Anindilyakwa
Land Council

Stories from Groote

Edition 21

17 March 2026



Message from the Chair

In this edition of ‘Stories from Groote’ we are focusing on what Caring for Country looks like on the Groote Archipelago.

Our home is precious and unique. Our land is made up of tropical savannah woodland, monsoon vine forest, and pandanus and paperbark wetland. Animal life on land is abundant yet fragile, and includes threatened species like the Northern Hopping Mouse, Brush-tailed Rabbit-rat, Northern Quoll and Masked Owl. Our sea is pristine and home to large marine life like dugong, crocodiles, turtles and manta rays. There is no agriculture on the island, and our biosecurity team are vigilant about protecting our pristine environment from invasive species.

The Anindilyakwa Land & Sea Rangers are the heroes who protect the Eylandt. In this issue, we shine the spotlight on the work they do, from protecting our islands, reef and ocean from outside threats, to nurturing protected species and passing on knowledge to the next generation.

We also celebrate other organisations who Care for our County, including the Country Connect Foundation, who help Aboriginal people with complex care needs to return to their community. And Groote Aqua, who are working on developing an aquaculture hatchery to support opportunities for our fledgling ‘blue economy’.

We hope you enjoy this issue. If you have any ideas for stories you’d like to share, get in touch with our team at corporate.media@alcnt.com.au

Cherelle Wurrawilya, Chair

Subscribe now

Spotlight on ALC Land & Sea Rangers

Caring for Country is at the heart of the work of the ALC Land & Sea Rangers. Here on Groote, the Rangers play a vital role in protecting the environmental, cultural and social values of the Archipelago.

Here are five things you should know about the ALC Land & Sea Rangers:

They manage 10,000 square kilometres of islands, reef and ocean

The Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) includes Groote Eylandt, Bickerton Island, other islands in the Archipelago, and the surrounding Sea Country. This area is home to over 900 plant species, 150 marine fish species, and at least 330 terrestrial vertebrate species, including numerous threatened species – as well as culturally significant sites, songlines, and resources valued by Traditional Owners. Guided by Elders and an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from various government, industry, and research organisations, the ALC Rangers are dedicated to care for this precious, protected region.



They support knowledge sharing and job skills

Backed by Commonwealth, State and Land Council funding, becoming an ALC Ranger provides accredited training pathways and employment opportunities for Traditional Owners. In addition to learning valuable work skills, as custodians of Land and Sea Country, Rangers get to work on projects that reconnect them with Country, while passing on traditional ecological knowledge to younger generations.



They are guardians of biosecurity

Because of its outstanding conservation value, the Groote Archipelago has been recognised as a site of International Conservation Significance. The ALC Rangers work hard to protect this unique environment. Strict quarantine and biosecurity processes restrict the free movement of plants and animals, and weed management is a high priority. Feral animals common to the mainland, like buffalo, cane toads, pigs, horses and donkeys, are currently non-existent in the Groote Archipelago – and the ALC Rangers are here to keep it that way!



They combine traditional knowledge with modern science

The ALC Rangers are equipped with high-tech surveillance tools to support their work as caretakers. They have access to drones to monitor from the air, camera traps to investigate terrestrial species, and underwater cameras to explore the seas. Recently, as part of the ghost nets program in collaboration with Charles Darwin University, ALC Rangers used high-resolution drone imagery and AI analysis to identify 265 ghost nets over 223 kilometres of coastline. They won the People's Choice Award at the NT Natural Resource Management Awards for their efforts!

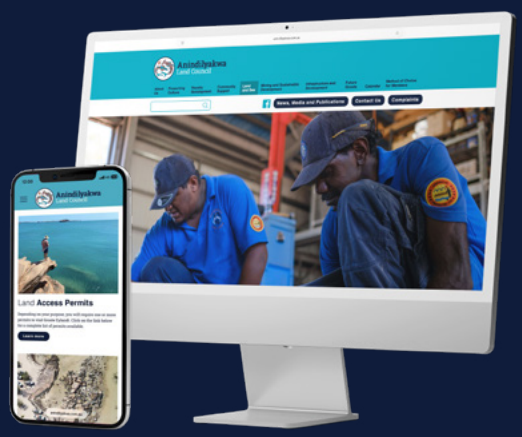


They work in harmony with the seasons

ALC Rangers work with the seasons. In the Dry season, the Rangers maintain access to camp sites and manage visitor access to recreation areas. This is also the time for monitoring threatened species, such as the Northern Hopping Mouse, Masked Owl and Brush Tailed Rabbit Rat, and cleaning up marine debris washed up on the shores of Groote Eylandt, sometimes from thousands of kilometres away. Leading up to the Wet season, Rangers monitor fish species and turtle nesting activities.



Learn more about the ALC Land & Sea Rangers



Visit the site

Connecting people with Country, Culture and Community

Create pathways for youth to stand in both worlds

In remote communities like the Groote Archipelago, connection to Country isn't just important, it's fundamental to health and wellbeing. That belief sits at the heart of the work being done by the Country Connect Foundation. This Indigenous-led not-for-profit organisation, working alongside the broader Country Connect group, helps Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory and Queensland who are living with disability or complex needs, young people involved in the justice system or child protection, and individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to access the care and support they need within their own community.

Often, those in need of the most support are forced to live far from home to access care or other support services, as remote communities may not be equipped to support them. Helping those people return home and reconnect with their families, communities and culture can be life changing.

Through Country Connect's community-led programs – spanning disability and wellbeing supports, intensive youth initiatives, including residential programs, and Specialist Homelessness Services, providing accommodation and outreach - many individuals have been supported to remain in or return to their communities. Central to this work is a local workforce who share language, culture and lived experience with the people they support, helping create culturally responsive environments that strengthen wellbeing and build trust within communities.

