



Kimberley Ranger Forum 2017

Knowledge Brokering Activities and Outcomes

A report to the Kimberley Land Council

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Cover photographs

Front cover: Kimberley Ranger Forum participants on the beach (photo Kimberley Land Council).

Back cover: Kimberley Ranger Forum activities (photo Kimberley Land Council).

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We would also like to thank the Kimberley Land Council for the invitation to participate in the Forum and explore the “how and why” of the knowledge brokering that took place. Many thanks to the ~30 Rangers who participated in individual and group interviews. We would like to acknowledge the NESP NAER for funding this project, and CSIRO Land and Water for its co-investment. Thanks also to NAILSMA, our partner in the project.



Evenings at the Forum, photo Kimberley Land Council.

Executive summary

The 2017 Kimberley Ranger Forum was held by the Kimberley Land Council in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and had a particular focus on biosecurity. Indigenous rangers play a critical role in maintaining Australia's biosecurity, not just for people in the north but all across our vast country. Many activities at the Forum reflected its theme "Indigenous Rangers – delivering biosecurity, protecting Australia".

In addition, when Indigenous land managers come together, they share knowledge and learn from each other. Indigenous peoples gain many benefits through learning from each other. This report focuses on understanding how and why these benefits occur, through interviewing Indigenous people at the Forum and observing their activities.

Seven key messages were identified:

- Being **on country, welcomed by Traditional Owners**, following cultural protocols and reciprocity, **creates the right environment for learning**.
- Rangers are **empowered through social cohesion, collegiality and a sense of pride** experienced at the Forum.
- **Cultural connections through dance, language, and family** are vital to peoples' sense of comfort and ability to grow and learn.
- **Peer-to-peer exchanges and one-on-one interactions** allow for more targeted learning and follow up.
- Exchanging common experiences, successes and grievances allows Rangers to identify **what works and why in policy, program design and on-ground activities**. It supports Women Rangers and land managers to be stronger and more confident in their own roles and decision-making.
- **Practical, hands-on activities** particularly the realistic first-aid scenarios, building the tables, the smack-down on the beach and fixing machinery are great ways to conduct **formal training**.
- Greater **formal and informal interaction between the Rangers and non-Indigenous participants** would foster trust, relationships and mutual learning.

The Forum was uplifted by happiness, joy and unity of purpose.



Bardi Jawi dancer at the opening ceremony, photo Kimberley Land Council.

1. Introduction

Kimberley Ranger Forum 2017 was held at beautiful Pender Bay (Gurrbalgun) on Bardi Jawi country from 1-3 August. The Pender Bay community is a small family outstation that Kevin George has built up over the years as a place of respite for his family to enjoy country. Kevin is the Chairperson of the Bardi and Jawi Niimidiman Aboriginal Corporation and Senior Cultural Ranger for the Bardi Jawi Ranger Team. He welcomed us all to enjoy our time on Bardi Jawi country.

This report to the Kimberley Land Council is supported through a project of National Environmental Science Program's Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub. The project is designed to strengthen "Knowledge Brokering" of Indigenous land managers to improve their adaptive environmental management with multiple co-benefits. Knowledge brokering activities bring together Indigenous, western science and other types of knowledge into land management decision-making. The project will inform the development of national guidelines on working with Indigenous Knowledge in environmental management. In meeting this goal, the project aims to deliver:

- Tailored knowledge brokering tools and guidelines for their use;
- Knowledge-sharing among Indigenous land managers across northern Australia through pan-northern networking activities, and
- A diagnosis of the conditions under which knowledge brokering can improve Indigenous adaptive management of environmental assets.

The Kimberley Land Council is a partner in the project and invited the NESP research team to write a report about the knowledge brokering that occurred at the Ranger Forum. This Report aims to record how and why Indigenous land managers share knowledge and learn from each other. Indigenous peoples gain many benefits through learning from each other. By undertaking interviews and observation at the Forum, the research aims to identify how and why these benefits occur.



Kimberley Land Council Chair Mr Anthony Watson at the Forum, photo Kimberley Land Council.

2. Key issues explored

Understanding formal training:

- What was helpful about the training at the Forum?
- What do you think you will use from the training and why?

Understanding knowledge sharing:

- What did you learn from yarning with other people who came to the Forum?
- How is it different to learning in the formal training sessions?
- Were there important cultural activities that you were involved in?

