



Caring for Country and Building Their Futures – Meet KAC's New Team of Women Rangers

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When Taelah Linton started working as a Kokatha Ranger earlier this year, she wasn't quite sure what to expect.

'It's really different to what I thought it would be,' she laughs. 'I guess I thought you had to be a bit of a nerd to be a ranger, but it's not like that at all.'

Her days involve anything from mustering and weighing cattle, to monitoring endangered wildlife and learning more about Kokatha Country.

Taelah is one of three young women employed through Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation's new Indigenous Ranger Program, which was established after KAC successfully secured funding from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Working across the Kokatha Stations near Roxby Downs, the Women's Ranger Team is already making a valuable contribution to caring for Country, while building skills and creating new opportunities.

For Taelah, who grew up in Port Augusta, the role has been life changing.

'I have dyslexia so I found school quite hard,' she says.

'I ended up doing a Certificate II in Automotive through TAFE and then worked at Outback Mining Services, but I've always loved station life. When I saw the ranger positions come up, I applied and when I got an interview, I was absolutely rapt.'

Meet KAC's New Team of Women Rangers (continued)

Pictured front page from l. to r. Taelah Linton, Chantari Warren & Amelia McKenzie at Roxby Downs Station.

Since starting in the role, she's worked alongside organisations including Arid Recovery, monitoring native animals that live on Kokatha Country.

One recent project involved helping with the annual trapping and monitoring of Kowaris, a small carnivorous marsupial native to Australia's arid regions.

'We had to get up at 3am to be at Arid Recovery by 5am,' she says. 'It was freezing cold and we were checking traps. If there were Kowaris in them, we'd measure their feet, check their teeth, take a tiny bit of DNA and then let them loose again and they'd hop straight back to their burrows.'

While she's enjoyed learning about the environment, Taelah says one of the best parts of the job has been the people.

'We're like one big family,' she says. 'We all get along really well and have little jokes together. It's a lot of fun.'

Fellow Ranger Amelia McKenzie agrees. Growing up in Andamooka, Amelia spent much of her childhood learning about Country from her father, archaeologist Mick McKenzie.

'When I was older, I went out to Arid Recovery with Dad and saw how the archaeologists work,' she says. 'I realised that I really like working outdoors and being on Country.'

One of Amelia's favourite parts of the role is getting out on the stations and spending her days working on Country rather than behind a desk.

'I love driving the buggies around the stations,' she says. 'It doesn't feel like work. It feels like we're on a permanent camping trip.'

Amelia has particularly enjoyed working with the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board to search for the critically endangered Plains-wanderer, which has been reported on Kokatha Country in recent years.

'I didn't even know what they were before I came out here, but we think we may have spotted one recently,' she says.

'They're this little duck-like bird and we saw something run across the road that looked just like one.'

There have, however, also been challenges.

'One of the hardest things was doing chainsaw training,' Amelia says. 'But everyone encouraged each other and helped each other through it.'

Amelia hopes the experience she is gaining as a ranger will help her achieve her long-term goal of becoming an archaeologist and anthropologist.

She also wants to encourage other young Kokatha people who might be considering working as a ranger.

'I would say 'do it' because you learn heaps,' she says. 'You get to see all different parts of Country that you probably would never get to see otherwise. Just soak it all up.'

For Chantari (Tari) Warren, applying for the ranger program was an easy decision.

'As soon as I saw the job advert, I showed my Dad and he said, 'That would be perfect for you,' and it is,' she says.

Tari has particularly enjoyed the training opportunities that have come with the role, including four-wheel-drive training.

'I just love to learn new things and build on my knowledge,' she says.

Growing up, she spent countless hours camping and hunting on Country with her father, grandfather and uncles. Now, as a mother of four boys, she's proud to be passing that knowledge and connection on to the next generation.

'I try and take my boys out and show them the ropes whenever I can,' she says.

