



# Junior Ranger Coordinators Workshop proceedings

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Queensland  
Government

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Department of the Environment, Tourism Science and Innovation.

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# Table of contents

Table of contents .....	3
Purpose .....	4
Participants .....	4
Objectives.....	4
Workshop insights .....	5
Overview .....	6
Partner-led sessions .....	6
Ranger group showcase .....	8
Green Island with TropWATER – James Cook University.....	14
Key outcomes .....	15
Participant feedback.....	16
Lessons learned .....	16
Next Steps .....	16
Reflections from participants.....	17
Key facilitators and partners .....	17
Section or chapter title page.....	19

## Purpose

The Junior Ranger Coordinators Workshop brought together Coordinators from across Queensland for the first statewide in-person event of its kind. Its purpose was to strengthen coordination across the Junior Ranger space, build connections between Coordinators and partners, and co-develop supports that empower Coordinators to engage young people in cultural and environmental stewardship.

## Participants

- 48 Junior Ranger Coordinators from 25 Indigenous Ranger Groups, including Queensland Parks & Wildlife Services (QPWS) joint management and National Indigenous Australian's Agency (NIAA) - supported groups.
- 60 total participants including rangers, Elders, cultural leaders and program partners.
- Supported by 18 partner organisations from government, research, education and conservation sectors.

## Objectives

- Strengthen relationships.
- Share practical tools and ideas for youth engagement.
- Showcase Junior Ranger activities and successes.
- Build collective knowledge about youth pathways and leadership.
- Co-design long-term support strategies and professional development mechanisms.

# Workshop insights



Participants at the Junior Ranger Coordinators Workshop, Cairns 2025. Photo Bridget Ferguson 2025

Over three days, Junior Ranger Coordinators came together for hands-on learning, cultural exchange and practical program development. The workshop combined interactive sessions, on Country experiences and reflection on the role of Junior Ranger programs in empowering youth and protecting Country.

## Key highlights



Minjil delivering the Welcome to Country and opening the workshop in Gimuy (Cairns)



Junior Ranger Coordinators, Elders and partners gathering at the opening of the workshop

- Minjil Welcome to Country and opening remarks

- Interactive workshops led by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Tribe Academy, Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and APN Cape York Rangers
- On-Country field trip to Green Island with James Cook University (JCU) TropWATER
- Breakout sessions focused on practical youth engagement
- Networking, yarning circles and partner collaboration
- Junior Ranger showcases by nine ranger groups
- Collaborative planning for future Junior Ranger initiatives

## Overview

### How the workshop was delivered

- Presentations by partners and ranger teams
- Facilitated workshops and breakout sessions
- Cultural panels and storytelling
- Youth engagement strategy sessions
- On Country field trip
- Networking and reflection sessions

### Agenda highlights

- Welcome and Elder panel
- Engaging with young people – CSIRO
- Empowering young Indigenous leaders – Tribe Academy
- Digital storytelling – WTMA
- Challenges and barriers – APN Cape York Rangers
- Junior Ranger showcases (nine groups)
- Green Island field trip with TropWATER - JCU
- Reflection circle and feedback session

## Partner-led sessions

### Engaging with young people - CSIRO STEM Education and Outreach

CSIRO delivered a two-part workshop exploring inclusive language, growth mindsets and strength-based learning. Participants discussed mentoring, age-appropriate activities and practical classroom resources. Rangers also discussed challenges in working with schools, funding, and logistics.



Steve Danczak and Sarah McDonnell delivering the CSIRO youth engagement workshop



Shennae Neal and Matt Cheetham from Tribe Academy

## Empowering young Indigenous leaders - Tribe Academy

Tribe Academy delivered interactive sessions focused on team building and leadership. The workshops encouraged communication, confidence, and collaboration through activities that fostered leadership and self-awareness. Tribe's energetic, holistic approach inspired participants to reflect on how to empower young people within their communities.

## Digital storytelling- WTMA

Aaron Smith from WTMA presented on using digital storytelling to engage audiences on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. He highlighted that authentic, less-edited content performs best because it feels natural and real. Rangers were encouraged to share genuine stories from Country to strengthen cultural and community connections.



