

ISSUE 12, DECEMBER 2025

# STRONG COUNTRY, STRONG PEOPLE – ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Newsletter

Thirty years ago, ALCT was established to bring Country back to Aboriginal people. Today, we mark that milestone in a shared newsletter with our Truwana Rangers, celebrating how far we've come and the work still ahead. Our story is one of resilience, responsibility and deep connection to Country. As the only statutory body representing Tasmanian Aboriginal people, we are guided by our continued cultural authority and our compliance with the Aboriginal Lands Act, ensuring our lands, rights and responsibilities remain protected. This edition honours everyone who has walked this journey with us and those who continue to carry this work forward.



## **Warning**

*This newsletter contains photos, names and content relating to a Community member who has passed away.*

*Readers are advised to proceed with care*



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## Message from the Chair

### **Greg Brown, Chair, Nipaluna / Hobart**

The Tasmanian Parliament passed the *Aboriginal Lands Act* (the Lands Act) and it became legislation in 1995. At the time, there were many detractors about Aborigines getting land back as it would impede on their so-called rights. It is now well established and proven that this is not the case. No worlds have changed and the Lands Act has worked very well.

Despite this, we still get our detractors and some elected members of Parliament using excuses to not return land. We also have a continual struggle with those elected members of Parliament thinking that they know better by trying to tell us who we need to include in culture, heritage and country and going so far as to giving land to other bodies to bypass the Lands Act.

The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) has never been appropriately funded by the Tasmanian Government. Once administration costs, insurance costs and wages are paid, we have no money left for land management activities. We rely solely on other funding sources for this and particularly Commonwealth Government funding for our Rangers Program.

With the commitment of our supporters, we have benefitted from their generosity and now have some funds to purchase land and we have also been gifted some land. It is so pleasing that our supporters recognise it is the right thing to do. Successive Tasmanian Governments should hang their head in shame as we have had no land returns from the Government for over 20 years.

As Chair of ALCT, I am lucky to have a Council full of dedicated and passionate members and staff. ALCT has been here for 30 years and we will continue to push for further land returns; increased funding for land management; and of course a Treaty.

Our land, which we existed with, and was part of, for thousands of generations is still waiting for us to return. We are resilient, we have never ceded sovereignty and we will not give up the fight for us to be part of our land again.







## Current Council



Greg Brown, Chair  
Nipaluna / Hobart



David Lowery, Deputy Chair,  
Pataway / Burnie



Di Spotswood  
Launceston on Kanamaluka



John Gardner  
Truwana / Cape Barren Island



Krystelle Jordan  
Pataway/Burnie



Thomas Riley  
Nipaluna / Hobart



Vernon Graham (Taraba)  
Launceston on Kanamaluka



Jo Willis  
Flinders Island



## Current ALCT Staff



### **Sarah Wilcox, General Manager, ALCT**

Sarah is the General Manager of ALCT and the granddaughter of Laurie Lowery, a deeply respected Elder, ranger, sportsman and mutton birder. Born in Pataway Burnie, Sarah is a saltwater woman with an extensive career across the public and private sectors, and she has also managed her own communications and engagement business.



### **Brooke Bourke, Senior Executive Officer, ALCT**

Brooke comes into the role of Senior Executive Officer with a strong background in Aboriginal health, communications and project management, and a deep commitment to ensuring all work is guided by Community and Culture. Born and raised in Nipaluna Hobart and now living on the Kanamaluka in Launceston, she follows in the footsteps of her mum Kathy, her dad Colin and her wider family, continuing their legacy of caring for Country and fighting for land return.



### **Alison Kirkwood, Chief Financial Officer, ALCT**

As Chief Financial Officer, Alison keeps us accountable and transparent in our financial commitments and reporting, ensuring we remain on track and up to date with all obligations





## Truwana Rangers Staff



Steve Heggie  
Ranger Coordinator



Phil Thomas,  
Crew Leader



Shane Hughes  
Ranger



Buck Brown  
Senior Ranger



June Brown  
Ranger



Lindee Mansell  
Ranger



Roy Thomas  
Working on Country  
Project Officer



Brett Newall  
Working on Country  
Wybalenna Ranger



## In memory of June Brown

We sadly lost June in October, the usual author and guiding voice behind this newsletter. June's care, dedication, and love for Community shaped every edition. As we continue this work, we do so with her at the forefront of our minds, honouring her legacy and the pride she had in the Rangers and in Truwana.



We take a moment to honour a beautiful soul, an integral part of our Community and our team, June Brown.