'They love knowing what I do up here. I miss them and it's hard, but it's good knowing that I'm doing an important job for Country and for their future.'

Tari says one of the biggest surprises has been learning just how much work goes into running a station.

'The job never stops. There's just so much that needs to be done to keep everything running smoothly,' she says.

'It's a lot of work but we all pitch in and it's fun. We're such a great team. It's like one big happy family.'

The women work alongside Senior Ranger Stanley Wingfield, Ranger Graham 'Bubbles' O'Toole and Ranger Coordinator Sam Stuart, who they credit with helping them build their knowledge and confidence.

Meet KAC's New Team of Women Rangers (continued)

Pictured below and right: Every day is different at the Kokatha Stations. Taelah, Amelia and Chantari hard at work monitoring native animals, training and learning about caring for Country.

'Sam's like everyone's Dad and he takes such good care of everyone,' says Tari. 'He and Stanley have so much knowledge about Country. We're so lucky to have people with so much knowledge teaching and encouraging us.'

The Women's Ranger Team represents much more than employment opportunities. The program is helping care for Country, protect native species and cultural heritage, and ensure knowledge continues to be passed on to future generations.

For Taelah, Amelia and Tari, it has provided the chance to learn, grow and build meaningful careers on Country.

And while each woman's journey is different, they share a common goal - caring for Country today, while helping create a stronger future for the generations that will follow.



Chairperson's Report



*Pictured: KAC Chairperson
Nyani Thomas*

It's been a busy and productive few months for KAC, with a number of important milestones that will help shape our future. From launching our new Strategic Plan, to meeting with the Trustee Advisory Committee, Kokatha General Trust and Perpetual to discuss our long-term direction, the Board has been focused on making sure we are building a strong future for Kokatha people.

One of the highlights was the launch of the KAC Strategic Plan 2026 - 2035 at the Press Road Community Space on 28 May. Deputy Chairperson Glen Wingfield and I were proud to officially launch the plan alongside Directors, staff, community members and guests.

It was deadly to see so many people come together to celebrate this important milestone for KAC. It was also great to have a yarn with BHP Copper SA Asset President Anna Wiley and other guests who joined us on the day.

The Strategic Plan sets out our vision and priorities for the next 10 years and provides a clear roadmap for where we want to go as an organisation. Now that the plan has been launched, our focus is on putting it into action and making sure we deliver on the priorities identified by Kokatha people throughout the consultation process.

Another important event was a joint meeting between the KAC Board, the Trustee Advisory Committee (TAC), the Kokatha General Trust and Perpetual.

The meeting gave everyone the opportunity to come together in one room and have open conversations about where KAC is today, and where we want to be in the future.

We talked about what we want to achieve by 2030, which is within the life of our new Strategic Plan, as well as our aspirations for 2050 and even 2100. Many of KAC's agreements with BHP will continue for decades to come, so it is important that we are thinking not only about today, but about the future we want to leave for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

We also discussed the challenges we face as a Nation and how we can work together to achieve our goals.

Conversations like these are important because they help make sure everyone is working towards the same vision and making decisions that will benefit Kokatha people for generations to come. Directors also recently travelled to the Gold Coast to attend the AIATSIS Summit. This was a valuable opportunity to learn from other Aboriginal organisations, hear about issues affecting First Nations communities across Australia and bring back ideas that may help strengthen KAC into the future.

The Board met in Port Augusta on 7 and 8 May for our regular Board meeting.

Directors received updates on a range of projects, partnerships and organisational matters and discussed how we can continue to strengthen governance, improve communication and support the ongoing growth of the Corporation.

One of the more challenging discussions during the meeting was an urgent briefing from the South Australian Government regarding proposed amendments to the Indenture Act, the legislation that underpins the Olympic Dam operation.

The Board expressed its disappointment that Kokatha had not been involved in earlier discussions, particularly given the significant impact decisions relating to Olympic Dam have had on our people and Country over many years. We made it clear that Kokatha expects to be consulted on matters that affect our community and our interests.

