

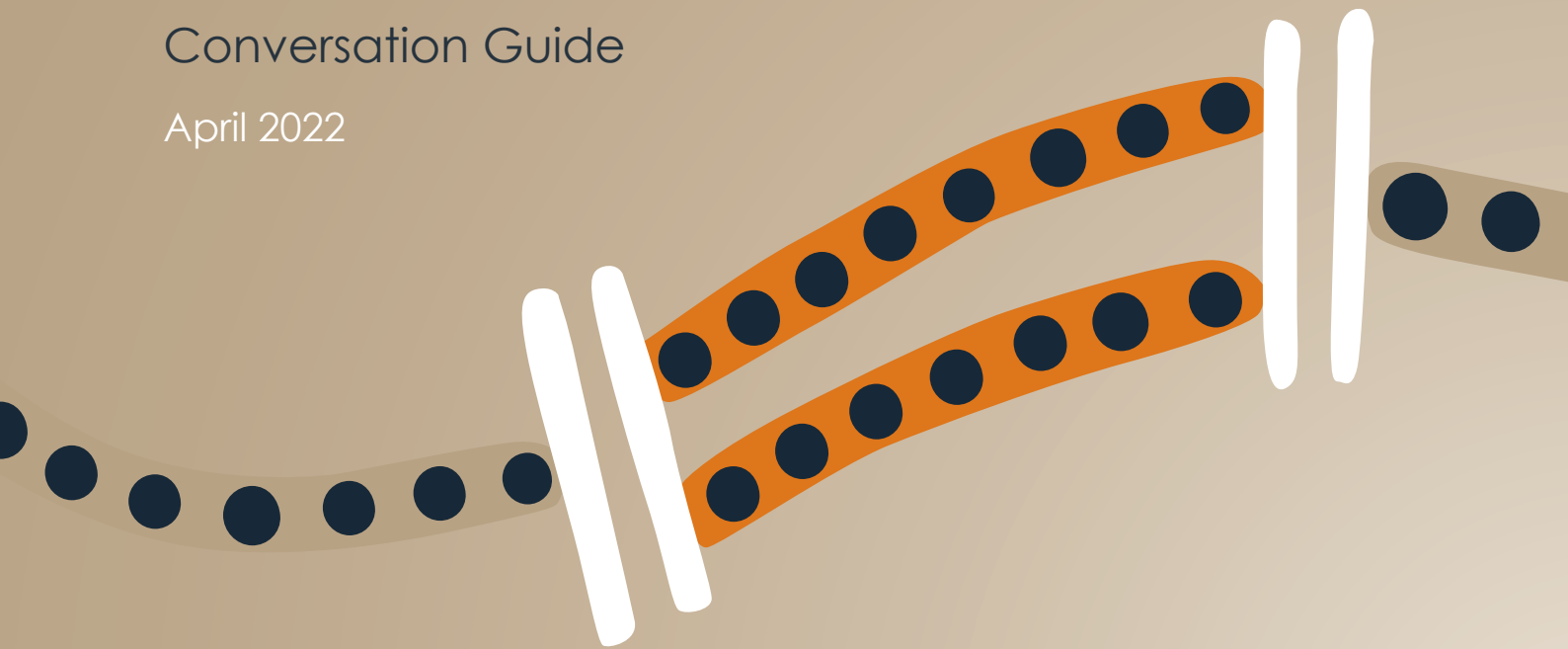


Australian Government

Consultation for Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy

Conversation Guide

April 2022



**National Indigenous
Australians Agency**

Land and Sea

Consultation for Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy – Conversation Guide (April 2022)

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The National Indigenous Australians Agency acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.

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Introduction

Consultation on the Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is seeking feedback on the Consultation Draft of the Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy (the Strategy).

Consultations will be conducted by virtual (online) methods due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. You can offer your views:

- in the virtual **workshops**, being held at the regional and national level;
- by completing an online **survey**; and/or
- in a **written submission** using an online form.

The same discussion topics will be covered in the workshop and survey.

This **Conversation Guide** contains information on the discussion topics to help you prepare for the workshops, complete the survey or make a submission. Separate **Information Sheets** provide additional information on the lead actions proposed in the Strategy.

We are interested in hearing the views of all organisations and people who are involved in, or have an interest in, the Indigenous ranger sector. This includes Indigenous ranger organisations, other Indigenous organisations and communities, government agencies, natural resource management organisations, landholders, researchers and scientists, training providers, industry, and philanthropic and conservation organisations.