June was staunch, kind and loving, someone whose presence, strength and gentle leadership lifted everyone around her. She was more than a colleague; she was a mother, sister, friend, cousin and mentor, and her impact reached far beyond any single role.

June gave so much of herself to her Community. She was a dedicated Ranger, a passionate cultural practitioner, a fierce advocate and a quiet, steady force who always put her people first.

Her commitment to Country, Culture and Community was unwavering. Her care, laughter, guidance and generosity touched so many, and she leaves behind a legacy that will continue to shape and strengthen us.

We will carry June with us in everything we do, holding her memory close as we keep walking the path she helped lay for all of us.

krakani nayri /  
Rest Well  
Forever part of  
our team and  
our island.







# 30 Years of Land Back in Lutruwita

On 10 December 1995, a significant moment in the story of Lutruwita took place.

The Tasmanian Government returned 12 parcels of land to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community under the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995.

These places hold deep cultural, historical and environmental significance for our people. Their return recognised our cultural authority, our custodianship and our enduring connection to Country. This moment also marked the establishment of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

ALCT was created as the statutory body to hold and manage Aboriginal land for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community.

For our Elders and leaders this was more than a hand back of places. It was the return of responsibility, cultural governance and pride. It was the beginning of a new era where Country and Community could again be cared for through Aboriginal leadership.



*land return 1995, Piyura Kitina / Risdon Cove*

## Our Legacy

Today **less than one per cent** of the landmass of Lutruwita has been returned as Aboriginal land. Since 2005 no further land has been returned to our Community under the Aboriginal Lands Act.

Despite this ALCT and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community have continued to care for Country with strength and determination.

Our people have protected cultural sites, regenerated landscapes, preserved knowledge and upheld the responsibilities handed down by our Old People.

Our connection to Country remains unbroken and we will sustain this for generations to come.



### ALCT Today

For 30 years ALCT has worked to honour the vision of our Elders who fought for land justice. ALCT manages Aboriginal land across Lutruwita under the Aboriginal Lands Act. We support ranger programs, including the Truwana Rangers. We lead truth-telling, cultural protection and land management work. We advocate for ongoing land return and for the recognition of our cultural authority. We work to ensure that the rights, responsibilities and stories of our people are upheld for future generations.

### Looking Forward

The 30-year anniversary is a moment of pride for our Community. It is also a reminder that land return work is not complete. Land justice is a right. **It should not require constant struggle or repeated justification.**

Returning land to Aboriginal people strengthens Lutruwita. It restores cultural governance. It protects significant places. It heals Country and strengthens Community.

As we mark this anniversary, ALCT calls for meaningful progress toward land return in Lutruwita. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Community continues to lead the care of Country using knowledge that has guided our people for more than two thousand generations. We stand ready to continue this responsibility.

### To Our Community

This anniversary belongs to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It honours those who fought for land. It honours those who protect it today. It strengthens the path ahead for our young people who will take on this responsibility.

ALCT recognises our Elders, activists, rangers, land managers, cultural leaders and Community members who continue to care for Country. Your resilience continues to guide our work.

**Land Back continues. Country continues. Our people continue.**







## A Reflection in Verse

**Graeme Gardner, Former General Manager**

### **For We are Strong**

'For we are strong'.... conjures an image of unity,  
Such power is deafening and so daunting its triumphs.  
For a man who once stood alone and once held out his hand,  
the sense of unity and leadership  
are desires that are harnessed by a lingering uncertainty.  
If I want to feel the physical rejoice, I must first join the 'pack'  
and weave my way to the front. It  
is a challenge as my desire is equally confronted by hesitation;  
a consequence of (too) long having  
succumbed to the oppressor.  
So lonely for so long, there are still the voices that echo the  
word "No". No to identity, No to  
dignity, No to the land and No to my heritage. No is a white  
word written in black. A harsh but  
realistic view from one oppressed.  
My battle to restore belief continued but ended swiftly, as the  
emergence of an inner-worth is  
the victor. No longer alone, nor reluctant. Now armed with a  
renewed belief.  
It was an awakening that dawned a moment of clarity that if  
ever I accept another's opinion, it's  
when I have lost my sense of purpose. The arrival of this  
conclusion came without any personal  
thought, instead it came in the shape of another; nature. It  
beckoned the realisation of what the  
land, on which I stand, has provided for generations, all the  
while having endured discomfort,  
exploitation and disrespect. I realise the land on which I stand is  
not beneath me, it is within me.  
In unity.  
For we are strong.