Aaron Smith from WTMA delivering the digital storytelling workshop



APN Cape York Rangers leading the 'Challenges and barriers for Junior Ranger Programs' workshop

## Challenges and barriers for Junior Ranger programs - APN Cape York Rangers

APN Rangers facilitated an open discussion about challenges faced by Junior Ranger programs. Key themes included Department of Education processes, school engagement, funding limitations, and logistics in remote delivery. Participants identified opportunities for stronger collaboration, more flexible models, and better access to resources.

## Ranger group showcase

### Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji (GMY) Rangers

GMY Rangers, led by Stirling Ludwick, have built strong partnerships with schools and community organisations to deliver both on Country and in-school Junior Ranger activities. The program collects data linked to *Closing the Gap* priorities and has achieved major improvements in school attendance and engagement.



GMV Rangers – Stirling Ludwick and Dion Sands presenting during the Junior Ranger Coordinators Workshop

## Jabalbina Rangers

Led by Kim and Carina, the Jabalbina Junior Ranger Program supports young Eastern Kuku Yalanji people to learn and care for Country through cultural and land management activities. The program is deeply grounded in culture, taking Junior Rangers out on Country to learn traditional hunting and gathering, hear stories and language from Elders, and understand their responsibilities to Bubu. Junior Rangers also take part in community cultural events, strengthening their identity, leadership skills, and connection to culture, community and Country.



Jabalbina Rangers – Kim Missionary and Carina Denman presenting the Jabalbina Junior Ranger Program

## Yuwi Rangers

Bayou Diamond and the Yuwi Rangers have built a growing Junior Ranger Program supported by NIAA. Their work includes incursions, excursions, book-writing projects, and a mobile classroom bringing cultural and environmental learning to schools. The team collaborates with Earthwatch and Jock McKenzie to co-design lessons aligned with the Australian Curriculum, linking science and culture through hands-on

learning. Yuwi’s program is emerging as a model for storytelling, digital learning, and school partnerships that strengthen youth connection to Country.



Bayou Diamond and Yuwi Rangers delivering hands-on cultural and environmental learning with local schools

## Mandubarra Rangers

Led by Melissa Ball and Roh Sultan, the Mandubarra Junior Ranger Program focuses on connection to Country, on Country learning, the passing of knowledge from Elders to younger generations, and fostering a sense of responsibility for the environment. The program provides hands-on experiences that allows our kids to engage with traditional practices, learn about native flora and fauna, and understand the importance of preserving cultural heritage and natural ecosystems.



Mandubarra Rangers Melissa Ball and Roh Sultan teaching cultural knowledge and environmental stewardship through on Country learning

## Mamu Rangers

Led by Matt Gillis and Shai Ivey, the Mamu Land and Sea Rangers shared their school partnerships and plans to develop an educational package for the region, highlighting their long-running Project Gungamburr with Innisfail State College. The project engages disengaged students in practical activities such as running a native plant nursery, seed collecting, and revegetation, and connects them with Cassowary Coast Regional Council and Terrain NRM through a local Carbon Offset Project that now serves as an outdoor learning site. This work is creating meaningful pathways for young people into the growing nature repair and restoration sector.



*Mamu Ranger Shai Ivey presenting the Junior Ranger Program and Project Gungamburr*

## Lama Lama Rangers

Elaine and Alison Liddy coordinate the long-standing Lama Lama Junior Ranger Program, drawing on deep cultural and historical knowledge. Through on Country camps and school partnerships, they share stories, language, and environmental knowledge that strengthen cultural identity and intergenerational learning.



Lama Lama Rangers Elaine and Alison Liddy presenting their long-standing Junior Ranger Program

## Girringun Rangers

Led by Jordon Mooka, Girringun Rangers have developed a suite of Junior Ranger lessons that blend language, culture, and environmental science. Jordon works with multiple language and family groups to embed traditional knowledge and bring communities together through education and cultural sharing.



