

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE —
ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND NATURAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

506. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Environment:

Can the minister please update the house on which programs the Department of Parks and Wildlife has in place to support Aboriginal employment and joint management initiatives in managing our natural assets?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for this question.

Many members of this chamber may not realise that the Department of Parks and Wildlife is working with more than 21 traditional owner groups across the state of Western Australia in conservation and land management. Our work includes promoting employment and training opportunities with these traditional owner groups and seeking the best possible outcome that we can get for caring for country out in these places. Only a few days ago, the chairman of one of these groups raised a good example with me. He said the programs bring together their cultural and traditional knowledge, which is then partnered with the scientific knowledge that the department can offer, to manage this land. The department also provides training to their young people, which partners the scientific knowledge with the cultural knowledge that has been passed on to them. One of the first groups to join this program was the Miriung-Gajerrong people. Currently, 10 Aboriginal rangers operate out of Kununurra. As at 1 July 2013, 63 Aboriginal staff work in the Department of Parks and Wildlife on conservation and land management outcomes across Western Australia. This includes 13 trainees currently completing either a certificate II, III or IV in conservation and land management, as well as a number of school-based trainees across the state. This program picks up young people as they go through their last years in school. I had the opportunity to meet a couple of the Miriung-Gajerrong school-based trainees. This program provides a fantastic opportunity for people in remote and rural areas to pursue careers.

In the past decade, 86 trainees have graduated and found gainful employment, some within the department. Some have pursued careers as park rangers with the now Department of Parks and Wildlife, some have taken the skills they have picked up into the resource industry or in other employment, and some have even started their own enterprises. I met a fantastic young woman at Fitzroy Crossing. She works part time with the department and is using her skills to start some enterprises on the side. The department's wildlife ranger program partners with the Yawuru people in Broome, the Bunuba people in Fitzroy Crossing and the Murujuga people in the Burrup Peninsular. This program can be pursued either through joint vesting, joint management or cooperative management. The Martu people in the Gibson Desert are a good example of cooperative management. They help with the Lorna Glen project, which I have previously addressed in this place. Other good examples can be found in places such as the Pilbara and the Western Desert, where Aboriginal rangers employed by the department provide a lot of good-quality advice based on their cultural knowledge in fire management—an area in which the member for Girrawheen has a lot of interest. This is knowledge the department did not have previously. In addition, these rangers work on feral animal control and other conservation projects. In only a few months I have met with the Miriung-Gajerrong rangers —

The SPEAKER: Can you wind it up, please.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, Mr Speaker.

I have met with Bunuba, Yawuru and Martu rangers.

Several opposition members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will finish, Mr Speaker. As the government rolls out its conservation and biodiversity policy, members will see a number of commitments on terrestrial and marine parks, many of which contain native title areas. It will be clear as we roll out those commitments that we will continue to expand these partnerships with traditional owner groups across the state. This is a really good news story within the department.