

Aboriginal Ranger Mining Rehabilitation Program

The Nationals WA are seeking input to develop a policy on utilising the Mining Rehabilitation Fund to assist in the employment of Aboriginal Rangers

Summary

In Western Australia there is an estimated 11,000 abandoned mine sites and almost 200,000 abandoned mine features (open pits, underground shafts, shallow workings or waste dumps) dotted across the landscape.

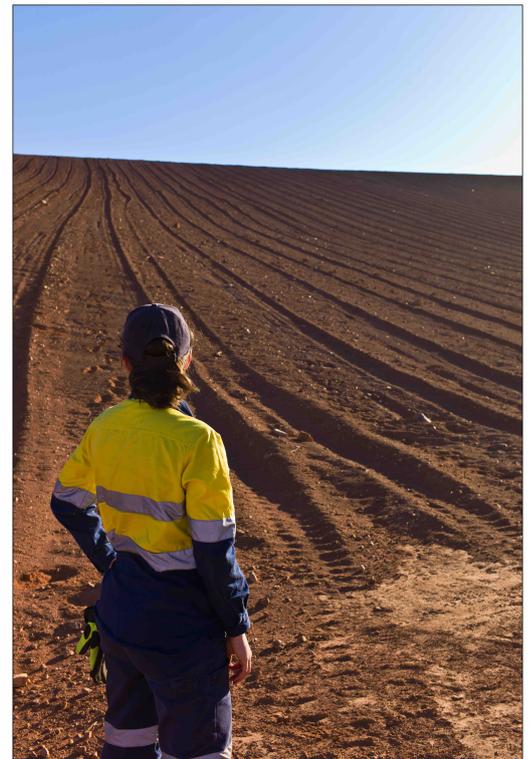
These sites need to be rehabilitated and Aboriginal West Australians are well placed to undertake this rehabilitation work. The Mining Rehabilitation Fund (MRF) provides a reliable ongoing funding source allows Aboriginal rangers to work on country with the flexibility to engage in cultural activities.

Background

Created in 2013, the Mining Rehabilitation Fund (MRF) is a pooled fund contributed to by Western Australian mining operators. Funds can be used to undertake rehabilitation activities where a tenement operator fails to meet rehabilitation obligations. By 30 June 2019, it is estimated the MRF will have accumulated approximately \$150 million.

About \$30 million is paid into the fund each year by mining companies but only \$2 million allocated to be spent in the current financial year. There is little evidence that the money is being spent strategically.

The Nationals will explore how the funds could be used to generate economic, social and environmental outcomes.





Case study

Since 2012, Northern Star Resources has been in partnership with the local Martu Traditional Owners, the Central Desert Native Title Service and neighbouring pastoralists to more effectively manage the biodiversity values at the company's Jundee Gold Mine, located 50kms west of Wiluna, and neighbouring pastoral stations.

Analysis undertaken by Northern Star Resources found that for every \$1 invested in the program, approximately \$2.30 worth of social, economic, cultural and environmental value was created for stakeholders.

The program uses an Ecologically Sustainable Rangelands Management planning process that holistically encompasses fire management, erosion control, grazing pressure reduction, feral animal management and threatened species monitoring.

Most importantly, the policy ensures Aboriginal people continue to work on and manage their country, something they have been doing effectively for tens of thousands of years. The program involves one week of work per month, which allows flexibility when Martu people are required to engage in cultural activities.

Policy development

The Nationals WA are seeking feedback from Aboriginal corporations and traditional owners with regard to a fee-for-service model for Aboriginal rangers to be engaged to rehabilitate abandoned mine sites across Western Australia. Instead of the current piecemeal approach to State funding of Aboriginal rangers, the MRF would provide a consistent pool of funds to provide a steady pipeline of work for Aboriginal rangers. The Nationals would like to investigate how ranger programs can be used as a gateway into the permanent workforce, and how these programs can build a skill base in a culturally appropriate setting with the goal of full-time work outside the program.

The Nationals WA invite feedback on this policy discussion paper.

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