

Governing country: A literature review of Indigenous governance principles in Indigenous ranger & protected areas programs

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Abstract

This paper reports on a literature review of Indigenous governance principles in Indigenous Ranger and Protected Area Programs. While existing scholarship has explored the policy frameworks and benefits associated with these programs, there has been less assessment of how Indigenous people govern programs on the ground. We drew on methods of systematic literature review to identify relevant scholarship over the last 40 years and analysed material using a conceptual framework of Indigenous governance principles. We found that all nine of the defined Indigenous governance principles were evident in the scholarship, often intersecting and overlapping to produce compounding governance strengths. Our survey of the literature indicated a dominant focus on the Northern Territory and a paucity of research related to programs in southern Australia. In this paper we also map, for the first time, the indicative locations, type of host organisations, and primary funding source for Indigenous Ranger and Protected Area Programs across Australia. This literature review illustrates the infinite potential to care for diverse landscapes, as well as foster Indigenous leadership, governance, and self-determined development, through investment in Indigenous Country governance. We argue that such investments must recognise and actively support the Indigenous governance principles at the heart of Indigenous Ranger and Protected Area Programs and their success.