Girringun Ranger Jordon Mooka presenting their Junior Ranger Program

# Yirrganydji Rangers

Yirrganydji Rangers, led by Melanie Mitchell, run annual camps and activities linking Junior Ranger learning with the Australian Curriculum. Their program connects ranger work with classroom outcomes, offering students cultural education and environmental stewardship experiences that support school priorities.



Yirrganydji Ranger Melanie Mitchell presenting their Junior Ranger Program

# APN Cape York Rangers

Veera Koometa and EJ Mathieson lead the APN Junior Ranger Program, focusing on language, culture, and community connection in the Wik region. Their work continues strong cultural traditions while giving young people opportunities to learn from Elders and stay connected to Country through meaningful, hands-on activities.



APN Ranger Veera Koometa presenting the Junior Ranger Program

# Green Island with TropWATER – James Cook University



Grounded on Country during the Green Island field trip.  
Photo Bridget Ferguson



Junior Ranger Coordinators during the Green Island field trip with TropWATER - JCU. Photo Bridget Ferguson

## Overview

The on Country field trip to Green Island provided a hands-on marine learning experience led by TropWATER – JCU. Participants explored seagrass ecosystems and learned practical monitoring techniques relevant to Junior Ranger programs.

## Key learning activities

- Seagrass identification and habitat observation
- Quadrat sampling and density measurement
- Mapping and data recording exercises
- Discussion on the cultural and ecological importance of seagrass meadows.



Abbi preparing to demonstrate quadrat sampling



Abbi guiding Coordinators through seagrass identification using ID charts

## Highlights

- Reinforced how science and culture connect in marine education
- Strengthened partnership with TropWATER -JCU
- Inspired ideas for incorporating marine monitoring into Junior Ranger activities.

## Key outcomes

### Program development and coordination

- Establish Regional Junior Ranger Advisory Committees
- Strengthen statewide collaboration
- Prioritise youth inclusion and co-design.

### Resources and learning tools

- Share templates and materials through Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger (QILSRP) SharePoint
- Develop new digital and print resources for Junior Ranger activities.

### Partnerships and professional development

- Deliver online professional development with CSIRO
- Expand collaboration with education, research and cultural partners.

### Cultural and educational practice

- Continue storytelling and youth-led learning
- Maintain on Country delivery and Elder involvement.

## Participant feedback

### What participants valued most

- Connection and collaboration across ranger groups
- Sharing youth engagement strategies
- Hands-on and culturally grounded learning.

### Suggestions for next time

- More informal networking and yarning opportunities
- More cultural-led workshops and school engagement sessions.

## Lessons learned

### What worked well

- Balanced sessions with flexibility
- Strong partner engagement
- Inclusion of Elders and on Country learning.

### What could be improved

- More networking time
- Clearer transitions and signage.

## Next Steps

### Resources

Share workshop materials, slides and templates statewide via QILSR SharePoint.

### Partnerships

Strengthen collaboration between ranger groups and partners through follow-up meetings and regional initiatives.

### Professional development

Deliver online workshops with CSIRO and partners focused on youth engagement, storytelling and curriculum-aligned learning.

## Youth engagement

Develop a youth-focused Junior Ranger workshop and continue regional gatherings to support peer learning.

## Governance

Continue strengthening and formalising the Junior Ranger Advisory Committee's role in statewide direction and professional development.

## Reflections from participants

'Great work – very important work.'

'Fantastic opportunity to connect with others in the Junior Ranger space.'

'Really enjoyed this week's workshop.'

'Keep doing what you're doing for our mob and our youth.'

'It was a fantastic opportunity to reconnect and build relationships.'

'I would be available to attend any future workshops.'

## Key facilitators and partners

### Government and research partners

- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
- Great Barrier Reef and Marine Parks – Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services and Partnerships
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
- Department of Primary Industries (DPI, Queensland)
- Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET)
- TropWATER – James Cook University (JCU)
- Youth Justice

### Community, education and conservation partners

- Tribe Academy
- APN Cape York Rangers
- Young Indigenous Women's STEM Academy
- Earthwatch
- Sharks and Rays Australia (SARA)

- North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)
- Tangaroa Blue
- Coral Watch
- INLOC

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