maximise opportunities in education and employment for the Wreck Bay Aboriginal community.

4. Supporting Indigenous Businesses

Within the jointly managed parks, priority is given to facilitating new tourism activities which will provide benefits to the Traditional Owners, encourage Indigenous training and employment opportunities and the establishment of new Indigenous owned businesses.

The Parks Australia commercial tourism licence selection criteria are structured so that Indigenous businesses are provided with additional incentive and ability to be eligible for a licence, including the scope to minimise licence fees to encourage new Indigenous businesses. The commitment to encouraging Aboriginal owned business and commercial initiatives and enterprises is also confirmed, for all three jointly managed parks, in the Park lease agreements, Plans of Management and a range of Park specific policies and procedures.

Commercial tour operator licences for non-Indigenous operators are structured so that the fees charged reflect the type of activity, the level of investment made by the operator and the commercial return, as well as conservation and non-financial outcomes for the park and Traditional Owners including, but not limited to, employment and training.

Parks Australia has established a Memorandum of Understanding with Voyagers Indigenous Land Council. The Park and the Resort work together where appropriate to support and encourage young Anangu in Mutitjulu and other local communities to participate in employment programmes. The Voyages Indigenous Engagement Team and the Park's Human Resources and Training Team work in partnership to share knowledge and expertise, facilities, financial and human resources to enhance the effective and efficient delivery of training and development initiatives supporting Anangu employment. Both parties recognise that recruitment, retention and career progression are critical issues for our business and we will collaborate where appropriate in aspects of workforce development, particularly in regard to supporting Anangu staff.