BACKGROUND
The McGowan Labor Government recognises that the social, cultural and environmental benefits of Aboriginal ranger programs have been far and wide reaching. They have provided an integral step towards improved community wellbeing and reducing poverty through economic opportunities and building leadership in remote and regional communities. In Western Australia, excellent work has already been undertaken by established Aboriginal ranger groups throughout the State and the Government acknowledges the aspirations of Aboriginal communities to establish new ranger programs to manage their country.

The Government is committed to building on this highly successful work and has developed a $20 million WA Government Aboriginal Ranger Program to protect the environment and leverage the social and economic benefits that employment provides in regional and remote areas.

The Program will employ Aboriginal people as rangers to undertake land and sea management activities across the State. The work of Aboriginal rangers will include work such as:

- biodiversity monitoring and research;
- traditional knowledge transfer;
- fire management;
- cultural site management;
- feral animal and weed management;
- cultural awareness and immersion experiences;
- tourism management; and
- education programs and mentoring.

The Program will also assist Aboriginal communities to identify land management priorities and opportunities, build community and organisational capacity and invest in direct training opportunities.

The Aboriginal Ranger Program will be led by the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organisations with support from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and across government. The Program will support Aboriginal groups and businesses and will be focused on new jobs for rangers across tenures, but inclusive of national parks and reserves, Indigenous Protected Areas, other Aboriginal tenures and Unallocated Crown land (UCL).

The McGowan Labor Government has and will continue to consult with Aboriginal organisations to ensure Aboriginal knowledge and aspirations informs the design and delivery of the Aboriginal Ranger Program. A Steering Committee comprising representatives of the native title representative bodies (NTRB), prescribed body corporates (PBC), Aboriginal ranger teams, industry and government was established to provide initial input. Consultation also occurred and is ongoing with State and Commonwealth government agencies, industry, local communities and conservation non-government organisations.

The objectives of the Program are:

- To work with Aboriginal communities to develop and implement a successful and sustainable Aboriginal Ranger employment program to provide new jobs, protect the environment and provide social and economic benefits to Aboriginal people in regional and remote areas.
- To provide training for Aboriginal people to develop their skills in conservation and land management to better meet the demand for ranger work.
- To scale up and expand the Aboriginal Ranger Program by leveraging funds from other State and Commonwealth agencies, industry and philanthropic groups.
- To increase Aboriginal ranger employment within DBCA that is additional, but complementary, to the Aboriginal Ranger Program.

The outcomes of the Program will include the following:

- New jobs for Aboriginal people looking after country.
- Enhanced cross-cultural engagement and exchange between Aboriginal people, the broader community and Government.
- Increased capacity within the Aboriginal community to undertake land and sea management and tourism operations.
- Strengthened capacity of Aboriginal organisations to facilitate and provide a range of services enabling ongoing employment and income generation opportunities.
- Enhanced protection of cultural and biodiversity values through land management activities undertaken by Aboriginal rangers.
• Empowered Aboriginal communities that can identify and address cultural and environmental priorities, leading to more resilient communities and broader health, educational and social benefits.
• Empowered Aboriginal communities that can jointly manage conservation reserves within DBCA.

Funding under the program, including funding for multi-year projects, will initially be available in 2017–18. A further application process will be undertaken in 2018–19 for single and multi-year projects to encourage the development of partnerships and integrated applications.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

Aboriginal organisations, including PBC’s, NTRB’s and Aboriginal body corporates, may apply for funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program. NTRBs may only apply where the project is undertaken on lands with no native title determination, where they have support of the PBC, or where native title does not exist. Aboriginal body corporates may apply for funding where they undertake, or wish to undertake, land and sea management activities and can demonstrate support of the traditional owner group. Support of the PBC or traditional owner group needs to be provided at the time of application or within two months of the closing date for applications. Government agencies and other organisations are ineligible to apply directly for funding through this process, but may participate through the formation of partnerships with eligible organisations.

Eligible organisations may submit joint applications to achieve regional outcomes or partner with other organisations to leverage Aboriginal Ranger Program outcomes and expand the program. Such applications are encouraged.

To be eligible for the Program, applicants are required to
• submit applications to DBCA by the closing time, or be granted an extension (see Closing Date for Applications below);
• complete the application form and submit via email or hard copy;
• be signed by appropriate member of the Aboriginal organisation;
• be lodged by an eligible applicant;
• identify the land area where work is to occur;
• attach relevant letters of approval / support; and
• agree to the terms specified in the application form.

Successful applicants must submit completion or progress reports and acquit funding received.