Understanding strengths and weaknesses of the Forum:

- What was the most beneficial aspect of the Forum for you?
- Do you have any suggestions about how to improve the Forum?

3. Key messages

Key messages about knowledge sharing

Being **on country, welcomed by Traditional Owners**, away from distractions of town, creates **the right environment for learning**. Happiness and joy came especially from the arrangements where Kimberley groups were paired with other groups as hosts. Following cultural protocols and reciprocity is critical.

Rangers are **empowered through social cohesion and collegiality** experienced at the Forum. Seeing the work of others inspires Rangers to try similar things and gives a great sense of pride, strength and unity.

Cultural connections through dance, language, and family are vital to peoples' sense of comfort and ability to grow and learn. Cultures are interesting and diverse but there are also common themes, priorities and issues.

Peer-to-peer exchanges and one-on-one interactions allow for more targeted learning and follow up. People connect on specific topics, such as control of specific weeds, and sometimes organise to do something together afterwards, for example starting a project or exchange visit.

Exchanging common experiences, successes and grievances allows Rangers to identify **what works and why in policy, program design and on-ground activities**. It supports Women Rangers and land managers to be stronger and more confident in their own roles and decision-making.

Key messages about formal training

Practical, hands-on activities particularly the realistic first-aid scenarios, building the tables, the smack-down on the beach and fixing machinery are great ways to learn.

Key messages about strengths and weaknesses in knowledge brokering at the Forum

Greater **formal and informal interaction between the Rangers and non-Indigenous participants** would be welcome. People identified a missed opportunity to foster trust, relationships and opportunities for learning.



Kevin George welcomed people to his Traditional Country at Pender Bay.

4. Understanding knowledge sharing

The right environment for learning – on country, away from town, with Traditional Owners, being hosted and being hosts, practicing protocols and reciprocity

You just feel welcome here with that official welcome from Kevin... hearing the laughter around the campfire at night...hearing the joy and the happiness of people coming together. It just settles people's souls. It's calming people to stop and slow down... a space away from the everyday busyness that we live. It's just so important to have these Forums on country. It takes away all the other distractions and all the other social influences. Cissy Gore-Birch, National Aboriginal Engagement Manager with Bush Heritage Australia, Kimberley Land Council Director and Traditional Owner.

Our hosts – the Balangarra Rangers from Wyndham – MADE the forum for us. They made the ladies feel very comfortable, made us feel very comfortable... Most important thing is for people to feel welcome spiritually. Kevin made us feel welcome and we want him to know how grateful we are. Keith Lambert, Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Management Coordinator.

Came pretty close to the boys from the Crocodile Islands who we hosted. Good way of bringing everyone together. Daniel Carrington, Gooniyandi Ranger.

Hosting the visitors, and sharing collaborative network information about the stuff that they do - around a camp fire, in a yarning circle, face to face was really something warming and easy to soak in with thinking... Larissa is our visitor, and we look after her and she looks after us ... If you look after your country it will look after you. If you don't look after your country, people become sick. Annie, Karajarri Ranger.



Harry Ludwick, Hopevale Congress Rangers and Chris Muriata, Giringun Rangers

Empowerment, strength, unity of purpose, pride and reinforcement of common purpose in diversity

It's empowering for us, seeing all these Ranger groups, we're the boots on the ground. Harry Ludwick, Hopevale Congress Ranger.

Myself, I came to a Northern Territory Sea Country Forum in Maningrida, inspired me to come back and start Rangers here, gave me the drive and inspiration. Some people here will be inspired in the same way. Daniel Oades, Bardi Jawi Ranger Coordinator.

I loved looking at everyone's logos on their shirts and their cars. Usually we wouldn't look at the men walking past, but we looked straight at their logos... all Australian rangers coming together to work collectively. Karajarri Woman Ranger.

It's a community of people coming together who are diverse, who are having to communicate, who are having to work together... We all share this common cause. We're all passionate about working on country, working on healthy country, working with people and networking. Cissy Gore-Birch.

Some groups are more advanced – looking up, we need to get there. You feel more motivated, more drive, more inspiration. Jason Richardson, Yawuru Ranger.



Bardi Jawi Oorany.

Connecting through song, dance, story, language and identity with looking after country

There are people with different languages. We have been trying to teach these guys easy words, so they can talk to us, that's what it's all about ... time we talk and tell stories we must translate it so they can understand. Our language is unique across 14 clans. Jennifer Yantarrgna, Anindilyakwa Ranger.