# Representing ALCT at the Palawa Business Hub Showcase

ALCT was proud to be represented at the Palawa Business Hub Showcase by General Manager Sarah Wilcox and Senior Executive Officer Brooke Bourke. Their participation created an important opportunity to share ALCT's work, engage directly with community members and highlight the role of land return in strengthening Aboriginal enterprise across Lutruwita/Tasmania.

Sarah took part in a panel discussion on the connection between Country, Culture and economy, emphasising that Healthy Country equals Healthy People equals Healthy Business. Her message reinforced land return as the foundation for community wellbeing and future economic independence.

Sarah and Brooke also facilitated interactive activities, inviting attendees to reflect on what being on returned land means to them. Community responses spoke to cultural connection, identity, opportunity and the feeling of walking with our Old People on shared Country. They also guided conversations around the map of returned lands, encouraging ideas and aspirations for what or where next.

Together, Sarah and Brooke provided a strong ALCT presence, sharing knowledge, building relationships and keeping land, culture and economic growth at the centre of the conversation. Their involvement strengthened community understanding of ALCT's role and the importance of continuing the journey of land return.

Healthy Country.  
Healthy People.  
Healthy Business.



Photo Credit: Jillian Mundy



# New Fire Units Installed for Island Safety

Our Ranger team has been busy building and installing brand-new Rapid Spray slip-on fire unit stands, a huge step forward for fire readiness on the island.

This work will support the Cape Barren Island Fire Brigade, strengthening local fire response and preparedness on Country.

These mobile firefighting units enable rapid response to small grass and scrub fires, improve access to remote areas, and help ensure we are better prepared for the upcoming fire season. Built tough right here in Australia, they're compact, durable and designed for the conditions we face on Truwana. The project highlights the skills and teamwork of our Rangers, who led the job from start to finish, from constructing the stands to fitting and securing the units. It's great to see our crew's practical know-how supporting the critical work of the fire brigade, helping keep the community safer and playing a key role in caring for Country.

Quick response,  
tougher gear,  
safer Country



## Country Returned to Palawa

A culturally and environmentally significant area, Dempster Creek, has been generously returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community during NAIDOC Week.

Barbara and Ian Sale have entrusted this special place to ALCT, ensuring its protection and cultural care for generations to come.

Chair Greg Brown said the gesture was deeply meaningful:

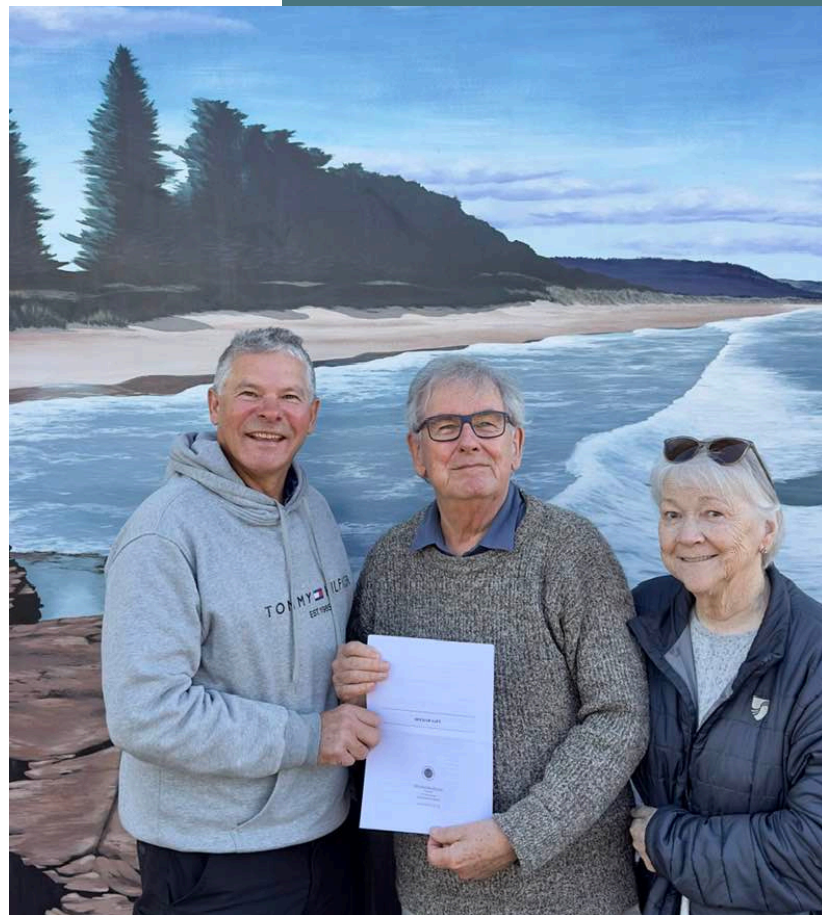
***“It is overwhelming for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community to have this special place returned, particularly during NAIDOC Week as we celebrate the next generation. The generosity we are witnessing far exceeds any reconciliation commitments made by government.”***