1 Traditional owner group means:
   1. PBC’s;
   2. native title claim groups;
   3. Aboriginal groups with traditional rights and interests in country in areas where native title is not claimed or has been found not to exist.

FUNDING

The Aboriginal Ranger Program includes $20 million provided over five years from 2017–18. Funding under the Program is available for:

• Jobs for Aboriginal Rangers, which may include:
  o funding agreements;
  o fee-for-service contracts with DBCA for the delivery of specific projects;
  o direct employment with DBCA;
• Training in association with undertaking land and sea management activities; and
• Community development, which may include development and capacity building of new ranger groups and planning for the management of country.

Preference will be given to those Aboriginal organisations that either:
• have completed planning to identify environmental or land/sea management outcomes and have the capacity to manage rangers, but don’t have the funding to employ them;
• have identified native title lands that require improved management, but need assistance in the land/sea planning process and/or assistance in supporting the employment of rangers; or
• would like to undertake work on conservation reserves in partnership with DBCA.

The Program also seeks to fund projects that can demonstrate a pathway to self-sustainability through partnerships and alternate future funding sources that will meet salary and labour costs beyond the funding period; or projects that can demonstrate the achievement of worthwhile outcomes over the funding period.

The Government reserves the right to allocate a portion of the funding to projects outside of this application process, such as for case studies to evaluate the success of the Program.
It is intended that a future funding process will be implemented in 2018 for single and multi-year projects commencing on 1 July 2018. Further information about this process will be available in 2018.

**HOW TO APPLY**

Applications for funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program must be made in writing on an application form, which can be obtained by phoning 9219 9933 or downloaded from [www.dbac.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram](http://www.dbac.wa.gov.au/aboriginalrangerprogram). Email applications are most welcome and encouraged. They must be submitted to [aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au).

To ease congestion in the electronic mailbox, if you are submitting your application by email please ensure that the total size of the email—with all attachments—does not exceed 10MB. Your assistance in this respect will help us to process applications in an efficient and timely manner. **If mailing by post please submit THREE copies to assist with assessing applications.**

Completed application forms from eligible organisations must be signed (or otherwise for electronic submission) by an office holder of the organisation or a staff member with the authority to sign on behalf of the organisation. The contact person should be an office holder or employee who is authorised to speak on behalf of the organisation. This person should be contactable by phone during normal business hours.

Please limit supporting material to that specifically requested in the application form (letters of support from partner organisations, maps etc). Do not include management plans with your application but please note the existence of relevant management or healthy country plan on your application. The assessment panel may request this material at a later date if required.

Applicants may lodge joint applications.

**ASSESSMENT**

An assessment of applications for funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program will be coordinated by DBCA.

All applications must meet the eligibility requirements above and will be assessed according to the Assessment Criteria (see below). The assessment panel may seek advice from within DBCA or from other Government agencies as appropriate and may request that an applicant amend their project, including as a result of further consultation or to consolidate the project with other similar or complementary projects. DBCA may also contact applicants to seek clarification about their application, request evidence in support of any declaration made in the application or to work with applicants to enhance the outcomes of their application.

A successful applicant may not be offered the level of funding requested and may be asked that some elements of the project be modified. The Minister for Environment will approve all funding granted to applicants under the Aboriginal Ranger Program.

To maintain probity, staff involved in developing proposals with applicants will not be involved in assessing the application.

Applicants will be required to acquit funding received within four weeks of the completion date of the project, including providing evidence of outcomes and payments made. Annual audited financial statements will be required for larger projects.

**Probity Auditor**

A Probity Auditor will be appointed prior to the close of submissions. He/she will provide independent probity advisory services to the assessment process and will undertake compliance audits to confirm that agreed processes are followed throughout the process.

Essential tasks include:

- ensuring that the procedures adopted in the submission of applications and assessment process are fair and equitable and that probity of the process is independently validated;
- monitoring and reporting to DBCA through the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator that the assessment process and procedures have been followed and that the outcome is capable of being independently validated;
- providing assurance to all interested proponents that appropriate processes were fully adhered;
- providing guidance to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator as to how unforeseen issues could be resolved;
- attending evaluation panel meetings where relevant;
- attending applicant meetings and presentations (if required);
- monitoring communication during the period between submission of applications and final decision; and
- identifying areas where efficiencies may be adopted in the process.
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to evaluate applications for funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program in a systematic manner. Note that applications do not have to meet all of these criteria to be successful.