We have been transferring our culture – giving our knowledge – and they give back, showed us one of our trees they use for ringworm and another one use the sap for toothache. Bardi Jawi Oorany Rangers.

Karajarri Rangers explained how the structure of the Forum meant they had to be very mindful of avoidance relationships, eating at different times to some relations and using a third person (auntie, cousin) to guide them around those whom they need to avoid.

I guess it's all about hearing that story about looking after country—culture stays strong, language stays strong...when you're on someone's country, it's good to learn the language. Jason Richardson, Yawuru Ranger.

When I put the ranger uniform, I represent my family group, my country back home and it's my job to look after it and to uphold because people are looking constantly. We're in the eyes of public and I always watch how I conduct myself. Laurissa Mundraby, Mandingalbay Yidinji Rangers.

It is our identity, our responsibility. We get taught from a young age to look after country. Notes from the interview with Bardi Jawi Rangers.

The cultural dance was very important, it reminded us of home and when the old people started singing, it touched me, and reminded us of our granddad. Jennifer Yantarrgna, Anindilyakwa Ranger.

Cultural activities – Kevin showing us all the spears, that was important. We are all Aboriginal people and do similar things. Jason Richardson, Yawuru Ranger.

We're all Aboriginal people, we all do similar things, having strong looking after country... what comes along with that is the culture stays strong, the language stays strong...All Aboriginal groups, we share the Rainbow Serpent, from Tasmania to Adelaide, Perth, right across the country, we share that story. Harry Ludwick, Hopevale Congress Ranger.



Kevin George conducting cultural education.

Learning directly from each other and being able to talk openly about challenges

Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers made special mention of the talks and workshop about Indigenous suicide. Indigenous people talking about their experiences, and particularly men been given the opportunity to talk openly about suicide and the impacts on them. They thought it was excellent. They had done formal training about suicide before but the workshop was seen as a really important opportunity for people to talk together. Notes from the interview with Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers, Coordinator and Rangers.

Being an only female ranger, the interaction with other female rangers give me that passion that inspires me to keep going because it's really, really hard sometimes for our voices to be heard as females within our group. Annie, Karajarri Ranger.

Learning from each other, more one-to-one. You're actually getting it from people on the ground who are applying that training to the on-ground, and you get feedback from them whether it's working or whether it's not working. Because you are talking to the person one-on-one. Chris Muriata, Girringun Rangers.

We've been sharing information, yarning face-to-face around the campfire. It's easy to soak in...learning how we can network with different communities. Anna Dwyer, Karajarri Ranger.

There is now more exchange across northern Australia with the rangers attending from across the north. Rex Edmunds, Kenbi Ranger.



Laurissa Mundraby, Mandingalbay Yidinji Ranger.

What works and why in policy, program design and on-ground actions. Using both Indigenous and scientific knowledge is critical

Most groups are on the delivery end of things, from that we've learned and now we want to be able to design programs. You need to merge both Indigenous knowledge and Western science. We'd love it [coming into science centres] because we see things from that science perspective, and then we can bring in our indigenous knowledge of that - our perspective and weave it together in a way. Harry Ludwick, Hopevale Congress Ranger.

Learning about the research and management partnerships that other ranger groups have and getting ideas about developing new partnerships ourselves. Zynal Cox, Nyul Nyul Rangers.



Women Rangers shared many publications bringing together their Indigenous and scientific knowledge of plants.

Participants identified numerous topics where their informal exchanges had increased their knowledge:

- Control of common weeds that are found right across the north
- How to raise funds for Ranger projects and programs
- How to prioritise spending of funds
- Using zoning and compliance activities to control threats
- Managing soil erosion, particularly on roads and tracks

- Managing vegetation, in particular culturally and ecologically important species
- Response to sugar bag declines are happening in lots of place
- Response to declines of fruit pigeons and flying foxes
- Putting a moratorium on netting in some coastal areas to control over-fishing
- Hatching, feeding and selling crocodiles
- Running ecotourism businesses
- Managing visitors through a permit and pay system
- Developing and selling bush products
- Gun licences
- Managing crocodiles and buffaloes
- How to establish an ongoing Indigenous land and sea management alliance.

The sheer fact that there's so many different groups here, and that we can all interact in a less formal sort of thing, round a camp fire, or just passing by and just talking to other groups, I found real beneficial. Jason Richardson Yawuru Joint Management Ranger.