Local support workers are vital to the success of Country Connect programs, creating safe and culturally responsive environments where people feel respected, supported and empowered. Alongside delivering culturally aligned support, Country Connect works closely with families, community leaders and local services to ensure people can access the support they need while remaining connected to Country, culture and community.

Country Connect CEO Troy Barrett understands the challenges of accessing essential support services in remote communities, having lived and worked in remote Northern Territory communities himself. And he understands the power of community to overcome these challenges.

"Communities thrive when they are supported to care for their own, yet the lack of culturally-responsive



Photo courtesy of Country Connect

services has often placed strain on families and made it difficult for people to get the support they need," explained Troy.

"Strong communities are built on connection, culture, and care. When we invest in inclusive and culturally responsive support, we create lasting change for generations to come."

Care disparities in remote communities

Country Connect provided the following eye-opening figures, demonstrating the need for better care services in remote communities.

In remote and very remote regions:

- As of 2020, only 21.4% of eligible NDIS participants were receiving support from the NDIS compared to 31.5% in major cities.
- The rate of Medicare-provided mental health services is 120 per 1,000 people compared to 430 per 1,000 people in major cities.
- For children aged 0-14, hospitalisation for preventable chronic conditions is 8.7 per 1,000 people compared to 2.3 per 1,000 people in major cities.
- While only 2.9% of people have an intellectual disability, they make up 15% of the prison population.

Learn more about the work of the Country Connect Foundation

Cultivating aquaculture and economic opportunities

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

Caring for Sea Country is not just good for the environment – Groote Aqua Aboriginal Corporation (GAAC) is banking that a thriving marine ecosystem will also be good for the economy. At the Little Paradise hatchery on Groote Eylandt, two native marine species are preparing to play a vital role in spawning new 'blue-economy' opportunities for Anindilyakwa communities.

Blacklip oysters and sea cucumbers (trepang) will be bred at the GAAC aquaculture facility – an initiative of the Groote Holdings Aboriginal Corporation and the Anindilyakwa Land Council. The hatchery program aims to establish a fully Aboriginal-led industry that will support economic development, jobs and food production across remote coastal communities in the Groote Archipelago and beyond.

About the Blacklip Oyster program

Blacklip oysters occur naturally in northern Australian waters and have been harvested by Aboriginal communities for thousands of years. These oysters have strong aquaculture potential due to their fast growth, large size and tolerance to tropical conditions.

At the Groote Aqua blacklip hatchery, oyster spats will be produced for GAAC's breeding program and to sell to NT oyster farms – an initiative that will support the development of the blacklip oyster industry in remote communities in the Northern Territory and across Australia.

"A thriving Blacklip oyster industry in the Northern Territory cannot exist without reliable commercial spat supply," said Dr Val Thepot, GAAC General Manager.



"Through the construction of our new commercial-scale hatchery, supported by an Aboriginal Investment NT grant received late last year, Groote Aqua is addressing this critical gap."

Trials are underway, with data from successful spawns providing valuable insights into refining the breeding and larvae process and refining hatchery techniques.

About the Sea Cucumber (Trepang) program

Sea cucumber (also known as trepang) has a long history within Aboriginal culture as a source of trade with neighbouring Asian countries, where it is considered a delicacy with a range of health and medicinal benefits. At the Groote Aqua hatchery, sea cucumber broodstock is carefully selected from the pristine and productive Salt Lake on Groote Eylandt. The mature individuals provide a sustainable supply of fertilised eggs for cultivation. This continuous production cycle creates long-term viability for sea cucumber farming in the region.





Photos courtesy of Groote Aqua

Job alert: ABS Census needs community field officers

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

Attention Anindilyakwa locals: are you looking for a short-term job that pays you to connect with your community?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is now hiring Field Officers for the 2026 Census!

What you need to know:

- Every five years, the ABS Census counts every person and home in Australia to get a snapshot of the country and the people who live here. Everyone in Australia must be counted.
- Information from the Census helps the Australian Government plan for community needs for the future.
- The personal information collected from the Census is private and safe. It's protected by law and can't be shared.
- The next Census is on **Tuesday 11 August 2026**.
- Census Field Officers help everyone in their community to complete the Census form.
- The ABS needs temporary Census Field Officers in your community! Join the 2026 Census Talent Community to get notified about jobs.

To find out more about becoming a temporary Census Field Officer, visit www.census.abs.gov.au/jobs



AINT grants now open for one-off projects

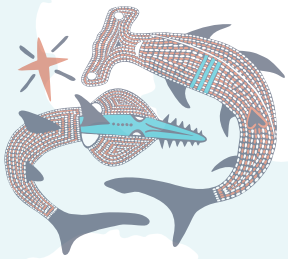
Invest in the present to build a self-sufficient future

Aboriginal Investment NT's Community Quick Response Grants are open for applications from now and throughout the year.

You can apply for up to $20,000 to support one-off projects in urban, regional and remote Aboriginal communities and homelands across the NT.

To learn more about the Grant or to apply, visit:
www.aboriginalinvestment.org.au

Our values



One People One Family
Ngarrurrakawuruma ngarnumamalya

Pride
Ngarriwerrikiyangmakwajinama

Honesty/Truth
Akuwerrikilyangmandukunadinama

Listen
Akeningmidini-yada

Respect
Akumaringkirradinama

Our Future
Ambakumurra-yada

The Strategic Plan 2023-33

Protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture

Invest in the present to build a self-sufficient future

Create pathways for youth to stand in both worlds

Anindilyakwa Land Council

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