

Media Release

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First Cooper rangers ready for work

A first-of-its-kind program that will see Cooper Basin Traditional Owners manage their Country has reached a significant milestone, with the first wave of recruits now fully trained and on the ground.

Santos and Beach Energy are investing up to A\$12 million in a program over five years that will see more than 15 indigenous rangers care for more than 130,000 km² of land that spans the top of South Australia and into Queensland's southwest.

Santos Chief Operating Officer Australia and PNG Upstream Oil and Gas, Brett Darley, said the partnership with five Traditional Owner groups will enhance environmental protection of the area and help conserve cultural heritage.

"We've been working in the Cooper Basin for more than 70 years and have a deep respect for the Boonthamurra, Dieri, Kullilli, Wongkumara and Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka groups," Mr Darley said.

"We acknowledge their rich and diverse histories and want to help them strengthen their connection to country," he said.

"Our investment is creating local employment pathways for all five Traditional Owner groups in the Cooper Basin. Purposeful work can make a real difference, with potential flow-on effects that can span generations," he said.

Beach Energy First Nations Engagement Manager Candice Nayda said, "The program provides a valuable opportunity for young Indigenous people to connect with their culture while protecting the environmental heritage of lands their Elders have walked for tens of thousands of years."

The rangers were trained at Camooweal Ranger Camp on Indjalandji-Dhidhanu Country, near Mt Isa.

Chair of the Cooper Basin Ranger Support Services Company, Ron Saltner (Kullilli), said recruits learned about soil conservation, biodiversity monitoring programs and how to manage feral animals and weeds.

"This partnership marks a significant step in building stronger relationships, mutual respect and reconnecting with our Country to preserve it for future generations," Mr Saltner said.

"Through ongoing engagement and collaboration, the ranger program will protect the environment and cultural heritage of the world's oldest continuous living culture, while creating meaningful employment for our people.

"We are proud of our commitment to this historic partnership to safeguard our land for generations to come," he said.

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Media enquiries

Samantha Hutchinson
+61 (0) 425 317 171
Samantha.Hutchinson@santos.com

Investor enquiries

Lucia Walsh
+61 8 8116 7348 | +61 (0) 432 872 151
Lucia.Walsh@santos.com

Santos Limited

ABN 80 007 550 923
GPO Box 2455, Adelaide SA 5001
T +61 8 8116 5000 | F +61 8 8116 5131
santos.com