• Delivers clear land and/or sea management outcomes in areas with significant environmental and/or cultural values and/or an identified conservation or land management need;
• Delivers social and/or cultural outcomes;
• Demonstrates capacity to deliver or increases the capacity of Aboriginal people and organisations to undertake land and sea management;
• Delivers training and work experience of Aboriginal rangers that leads to the provision of services for, or jobs with, State Government agencies, the community or the private sector;
• Develops partnerships which leverage additional resources to complement the delivery and/or expansion of the Aboriginal Ranger Program;
• Does not substitute existing jobs and programs and can demonstrate additional jobs;
• Complements or aligns to State Government policies, priorities and conservation programs;
• Demonstrates cost effectiveness; and
• Demonstrates the ability to monitor and report on outcomes achieved and expenditure acquitted.

While not part of the Assessment Criteria, the Aboriginal Ranger Program will support a mix of established, new and emerging ranger groups as well as female rangers and this will be taken into consideration during the assessment and approval process. Projects that demonstrate integration (e.g. integrated weed and feral animal management programs), a pathway to sustainability and create career pathways to employment in land and sea management as rangers will be highly regarded.

An additional principle of fairness will also be applied which will consider geographic spread and the variation in ranger group’s organisational capacity.

Separate consideration will be given to applications from new and emerging groups, which will be assessed against each other. New and emerging ranger groups are those that have been established for two years or less. The Government reserves the right to determine the amount of funding allocated towards new and emerging groups and established ranger groups.

Applicants are encouraged to engage with DBCA regional offices in the co-design of work and management plans prior to submitting their applications to aid in the preparation of project proposals, add value and enhance the delivery of Aboriginal Ranger Program outcomes.

CONDITIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Successful applicants must comply with the following conditions:

• The funding will only be used for the purposes specified in the application and applicants must comply with State and Commonwealth legislation.
• Land and sea management activities must be directed toward achieving an Aboriginal Ranger Program outcome, rather than “business as usual”.
• Fire management will only be permitted in compliance with relevant statutory approvals. Collaboration with other fire practitioners in the area is expected.
• A portion of funds may be applied for administration expenses where it can be demonstrated that this is essential to achieve the specified outcomes of the project. Administration could include time spent organising Aboriginal Ranger Program employment contracts, payroll, fee-for-service contractual agreements and payments, procurement of operational materials, vehicle and equipment management and arranging ranger insurance and workers compensation.
• Coordination or support staff to implement training, mentoring, safety management and works planning to support the work of Aboriginal Rangers will be considered where it can be demonstrated that this is essential to achieve the specified outcomes of the project.
• Funding for consultants and/or contractors to deliver specific components within a project will be considered where this is essential to delivering project outcomes.
• Third party contributions must be additional and not associated with the normal or existing operations of an applicant. Expenditure for work already carried out or projected for work after the funding agreement cannot be counted as applicant or third party contributions.
• Applications will be considered that seek to continue projects that previously received funding from another source, providing that applicants can clearly demonstrate:
  o a significant land/sea management and conservation outcome from continuing the project can be demonstrated (not simply “business as usual”);
o previous funding was not discontinued because the project was not delivering, or was considered to be completed; and
o funding is not still potentially available from another source.

• Applicants are required to indicate any current external funding sources that support employment of Aboriginal rangers within the applicant organisation, the amount of funds received and the end date for any funding. All financial information provided is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed.
• A separate record of the financial administration of the funding will be maintained.
• Acknowledgement of State Government support through the Aboriginal Ranger Program will be included in any publicity related to a funded, or partially funded, project.
• Funding recipients will provide a project report outlining employment achievements and environmental and land/sea management outcomes and financial statement at the completion of the project in a specific form.
• Any unspent funds will be returned with the completion report and financial statement to DBCA unless approval is obtained to use the funds in a related project.

Applicants to the 2017–18 round of Aboriginal Ranger Program funding will be eligible for funding in 2018–19. However, applicants will be required to provide evidence of outcomes achieved and financial acquittals each year through a progress report in order to be awarded any future funding. Failure to comply with conditions, including the provision of a completion report and financial statement, will also influence the awarding or disbursement of any future funding. Recipients should not expect that funds will be provided automatically or on an ongoing basis.

APPROVALS
The Aboriginal Ranger Program extends across various land tenures, as well as lands covered by native title, lands where native title has not been determined and lands where native title has been extinguished.

Projects undertaken on determined native title lands where native title applies must be submitted by, or have written permission from, the PBC. Where native title is claimed but has not been determined, support must be obtained from the native title claimants or the relevant NTRB.

Applications over Aboriginal Lands Trust reserves or Unallocated Crown Land may require the appropriate permits/licences from the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage prior to the allocation of funding. Projects on Unallocated Crown Land or unmanaged reserves may require evidence of consultation with, and support from, the relevant local government authority.