Ian Sale, who cared for Dempster Creek for over 40 years, said:

***“For those who walk, fish, paint, kayak, discover or carry out citizen science, the place remains open and welcoming. Its conservation is now further strengthened.”***

Dempster Creek is rich with birdlife, waterways and native species, and will also serve as a valuable learning space for junior rangers as they continue developing their skills in caring for Country.

## A NAIDOC Week gift to Country





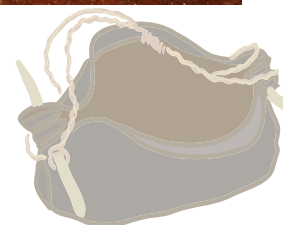


# Health and Strength on the Island

Our Truwana Rangers recently supported a project led by the Cape Barren Island Association to install new outdoor gym equipment at the community gym, adding another resource that supports health, strength and activity on the island. The Rangers assisted with the delivery and installation of the equipment for community use.

The equipment is already being put to good use, with community members enjoying the chance to train outdoors, stay active and look after their wellbeing on Country.

By supporting projects like this, our Rangers continue to show that healthy people make for a healthy Country, and that investing in community health is another way we care for Truwana together.







# ALCT Takes Key Priorities to the Federal Indigenous Minister

ALCT recently met with Minister Malarndirri McCarthy in Nipaluna to share some of our key achievements, including the incredible work of the Truwana Rangers and the ongoing Truth-Telling at Wybalenna project.

We also discussed the significant challenges we face as an underfunded statutory authority in Lutruwita/Tasmania, and the continued struggle to secure land returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. The Aboriginal Lands Act and the Aboriginal Land Council both mark their 30th anniversaries this year, yet no land has been returned in the past two decades. Land return is simple, achievable, and would benefit all Tasmanians as our rangers continue healing Country through cultural practices that have sustained it for over 2,000 generations.

We look forward to continuing this important conversation and have invited the Minister to visit the Truwana Rangers and Wybalenna on her next visit. She seemed genuinely keen, and we'll be sure to hold her to that.



Sarah Wilcox, Thomas Riley, Buck Brown, Malarndirri McCarthy, Brooke Bourke, Shane Hughes



# ABC Coverage Shines a Light on Truwana Rangers Protecting milaythina / Country

The incredible work of our Truwana Rangers has been recognised nationally, with two recent ABC stories showcasing their dedication to caring for Country, wildlife, and community.

In one feature, ABC followed our Ranger team as they tackled feral cat management on the island. The segment highlighted the “cat-trapping queens” of Truwana showcasing their skill, calm approach, and deep understanding of the environment. Their work plays a vital role in protecting native animals and supporting the long-term health of the island’s ecosystems.

Another ABC story focused on the Rangers’ efforts to restore and protect Truwana’s precious coastal wetlands. The team has been on the frontline of fighting invasive coastal weeds, helping new life return to the area and ensuring the wetlands remain a thriving home for birds and other wildlife. The story highlighted the strength of community-led land management and the Rangers’ commitment to looking after the island’s future.

Together, these features shine a national spotlight on the pride, knowledge, and expertise of our Ranger team. Their work continues to strengthen Country, protect native species, and keep Truwana healthy for the next generations.



[Click here for the Cat Trapping Queens Interview](#)

[Click here for the Sea Spurge Interview](#)





## Listening to Country: Funding Secured for Truwana Biodiversity Project

The Truwana Rangers have received new funding to expand their biodiversity monitoring work and take the next step in building Truwana's first faunal species list.

This project, Listening to Country, builds on years of acoustic monitoring with Dr Liz Znidersic. The funding will allow the Rangers to analyse long-term recordings, install new solar-powered acoustic monitors in the Ramsar wetlands, and begin formally documenting the species present on the island.

The work will strengthen land management decisions, support climate and invasive species planning, and contribute open-access data to broader conservation efforts.

Over the coming months, the Rangers will conduct training, retrieve and interpret recordings, install new monitoring units, and compile early findings. This marks an important milestone in understanding and protecting the biodiversity of Truwana.

## Truwana's first species list begins








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