Background to the Strategy

The Indigenous Ranger Sector

The Indigenous ranger sector is comprised of community-based Indigenous ranger organisations that operate ranger groups to manage Country in their regions. These ranger organisations make a significant contribution to Australia's land and water management, and to the environmental, cultural, social and economic wellbeing of their communities.

More information about the Indigenous Ranger Sector is on pages 6 to 7 and 13 to 15 of the Strategy.

Why the Strategy is being developed

The concept of an Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy arose out of consultations in 2020 with Australian Government-funded ranger organisations and an Indigenous Ranger Independent Reference Group comprised of Indigenous land and water management and environment experts. The NIAA asked for feedback about extending the Australian Government's Indigenous Ranger Program.

During those consultations ranger organisations identified aspirations and challenges that went beyond the administration of the current Indigenous Rangers Program. Some of these are summarised on pages 16 to 18 of the Strategy. We understand that similar challenges are experienced by Indigenous ranger organisations funded by other governments or independently.

The Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy aims to support the wider aspirations of Indigenous ranger organisations throughout Australia and to address the range of challenges they face in order to create a vital Indigenous rangers sector.

The Consultation Draft of the Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy is being informed by, and responds to, the feedback the NIAA received during the 2020 consultations, information about other Indigenous land and water management developments, and discussions with Australian state and territory government agencies.

What the Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy will do

The Strategy seeks to further empower and develop the Indigenous ranger sector and enhance the cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits flowing to communities through Indigenous ranger operations. The proposed vision is:

VISION

A vital Indigenous ranger sector empowered to manage Country sustainably, strengthen culture, provide economic and career opportunities for Indigenous people and communities, and have a recognised role and voice in land and water management

Topics for discussion

The following sections A to D provide information on the topics covered in the workshops and survey.

A. Integrated National Approach

The Consultation Draft of the Strategy proposes an integrated, national approach that applies to all government-funded and independent Indigenous ranger organisations, their partners and stakeholders. The national approach is intended to be implemented collaboratively with governments, partners and stakeholders involved in ranger organisation funding, land and water management, research, training, career development, organisational capacity building and business development. Throughout Australia, the Indigenous ranger sector is experiencing increasing growth and demand that might best be supported by taking a national approach.

- Indigenous ranger organisations manage significant areas of Australia's national reserve system and other areas, especially in remote and regional locations (including coastal areas) where there are few other land and water managers or landholders. *A national approach could help build recognition and support for more coordinated investment in, and support of, Indigenous rangers contributing to Australia's land and water management.*
- Across Australia ranger organisations face different jurisdictional program requirements to address their needs for Country management, resourcing, training and education and business development. *Programs that address ranger organisations' needs in a broadly consistent way could streamline and improve service delivery to the sector.*
- Ranger organisations typically deal with a number of Indigenous, government, industry and other partners in their local areas, regions and nationally. *Building an understanding of the aspirations and needs of ranger organisations' across Australia could assist ranger organisations to develop their partnerships with stakeholders, and vice versa.*
- Many ranger organisations are seeking to extend their service offering, resources, capabilities and participation in local and regional land and water management in response to the emerging opportunities for Indigenous land and water management. These opportunities include climate change and disaster resilience, cultural burning for

bushfire management, carbon schemes, and biosecurity prevention, monitoring and compliance. *Building stakeholder understanding and demand for Indigenous ranger involvement throughout Australia could assist Indigenous rangers and their partners to take up these emerging opportunities.*


A national sector-wide approach could support consistent collaboration with ranger organisations, partners and stakeholders to develop and deliver solutions through implementation planning. The Strategy is intended to be implemented in a flexible manner across Australian, state and territory agencies, Indigenous organisations, and the private sector. It encourages cooperative regional approaches.



Do you think there are benefits in taking a national approach to support the growth and development of the Indigenous ranger sector?

Core features of the proposed national approach

Core features of the proposed national approach include national principles, high level lead actions supported by detailed implementation plans, and the establishment of a reference group to advise on implementation of the Strategy and evaluation of the Strategy's success.



What are your views on the core features of the proposed national approach (described in sections i to vi below)?

i. National Principles

The proposed national principles identify what is important in successfully delivering the Strategy. The principles are intended to guide organisations, agencies, regions and other stakeholders when they develop detailed implementation plans and actions for their situations.

It is proposed that the Australian, state and territory governments endorse the National Principles to support a national approach.

