



## Media Release

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### **Santos partners with Lake Eyre Basin Traditional Owners to care for country**

Santos and its Cooper Basin joint venture partners will invest up to A\$12 million over five years in partnership with Traditional Owners on a ranger program that will help them better care for their Country, create employment pathways and protect the environment.

As part of the new deal, the Cooper Basin joint venture (JV) will partner with five Traditional Owner groups in southwest Queensland and northeast South Australia, including the Wongkumara, Kullilli and Boonthamurra. These three Traditional Owner groups have a registered claim or determined native title over more than 95 per cent of Country where the Cooper Basin JV operates in southwest Queensland (see attached map).

Santos CEO and Managing Director, Kevin Gallagher, said Santos had worked in the Cooper Basin in southwest Queensland and northeast South Australia for more than 60 years and had developed long-standing relationships with Traditional Owners.

Mr Gallagher said, “We respect and honour the rights of these Traditional Owners to speak for themselves and for their Country. We value the agreements we have in place with them that enable our operations to be carried out in a way that protects and conserves their cultural heritage, and that provide a range of social, cultural and economic benefits to the rightful Traditional Owners.”

Wongkumara Traditional Owner, Hope Ebsworth, said, “We control our culture and Santos is helping us protect our land, and that’s what I want. It is important that as Traditional Owners, we speak for and make decisions about our own Country.

“Working with Santos, I got stuff done that I would never even dream of getting done, like fencing and protecting our sites. I am so proud because I’m protecting everything I can and that’s my life and Santos plays a big part in that.”

Kullilli Traditional Owner, Cassy Stevens, said, “Our people have recently acquired the pastoral lease to the iconic Thargomindah Station which means we, the Kullilli people, can finally go home to the banks of the Bulloo River after more than a century of dispossession.

“This ranger program will help us to implement our traditional knowledge alongside innovative land management and sustainable agricultural practices to regenerate native forest and heal Country,” Ms Stevens said.

Mr Gallagher said, “We are committed to looking at new ways of working so that Aboriginal communities share in the benefits of our projects.

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“In southwest Queensland, we’re passionate about working with Traditional Owners to continue to protect the natural and cultural values of the Cooper Basin which is part of the broader Lake Eyre Basin.

“The recognition of the Lake Eyre Basin as pristine river systems after more than 60 years of resources development is testimony to the environmental sustainability of our activities. We are committed to working in this very special place in a way that continues to protect cultural connection and heritage, water resources and the environment, for generations to come.

“This ranger program will allow for Traditional Wongkumara, Kullilli and Boonthamurra Owners to further care for and connect with their Country, including through the management of feral animals and weeds, soil conservation and biodiversity monitoring programs.

“It will build on the work Santos does each year that includes undertaking up to 200 cultural heritage assessments, employing and working with 100 cultural heritage officers and investing more than A\$1 million in the management of cultural heritage across the Basin.

“The Santos Indigenous Advisory Panel is providing a voice for Traditional Owners in the places where we operate and we are listening and learning about the importance of helping Aboriginal people reconnect and strengthen bonds with their Country.

“The importance for young people of connection to Country and opportunities for employment pathways is a common theme – and it is an area where Santos and the Cooper Basin JV can make a real difference.”

Santos will work with the Traditional Owner groups to finalise details of the ranger program, which is expected to launch in 2024.

The program will complement the existing Lake Eyre Basin Rangers who are based out of Longreach and Mount Isa, and whose Country is north of the Cooper Basin JV operations and the Country of the Wongkumara, Kullilli and Boonthamurra people.

