




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 16 September 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (10.30 am): For more than 50,000 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been the custodians of this country, developing a rich knowledge and cultural connection to land and sea. The Palaszczuk Labor government recognises and respects this knowledge and connection.

On Saturday I had the honour of announcing funding for 54 new First Nations rangers for 13 communities across Queensland. From the Far North to the Gold Coast, our government will invest \$24 million as part of our commitment to help double the number of Indigenous land and sea ranger jobs from 100 to 200 positions—something, of course, driven by my ministerial colleague and Quandamooka woman, the member for Algeester.

This is about recognising the oldest living culture on earth and the knowledge and connection our First Nations communities have to land and sea. I have had the privilege of seeing just how important a role Indigenous rangers play in looking after our national parks and protected areas. To see the knowledge being shared between Indigenous rangers and our Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is incredible and why we have committed and delivered funding for more positions. Rangers will apply their valuable cultural knowledge to care for Queensland's unique landscape and areas of high ecological and cultural importance.

For many communities securing this ranger program for country is a significant step. For the Waanyi people it will mean they can employ four rangers positions based at Gregory Downs. Waanyi chairman Alec Doomadgee says it is the dream of his late dad and tribal lawman Don George. He said that for the Waanyi mob, who are about healing and caring for country, it gives his community employment and a chance to share their spiritual and cultural practices. The chairperson of the Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation, Keron Murray, said—

The funding for a ranger team will support our people in caring for our remote and special country as our Elders before us, so we can continue to meet our cultural obligations and manage our lands.

It is the culmination of 30 years of work for them.

For Justine Dillon and the Ngarang-Wal Aboriginal Corporation and Kombumerri traditional owners this funding will provide four ranger positions. Justine said the funding would enable them to revegetate and restore land that—

... can't be reached by parks and council ... and with our traditional owner knowledge apply that to help and give back and help with the environmental goals within our region.

She also said—

We want to make sure that they're fully immersed in cultural awareness training and understanding and engagement, so they know what Kombumerri traditional owners expect on our country and how we take care of it properly.

We have an uncomfortable and ugly shared past in this country; however, this announcement is a key step on the path towards reconciliation. We are lucky to live alongside the oldest continuing cultures on earth. All Queenslanders benefit from the expertise and knowledge of First Nations Queenslanders and the culture and stories in the lands upon which we work and live.