

**ABORIGINAL RANGER PROGRAM**

**The SPEAKER:** Just before I give the member for Murray–Wellington the call, I would like to welcome baby William Scaife on his first visit to question time.

[Applause.]

**510. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to create employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house how this government's Aboriginal ranger program is delivering positive outcomes in communities across the state?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this program is helping to develop Aboriginal organisations to manage country and protect the state's vast environment?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:**

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would also like to acknowledge and greet the arrival of baby Bill! Is it baby Bill?

Well done! I thank the member for the question. It is a very important question because often I think some of the things that governments achieve over time get overlooked. This is a significant legacy that began under our former Premier and has been continued under our new Premier. The delivery of the WA Aboriginal ranger program is significant. It is a proud legacy of this government, and is changing lives and communities.

- (1)–(2) It is delivering better outcomes for our environment and creating jobs, training and community development opportunities, with the ultimate goal of empowering Aboriginal people in communities across the state. We are actually doing real, tangible things that make a difference to Western Australian lives and benefit Aboriginal people, giving them new opportunities.

Since 2017, the program has funded 32 different ranger groups, underpinned by an investment from this government of \$83 million—a significant amount. Last week, I announced the opening application for round seven of the program, which is making \$13 million available under a new grant stream of the program known as the development fund. It is about targeting groups with aspirations to start a ranger program or that are in the early stages of operating one. Round seven grants include grants of up to \$150 000 for planning and development and larger grants of more than \$150 000 for ranger operations. I encourage Aboriginal organisations throughout the state to apply for funding to help new and emerging groups continue to make our community stronger.

The success of the Aboriginal ranger program is overwhelming. Since its establishment, over 650 on-country jobs have been created, of which nearly half are held by women! The groups funded through the program are building knowledge and skills in conservation and land management, Aboriginal site management and tourism on country.

A 2022 evaluation into the social outcomes of the program found that the program had resulted in increases in self-confidence, pride, gender equality and improved mental and physical health. The return on this investment is far larger than the money we are putting into it. Indeed, research shows that for every dollar invested, the Aboriginal ranger program creates approximately \$3 million worth of—sorry, it probably could be \$3 million, Madam Speaker! I will be a bit more realistic. The research showed that for every dollar spent, \$3 worth of social, economic, cultural and environmental value was created. This is a critically important program. It is delivering jobs and opportunities to people who often do not get those opportunities. It is changing lives. I thank the member very much for the question.