5. Effective training

Formal training in a very applied practical manner works well

Realistic training with first aid, the hands-on stuff, building, fixing machinery. Gives us an opportunity to try stuff, gives us satisfaction. Harry Ludwick, Hopevale Congress Ranger.

The First Aid was really useful. It was fun and good – we felt the pressure, we had limited time to act before the patient lost consciousness and we were on our own trying to figure out what was wrong with them. Daniel Carrington, Gooniyandi Ranger.

Changing the bearings on, all hands-on, and I loved it. Cissy Gore-Birch.



Chris Muriata, Girringun Ranger, learning new knots.

6. Suggestions for improvement

Some interviewees commented that the training sessions needed to be smaller:

50 people at each of the workshops stops people from participating and engaging. At the smaller scale, people are really forced to get involved and get their hands dirty. Whereas the bigger scale, there's an opportunity to just sit back and not engage.

Training was good and bad. 50 people in a workshop is too many. Short exposure. Some stuff we've already covered in our qualifications. Biosecurity – we had already covered in the training. Training would be improved in smaller groups, bit more interaction. Don't go right through from start to finish.

Jason Richardson, Yawuru Ranger, suggested building on the strengths of peer-to-peer learning in the formal training sessions:

One suggestion is to ask the Ranger groups to run some of the training. Learning off other Indigenous people. People will see if these groups can do it, then they can.

Many comments were made about improving the interaction between the Rangers and their partners and potential partners who attended the Forum:

What would have been great is for the corporate people to be more engaged ... It's kind of segregated. The corporates are over there and all the rangers are over here. These guys need to be more engaged with what's actually happening on the ground, working with the people at that level to be able to understand how to make a difference at that higher level of discussion. Indigenous participant.

It felt very wrong being one area just for guests. There was lots of fun in the Ranger camp, music at night, evening campfires where some of the key conversations happen. That's good. But the Rangers felt left out from all the high-flying corporates, there was a sense of unease around that. Non-Indigenous participant.

Several people suggested that the “Ranger Expo” would have been better at the beginning, rather than the end, of the Forum, to promote earlier engagement of the visitors with the Rangers.

6.1 Different training needs

Interviewees identified a number of different training opportunities they would like to have:

- Learning how to fly a drone and use it to monitor and map fire movement, weeds, impact of fires on native plants.
- Building a ‘bush medicine pharmacy’ – making balms and bush medicines, as well as seed collecting.
- Monitoring via marine transects – to monitor for dolphins, whales etc.
- Training in snake handling and other animal handling, possibly crocodiles.

7. Kimberley Ranger Forum activities

7.1 Ranger activities

The 250 Rangers at the Forum were divided into five groups of about 50 each and rotated through five different activities.



The biosecurity tent involved trainers showing pictures, samples and explaining to Rangers the steps they needed to take.



Biosecurity workshop, photo Kimberley Land Council.

Other workshops involved hands-on work like building of picnic table and chairs.



Build'Em workshop, photo Kimberley Land Council.

Practical activities on the beach were popular.



Rangers also held special workshops, including a Women Rangers discussion.

Bardi Jawi Rangers greatly enjoyed the tours of their Monsoon Vine Thicket country and explaining their ecological and cultural importance. Many children enjoyed being present on Bardi Jawi country.



Fishing in Pender Bay, photo Kimberley Land Council.