While no commitment was made to change the proposed amendments, the Board will continue to advocate strongly for Kokatha people and ensure our voice is heard.

As always, the Board remains focused on making decisions that support Kokatha people, protect our interests and create opportunities for future generations. Thank you for your continued support of KAC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nyani Thomas'.

*Nyani Thomas
Chairperson*

*Pictured below: Nyani
Thomas launching the KAC
Strategic Plan, with BHP
Copper SA Asset President
Anna Wiley, and Nyani
Thomas and Deputy Chair
Glen Wingfield at the launch.*





A Steady Hand Through Change

Pictured: John Hender thought he'd be in the KAC CEO role for four months, but ended up staying for 14 months.

When John Hender stepped into the CEO role at Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation (KAC) in February 2025, he thought he might only be there for a few months. 'I thought it might be about four months,' John laughs. 'But it ended up being 14 months. That just goes to show how hard it is to find the right person for these roles. KAC is a dynamic and complex organisation.'

John was asked to take up the job after former CEO David Whitelaw resigned. While John had held leadership positions throughout much of his career and had a long-standing connection to KAC through his role on the Kokatha People's Native Title General Trust, this was the first time he had taken on a CEO position. 'I'd never had an actual CEO role before and I was quite keen to see how I'd go,' he says.

Over the following 14 months, John helped guide KAC through a period of significant growth and change. Among his proudest achievements were relocating the KAC Port Augusta office from Flinders Terrace to Railway Terrace, securing the Indigenous Ranger Grant through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), establishing a new Adelaide office and witnessing KAC achieve the historic Oak Dam Retention Lease Agreement.

While there were many milestones along the way, the people who make up KAC are what John will remember most. He loved spending time on Kokatha Country, visiting the stations, getting to know community members and connecting with Kokatha Elders.

A Steady Hand Through Change (Continued)

John is also incredibly proud of the team of staff that has been built within the Corporation.

'There was a bit of dysfunction amongst the staff when I first started, but once we got it up and running properly, I couldn't have been prouder of them,' he says.

'Seventy per cent of our staff are Kokatha people and their professionalism and commitment continues to impress me. I've worked at publicly listed national and international companies and I can say that the calibre of our staff at KAC is of the highest level.'

One of the major pieces of work undertaken during John's time as CEO was the development of KAC's Strategic Plan, which provides a clear roadmap for the future of the Corporation.

As he hands over the reins to new CEO Jason Davison, John says he is excited about what lies ahead.

'I'm thrilled about Jason's appointment,' he says. 'The Board put a lot of effort into ensuring we were recruiting the right person for the job and Jason comes with excellent credentials.'

John believes KAC has a bright future, particularly as work continues towards securing a new Olympic Dam Agreement and Kokatha Mining Services goes from strength-to-strength.

'KMS really is a shining light at the moment. They're achieving so much with amazing staff. It's impressive to see,' he says.

As KAC enters its next chapter, John is also enjoying the opportunity to slow down a little.

'After months of waking up at 5am, I'm really enjoying setting the alarm for 7am,' he laughs.

These days he's spending more time fishing, gardening, hunting, and enjoying the company of his grandchildren, wife and children.

Reflecting on his time as CEO, John says he is grateful for the opportunity he was given.

'My main concern going in was that I wasn't going to have the energy to do the job,' he says. 'But I actually found that it energised me. There was a lot of work to do, and it was constantly evolving, but I'm so glad I had the opportunity to work with such a highly professional, motivated and committed team.'

KAC Chairperson Nyani Thomas thanked John for stepping into the role when the Corporation needed him and for the leadership he provided.

'John guided us through some really important structural changes and helped get the huge amount of work done to create a Strategic Plan for KAC,' he says. 'We're so grateful for the leadership and integrity he brought to the CEO position, and we wish him all the best for the future.'