The proposed National Principles are as follows.

- **Caring for Country** and achieving sustainable Country management are core activities for Indigenous ranger organisations.
- **Ranger groups provide environmental and cultural service to the Australian community** by conducting significant land and water management activities across Australia, including in substantial parts of the National Reserve System.
- **Ranger groups and communities** set their own priorities and make their own decisions to pursue any new activities, partnerships and fee-for-service and commercial opportunities.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration, partnerships and co-investment** will be encouraged to harness resources and expertise and provide holistic approaches to Indigenous ranger projects and development.
- **Holistic, integrated solutions** that can address common challenges and simplify **funding** administration are desirable, where possible.
- **Building human capital, economic opportunities and social and cultural well-being** in addition to protecting Australia's natural and cultural heritage are important goals for Indigenous ranger activities.
- **Flexible, place-based approaches** tailored to the local aspirations, needs and circumstances of Indigenous ranger groups and their communities are desirable.
- **Indigenous-led initiatives** will be encouraged, facilitated and built upon.

ii. High level lead actions

The Strategy is intended to be delivered flexibly so it is relevant to the needs of particular organisations and places. It contains high level actions broadly relevant to Indigenous ranger organisations, governments and stakeholders across Australia.

iii. Detailed Implementation Plans

The Strategy suggests high level actions that could be further refined in implementation plans for particular organisations, agencies and places. We propose the implementation incorporates regional place-based approaches and is staged over the short, medium and long term.

iv. Regional, place-based approaches

Regional implementation plans could support a collaborative, place-based implementation of the Strategy by the stakeholders in a region.

We acknowledge there are a number of regional initiatives with Indigenous land and water managers that could provide insights into regional implementation of the Strategy.

You may wish to reflect on how relevant regional implementation is for the Strategy, how workable it might be in your region and what arrangements would be needed for success.

You are welcome to tell us about existing regional partnerships and collaboration that could be further supported.

v. Staged implementation

The Strategy is proposed to be implemented over six years to 2028 in three stages.

In the **first two years** (the **short term**) the emphasis will be on actions that lay the foundations for implementing the Strategy through:

- research, evidence gathering and analysis;
- building awareness of rangers' skills and services;
- continuing ranger organisation capability development;
- program policy reform that can be implemented in the short term; and
- developing long term implementation plans.

Examples of proposed short term actions that lay the foundations are:

- identifying opportunities, gaps and barriers for Indigenous ranger participation in land and water management (Action 1.5 in the Strategy); and
- analysis of availability and suitability of training courses to address Indigenous rangers' needs (Action 2.1 in the Strategy).

In years **three to four** (the **medium term**) the evidence gathered in the short term will be used to implement detailed actions.

In years **five and six** (the **long term**) there will be an opportunity to adapt delivery of the actions as necessary, based on experience. An evaluation against the outcomes will be held in year five.

vi. Indigenous Ranger Reference Group

An Indigenous Ranger Reference Group is proposed to advise on implementation of the Strategy and evaluation of the Strategy's success. This includes oversight of a formal evaluation of the Strategy at year five. The Reference Group proposal aligns with governments' commitments in the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) to deliver services and programs in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Membership for the Reference Group could be drawn from Indigenous ranger and land and water management experts, with Secretariat support provided by the NIAA.

You may wish to reflect on the benefits, role and structure for an Indigenous Ranger Reference Group that could advise on implementation of the Strategy.

You are welcome to suggest possible Indigenous members to the Reference Group for consideration.

B. Proposed actions

The Strategy proposes high level, lead actions that can be applied to the Indigenous ranger sector across Australia. The actions could be tailored to meet the specific needs of ranger organisations and regions at the organisation, agency and regional level.

The proposed actions were developed from the 2020 feedback from Australian Government-funded Indigenous ranger organisations and consultation with state and territory agencies and other stakeholders.



What are your views on the actions proposed in the Strategy?

You may wish to consider how the proposed lead actions might be applied to your circumstances. For instance:

- Are these the right lead actions to achieve effective outcomes and guide detailed actions developed in Implementation Plans of particular organisations, agencies or regions?

- What actions do you consider to be priorities? Why?
- How would you and your partners implement priority actions for your organisation or region? What would the detailed action look like in your organisation and region?
- Are there other short, medium or long term actions you think should be included in the Strategy?

We have developed the following Information Sheets on the lead actions for each theme in the Strategy to help you consider your views on the actions.