7.2 Ranger Expo

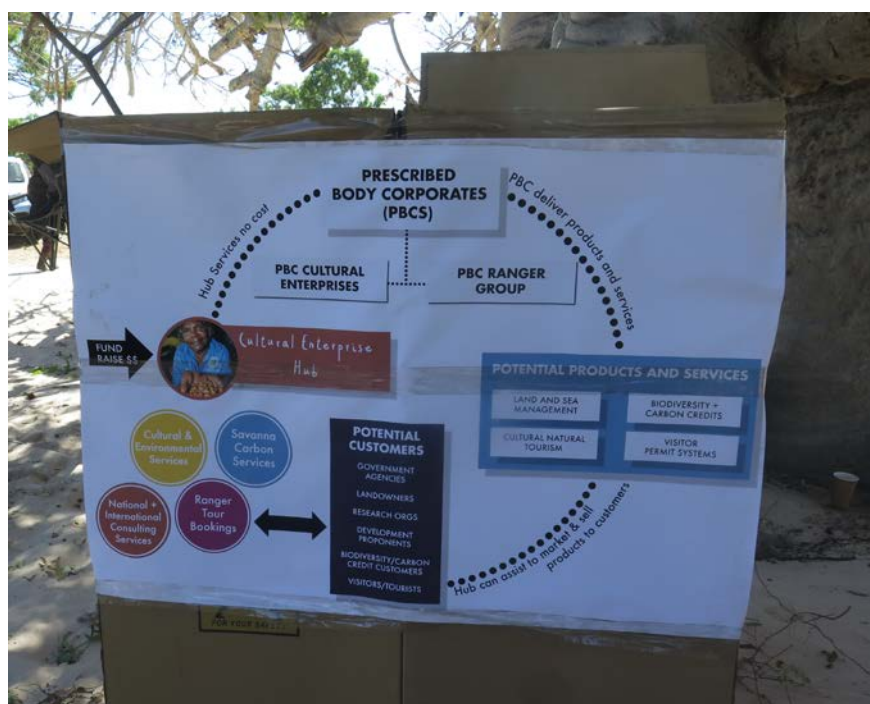
The Ranger Expo on the last afternoon of the Forum proved to be the “bigger than Ben Hur” event that was advertised! Many exciting activities were on display and the partners who attended found it interesting, useful and helpful.



Naum Wungthim poster showing ceremony group, language group, family group and totems from people in their community.

7.3 Partners' activities

Partners who attended the Forum participated in different “learning pathways”. Opportunities were provided for cultural exchanges, and to consider issues of importance to Indigenous land managers. The Kimberley Land Council particularly invited partners to consider ways to strengthen their Cultural Enterprises Hub in order to provide a secure economic footing for Rangers and their work going forward.



Cultural enterprise hub concept diagram.

7.3.1 Key ideas from the partner workshops

Carbon economy

- Working in an increasingly competitive market but opportunities to scale-up the carbon-related work in the Kimberley.
- Bio-sequestration opportunities are on the horizon and an insurance-type scheme against wild-fire might be another opportunity.
- Marketing could be improved; ‘savanna burning’ focus is misunderstood; need to change the focus to ‘wildfire prevention’.
- The cost of annual burning operations is the major impediment.



Guest discussions during the learning journeys.

Science, technology and innovation

- Promoting Cultural Awareness Training for scientists as a serious business opportunity and new model for engagement that puts Traditional Owners more centrally.

Governance and leadership:

- Finding a blended Indigenous and western governance model for the Cultural Enterprises Hub would allow it to step up to the next level.
- Issue of transparency, legitimacy, accountability, and capability, for leaders to step up.
- Ranger network provides a model, could be the basis for leveraging up

Indigenous tourism

- Opportunities and a lot of demand for an authentic family and Ranger product
- Pilot tour as “tag along” with Rangers proved successful and people are keen to continue work
- Needs investment to start-up and build.

Conservation finance models

- A lot of effort in analysing cost-benefit for Rangers but the economic opportunities being promoted with government investment (e.g. irrigated agriculture) do not have these analyses
- Focus instead on the story and the opportunity
- Key challenge is telling a powerful story about what is going on and the benefits delivered
- Recognise that cost-benefit can underpin accountability (vs attracting investment).

Indigenous land enterprise opportunities

- Many opportunities in tourism, savannah burning, bush foods
- Importance of things being led from the bottom-up
- But bottom-up leads to loss of economies of scale, lots of micro-enterprises
- Access to capital, expertise, business, skills, ensuring there is a market
- Local champion is important
- Native title and tenure issues but can be overcome (e.g. savanna burning)
- Political and corporate lobbying is essential to getting those business settings right.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Key need and opportunity for Aboriginal people to create their own monitoring and evaluation
- TOs really driving and identifying for them what is important
- Case studies can highlight key aspects, including the power of the personal journey
- Linked with IUCN, sustainable development goals
- Need a social lab get-together to generate and test ideas.



Guest discussions during the learning journeys.

Women's bush products

- Lots of opportunities – 15 priority foods but 6,500 potential across the Kimberley
- Challenged by poor underlying funding for women to participate properly
- Need research and development for the products, food standards, other standards
- Uncertainties around IP ownership and tracking
- Opportunities around leveraging local and traditional knowledge to the premium foods market.

Partnerships to support the Cultural Enterprises Hub

- Phasing of the partnerships is recommended
 - Phase 1 – partners who are comfortable in the messy space of sorting out and building the Hub
 - Phase 2 – partners involved in delivery of products
- Hub could benefit from greater clarity around its purpose e.g Centre of Excellence with a certain business model vs broader inclusive community/social development
- Absolute need for it to be driven by TOs.