For now, John will be cheering KAC on as the organisation moves into its next chapter under Jason's leadership.

'I wish KAC all the best for the future and can't wait to see what further achievements are made,' he says. 'It's an exciting time ahead and I'm grateful to have played a small part in the Kokatha story.'



Pictured: John Hender (front) with the KAC Directors at the 2025 AGM.

Community Information



SAVE THE DATE - KAC CLHM SATURDAY 8 AUGUST

Registered Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation members and registered Kokatha Common Law Holders are invited to save the date for our upcoming Common Law Holders' Meeting.

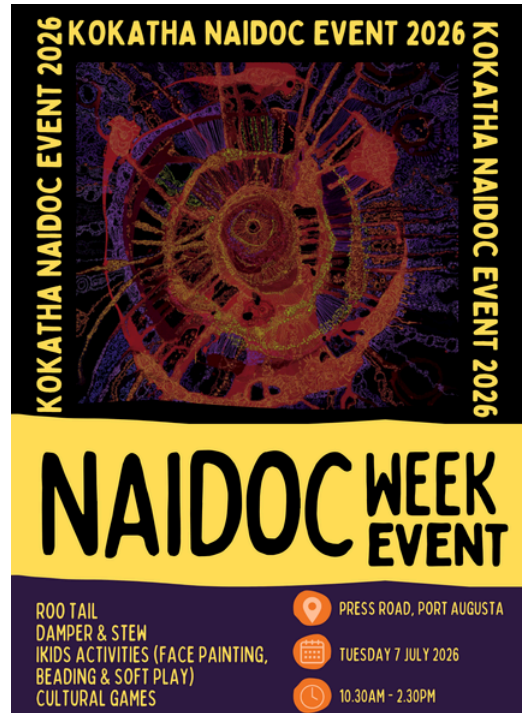
 Saturday 8 August 2026

 West Augusta Football Club

This is an important opportunity for Kokatha people to come together, hear updates, discuss matters important to our community and help shape the future direction of our Corporation.

Further information, including meeting times, agenda items and registration details, will be shared in the coming weeks, so keep an eye on our Facebook page and website.

We look forward to seeing you there.



KAC NAIDOC WEEK CELEBRATION

Come along and celebrate NAIDOC Week with the Kokatha community at our annual NAIDOC Event at the Press Road Community Space.




This is a chance for Kokatha families, community members and friends to come together, connect, share a meal and celebrate culture.

 Press Road Community Space, Port Augusta

 Tuesday 7 July 2026

 10.30am – 2.30pm

There will be plenty happening throughout the day, including:

-  Roo tail cooking
-  Damper and stew
-  Kids activities including face painting, beading and soft play
- Cultural games and activities

We look forward to bringing our community together to celebrate the strength, resilience and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during NAIDOC Week. Bring the family, bring your friends and come enjoy a great day with the Kokatha community.

Community Information

WHAT A DEADLY AFTERNOON AT THE NA DJINANG CIRCUS WORKSHOP

We had so much fun at the Na Djinang Circus community event, with the young and young at heart coming together for a 90 minute workshop.

Participants learned acrobatics, practised the basics of juggling and took on a range of circus-themed challenges.

There were plenty of laughs, lots of energy and some impressive new skills on display, as well as a yummy shared dinner at the end.

A big thank you to @Na Djinang Circus for travelling to Port Augusta and sharing your talents with us.

A shout out also to KAC staff, community members, parents and the young people who came along and made the afternoon such a success.

Participant Ayana Reid gave the workshop a rave review. 'I liked doing the somersaults, eating food, and making the pyramid with everyone,' she said. 'It was fun. I'd do it for longer next time.'

Check out some of the photos from the workshop!



Stay up to date

If you would like to stay up to date with the latest Kokatha news, check out the website and like and follow the Facebook Page.

[CLICK HERE](#) for KAC's Website

[CLICK HERE](#) for KAC's Facebook Page