Letters of support from the land owner are required at the time of application. In considering appropriate permits and licences, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage may need to consult with other interest holders.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX
Most registered Aboriginal corporations have an Australian Business Number (ABN) and will be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST). GST is therefore generally applicable to funding under the Aboriginal Ranger Program and applicants should include GST in calculating their project costs. If applicants have an ABN, but are not registered for GST, then no GST applies, and the total payment will be made exclusive of GST. If applicants do not have an ABN, and are not registered for GST, then DBCA, as the funding administrator, is required to withhold 47% tax from the total payment. Applicants can then claim that tax back if they are eligible to do so. The 47% tax does not get held back where the group is either undertaking the work for a hobby, or is an income tax exempt organisation, or will not expect to make a profit. The group will need to advise that they are exempt by filling in an ATO “Statement By A Supplier” form (available from the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator at DBCA).

INSURANCE
As part of implementing a risk management approach to activities under the Aboriginal Ranger Program, applicants are reminded of the benefits of obtaining appropriate insurance cover. It is the recipient’s responsibility to ensure they, and any subcontractors, hold appropriate insurance for any activities undertaken for the project. Appropriate insurance may include:

Public Liability
Public liability insurance covers the legal liability of the applicant and the applicant’s personnel arising for an amount of not less than $20 million for any one occurrence and unlimited in the number of occurrences happening in the period of insurance.

Workers’ Compensation
Workers’ compensation insurance in accordance with the provisions of the Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981 (WA), includes cover for common law liability and should cover for an amount of not less than $50 million for any one occurrence in respect of workers of the applicant. The insurance policy must be extended to cover any claims and liability that may arise with an indemnity under section 175(2) of the Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management Act.

Motor Vehicle Third Party
Motor vehicle third party insurance covers legal liability against property damage and bodily injury to, or death of, persons (other than compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance) caused by motor vehicles used in connection with the application for funding for an amount of not less than $30 million for any one occurrence or accident.

Compulsory Third Party
Compulsory third party motor vehicle insurance is required under statute relating to motor vehicles used in connection with the application for funding.
Professional Indemnity

Professional indemnity insurance covers the legal liability of the applicant and the applicant's personnel arising out of any act, negligence, error or omission made or done by or on behalf of the applicant in connection with the applicant's project and should be for a sum of $1 million - $5 million for any one claim and in the annual aggregate, with a provision of one automatic reinstatement of the full sum insured in any one period of insurance.

Professional indemnity insurance can include:

a) fraud and dishonesty;
b) defamation;
c) infringement of intellectual property rights;
d) loss of or damage to documents and data; and
e) breach of Australian Consumer Law.

DBCA reserves the right to request additional insurances if they are not provided but are relevant to the project.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY

Applicants must identify any information contained within their application which they consider should be treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request.

DBCA will only consider a request for confidentiality where:

• The information to be protected is identified in specific rather than global terms.
• The information is by its nature confidential.
• Disclosure would cause detriment to the parties concerned.

All financial information provided is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed.

Notwithstanding any obligation of confidentiality, DBCA may disclose, or allow at any time the disclosure of, any information contained in or relating to any application. In submitting an application, applicants consent to DBCA using the information submitted.

Applicants should be aware that if they are successful, DBCA may publish information on its website about recipients, including but not limited to:

• The name of the entity receiving the funding.
• Title and purpose for which funding awarded.
• A description of the project and expected outcomes.
• Amount of funding awarded.
• Location/s where funding awarded.

By submitting an application under the Aboriginal Ranger Program, the applicant consents to publication of the above information by DBCA if they are awarded funding.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS

Applications are called by advertisement in The West Australian and community and regional papers, and must be received no later than 4pm Tuesday, 31 October 2017.

If, for any reason, the applicant cannot submit their application by the closing time, it is the applicant’s responsibility to contact DBCA on 08 9219 9933 or at aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au to make arrangements for the application to be received prior to the closing time or to seek an extension to the closing time. Any request for an extension must be received by DBCA prior to the closing time. The Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Probity Auditor, may at his or her discretion elect to accept a late submission where the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator considers it appropriate in the circumstances.

WHERE TO LODGE APPLICATIONS

Applications should be forwarded to:

Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Locked Bag 104
Bentley Delivery Centre WA 6983
or online at aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au

Further enquiries can be directed to the Aboriginal Ranger Program Coordinator on telephone (08) 9219 9933, or email aboriginalrangerprogram@dbca.wa.gov.au

All applicants will be advised in writing as soon as project assessments have been finalised.

Successful applicants must enter into a legally binding agreement with the Government within the timeframe specified in the letter of offer sent to approved applicants. The agreement sets out the requirements and conditions under which the funding is provided.