8. Survey results

After the Forum, the Kimberley Land Council sent an online-survey that asked respondents to rate statements according to the following scale: “Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree.”

The following statements were rated by 30 respondents to the survey:

1. It was important to me that the forum was held on country as opposed to in a town setting.
2. The workshops were relevant to my work and worth taking a week out of my normal work program to be part of.
3. The group hosting arrangement helped me build relationships and feel part of a large ranger network.
4. I gained practical knowledge and skills through the Department of Agricultural and Water Resources workshops.
5. I gained a greater understanding of the importance of biosecurity and my role in it through the Department of Agricultural and Water Resources workshops.
6. Through coming together as rangers, we learnt from each other and inspired each other.
7. There was enough space in the program for rangers to come together to share stories, program successes and to build relationships/networks.
8. The purpose of the guest program was clear to me.
9. I enjoyed talking with the external guests and liked it when they participated in the ranger activities.
10. I would have liked the opportunity to engage more with the external guests.
11. The program was well balanced with a good mix of workshops, ranger presentations, evening entertainment, down time, on country experiences and time for networking.
12. I learnt new skills or gained confidence in a task/activity that will help me in my job as a ranger.
13. I made special connections with rangers/groups that I hope to continue/build through future exchanges.

The results of the survey (Figure 1) showed that rangers rated question 6 most positively of all. This result reflects the findings of the interviews that the opportunity to come together, and learn from each other, is the greatest strength of the Forum. The arrangements whereby the KLC partnered each of the visiting Ranger groups with a Ranger group from the Kimberley Forum was also an overwhelming success. Rangers strongly signalled their intention to continue building the relationships they have developed in their responses to statement 13.

The respondents to the survey also welcomed opportunities to engage more strongly with the visitors.