- [Information Sheet – Strong Country Proposed Actions](#)
- [Information Sheet – Strong Economy \(Skills\) Proposed Actions](#)
- [Information Sheet – Strong Economy \(Jobs\) Proposed Actions](#)
- [Information Sheet – Strong Economy \(Business\) Proposed Actions](#)
- [Information Sheet – Strong Culture Proposed Actions](#)

C. Indigenous Ranger Industry Body

If supported by Indigenous stakeholders, the establishment of an independent peak association or body could be one way to progress the empowerment and development of the Indigenous ranger sector.

An Indigenous Ranger Industry Body that operates as a peak industry body could function to provide information, support, advocacy, resources and services relevant to Indigenous ranger groups. It could establish an industry standard for the sector and act as a point of engagement for industry and academia seeking to partner with its members, including hosting capability statements for organisations seeking to expand through commercial opportunities.

Other key roles could be to oversee the development of any accredited Indigenous land and water skills curriculum and training packages (Action 2.1 in the Strategy) and associated employment award(s) for Indigenous rangers (Action 3.5 in the Strategy).

Many industry sectors have peak industry bodies that represent and advocate for their interests. Examples from various sectors related to land and water management are the National Farmers Federation; the Minerals Council of Australia; Science and Technology Australia; and Conservation Councils or similar groups (which represent conservation and environmental organisations in states and territories). Peak industry bodies are usually membership-based, and operate through Boards of Directors and a team of staff.

This is a new proposal that aligns with the elements of a strong Indigenous community-controlled sector set out in the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations which deliver common services are supported by a Peak Body, governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board, which has strong governance and policy development and influencing capacity' (paragraph 45c)

It could provide a foundation for formal partnerships and shared decision making, aligning to Priority Reform One in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Do you feel the establishment of a national and independent Indigenous Ranger Industry Body will drive Indigenous-led changes, priorities and projects in the Indigenous ranger sector?

D. Monitoring and evaluating success

Measuring success is essential to ensure the Strategy and actions under the Strategy can be adapted as necessary to new evidence and experience. These measurements will also feed into the proposed year five evaluation of implementation of the Strategy. We are seeking your views on whether the measures (also known as performance indicators) proposed in the Strategy are the best and most workable measures of success.

We intend to work with Indigenous ranger organisations and Australian, state and territory government agencies to identify practical, achievable data indicators.

Do you have any suggestions for practical ways we can measure the success of the Strategy?

The measures of success listed below are suggestions only. They are intended to reflect achievement of the objectives and outcomes listed in the Strategy for each of the themes – Strong Country, Strong Economy (Skills), Strong Economy (Jobs), Strong Economy (Business) and Strong Culture. You can read the measures of success in the context of the proposed objectives and outcomes on pages 28 to 39 of the Strategy.

The suggested measures of success are as follows.

1. **Strong Country**

- In the short term, improved information on opportunities for Indigenous rangers' participation in land and water management in their regions.
- In the medium term, an increase in the engagement of Indigenous ranger organisations in the land and water sector broadly, including research.
- In the long term, an increase in Indigenous ranger organisations' activities in their regions. Dependent on particular circumstances, this could include increases in the scope of services, partnerships or the area for which ranger services are provided.

2. **Strong Economy (Skills)**

- An increase in the number of tailored courses in land and water management delivered to Indigenous rangers.
- An increase in the availability of youth on-Country ranger programs.
- An increase in the number of Indigenous rangers seeking other vocational land and water employment beyond ranger programs.
- An increase in the higher level educational qualifications held by Indigenous rangers.

3. **Strong Economy (Jobs)**

- An increase in the number of positions created for place-based exchanges/ secondments/mentoring programs with land and water organisations and agencies.
- An increase in the number of Indigenous ranger positions (in ranger organisations), number of senior managerial ranger positions, and number of Indigenous rangers employed in the broader land and water management sector.

4. **Strong Economy (Business)**

- An increase in the dollar value of fee-for-service arrangements.
- An increase in the number of ranger positions created.
- The number of ranger organisations (seeking fee-for-service opportunities) that have current Capability Statements and Strategic Plans in place.

5. **Strong Culture**

- Indigenous ranger organisations (with Traditional Owners) control access to and use of local cultural data and knowledge.
- Indigenous knowledge, cultural authority and protocols are recognised, valued and respected in accountable research and partnerships.
- Indigenous rangers have an increasing role in the provision of cultural protection and management services.