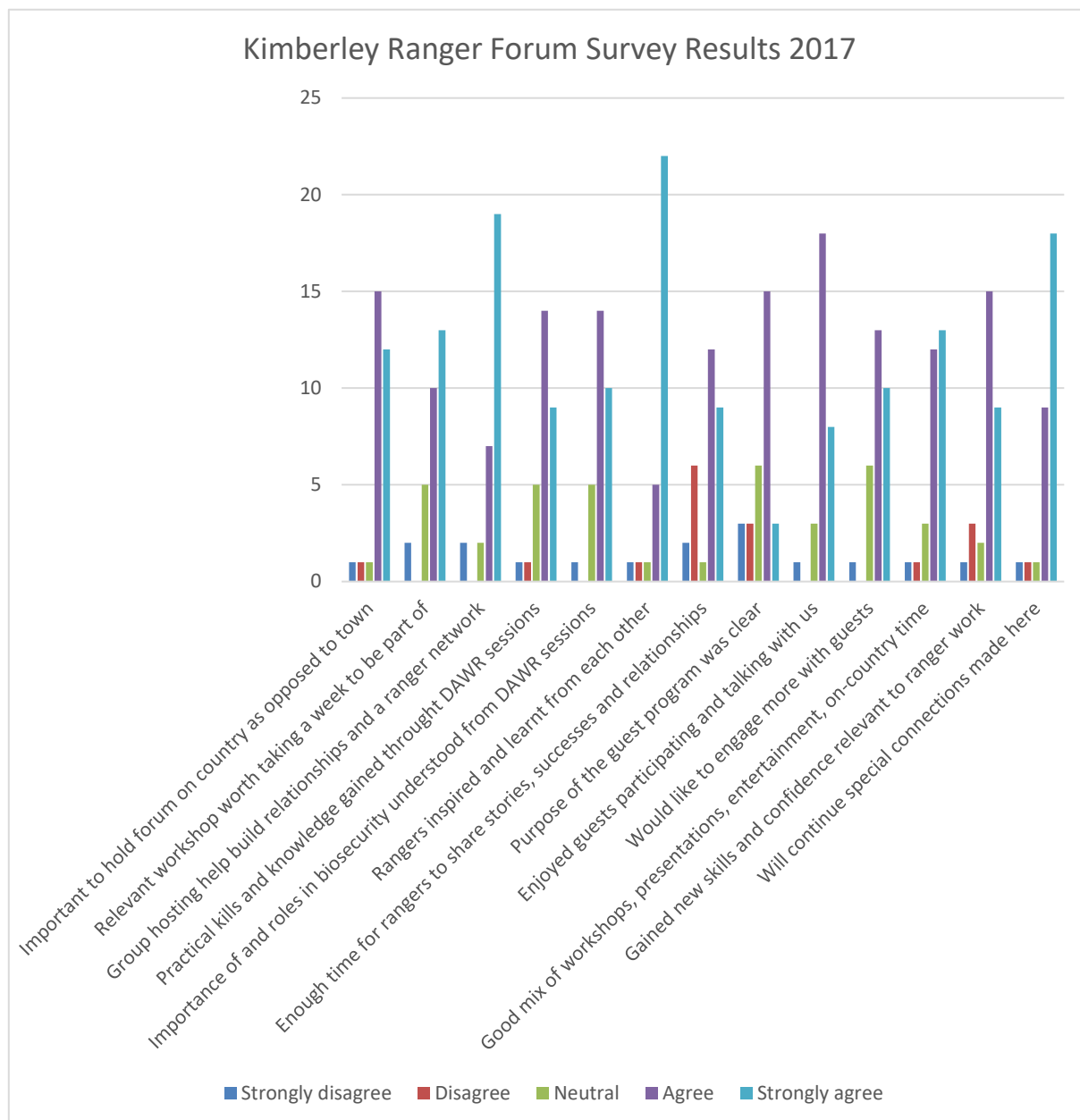


Figure 1. Kimberley Ranger Forum survey results.

9. Some comments that sum it all up!

Coming to these forums and gatherings inspires me to keep going. Being the only female ranger in my ranger group (from Queensland), I come to the ranger forum and see passion and drive, commitment from everyone. People see you there and feed back to your ranger that you are doing a good job. Larissa Mundraby, Madingalbay Yidinji Ranger.

Good meeting other people from Queensland, the Northern Territory and other ranger groups. Meeting all the TOs and making friends with people around here. Feel comfortable being here. Haven't been shamed talking with people like you. Lots of support from the rangers. Daniel Carrington, Gooniyandi Ranger.

I love hearing the ideas and different perspectives from different people and the way they work on country. Cissy Gore-Birch.

Informal yarning is the most valuable. Jason Richardson, Yawuru Ranger.

Good that we have forums like this, we have to be strong, transferring it over to other Rangers, bringing stories. Coming together we have one voice. Bardi Jawi Oorany Rangers

We've developed real relationships and real friendships (with the other rangers here) Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers.

Opportunities for networking and meeting people...over the years I have met other rangers through these networking opportunities and now I'm meeting up with friends, catching up. Zynal Cox, Nyul Nyul Ranger.



Evenings at the Forum, photo Kimberley Land Council.

Appendix 1: Guest program

Tuesday	
12:30-2:00pm	Lunch in the main tent
2:00-5:00pm	Guest registration and camp set up including putting up tents
5:00pm	Guest program welcome and introduction
6:30pm	Formal welcome and dinner
8:30pm	Fireside chat with learning journey teams
Wednesday	
6:30-7:30am	Breakfast in the guest camp area
7:30am-10:30am	Group Learning Journeys
11:00am	Women's ranger and guest gathering Learning journey reflections
12:30-1:30pm	Lunch in the guest camp area - Address from Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion
1:30-4:30pm	Workshop sessions Discussion topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Savanna burning carbon projects 2. Monitoring and evaluating social, cultural and environmental benefits 3. Building ranger experiences and tourism ventures 4. Science, technology and entrepreneurship 5. Setting up successful Indigenous Owned Enterprises 6. Multi-stakeholder Partnerships 7. Women ranger bush projects 8. Community leadership and governance 9. Cultural conservation financing models 10. Open topics to be decided
6:00-9:00pm	Dinner in the main tent and band night

Thursday

6:30-7:30am	Breakfast in the guest camp area
7:30am-10.30am	Group Workshops Wednesday debrief Challenge and opportunity discussion Group reflection and wrap-up
11:00am-1pm	Ranger Group Presentations (in the main tent)
1-2pm	Lunch in the guest camp area
2-4pm	Northern Australia Ranger Expo This bigger than Ben-Hur Expo event will transform the forum site into a bustling marketplace where rangers showcase their wares, skills, successes and future projects. For guests it's an opportunity to talk with rangers, learn about their work and hear more about their innovative projects, skills and expertise.
6:00-9:00pm	Dinner and open mic night



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