

## The Ten Deserts Project, Australia

Sustaining the largest Indigenous-led connected conservation network on Earth aims to keep Australia's outback healthy for the benefit of the entire world.

The Project is enabled through the BHP Billiton Foundation's [Environmental Resilience Global Signature Program](#).



### Unique ecosystems under threat

The Ten Deserts of Australia are one of the few great natural places remaining on Earth. The area represents the world's largest connected network of protected areas and spans over 35 per cent of Australia (2.7 million km<sup>2</sup>) across five state and territory jurisdictions.

The area is of immense cultural value to its traditional owners who have a history of occupation spanning more than 50,000 years.

Australia's 'deserts' are well vegetated with highly diverse ecosystems, including sand dune deserts, sandstone ranges, vast plains of Mulga woodland, grassland and stony 'gibber' desert, and ephemeral wetlands which fill with life when rains come.

Rich in unique plant and animal life, the landscape is home to many of Australia's threatened animals including the Night Parrot, the Greater Bilby, the Great Desert Skink and Black-flanked Rock Wallaby.

Despite being relatively intact, these unique desert ecosystems and the values they contain are under increasing threat due to vast destructive wildfires, invasive noxious weeds and feral animals. The impacts of these threats are further exacerbated by climate change.

### Delivering outcomes for Indigenous communities

The *Ten Deserts Project* will enable traditional owners to address these threats through the work of Indigenous rangers and land managers.

The benefits of Indigenous land management programs are well documented and reinforce their broader social, cultural and economic benefits. These benefits are derived through the provision of employment and training opportunities, reinstatement of cultural authority, and increased pride and confidence for both individuals and communities.

On-ground activities will be complemented by an effective and representative structure for Indigenous land management into the future.

The Foundation has committed significant funding to this multi-year project.

The project is led by Desert Support Services (DSS), part of the Central Desert Group, and involves some of Australia's most successful Indigenous organizations supported by international and regional conservation partners.



## Strong collaboration



To deliver the project outcomes over the life of the project, DSS will work with:

- Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board
- Central Land Council (CLC)
- Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ)
- Kimberley Land Council (KLC)
- Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation
- Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA)
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC)

Other Indigenous organizations will be involved and supported by the project for discrete activities at both a local and regional level.

The involvement of international partners will enable the lessons learnt to be shared with the broader global community.

## Support and empowerment

Supporting and empowering the Aboriginal traditional owners who live in this landscape to look after country is critical to improving Indigenous livelihoods and building the environmental resilience of the desert region.

The project will build on people's connection to country and integrate Indigenous cultural and ecological knowledge with contemporary natural resource management best practice to enable new approaches to be developed to respond to both existing and future threats.

Providing employment opportunities and growing the network of Indigenous rangers will help to sustain remote communities for future generations.

The project will also complement and enhance highly successful government programs for Indigenous rangers and protected areas.

An enduring outcome will be the creation of a representative structure for Indigenous land management organizations in the desert which will raise the deserts' profile and provide the enabling conditions to help secure future long-term funding and revenue streams.

These funding streams include increased government commitments, carbon abatement and tourism which will attract additional revenue for Indigenous organizations and communities.

## Collective action to build environmental resilience

Enhancing the environmental, cultural and socio-economic resilience of Indigenous peoples' lands is a key focus of the BHP Billiton Foundation's *Environmental Resilience Global Signature Program*.

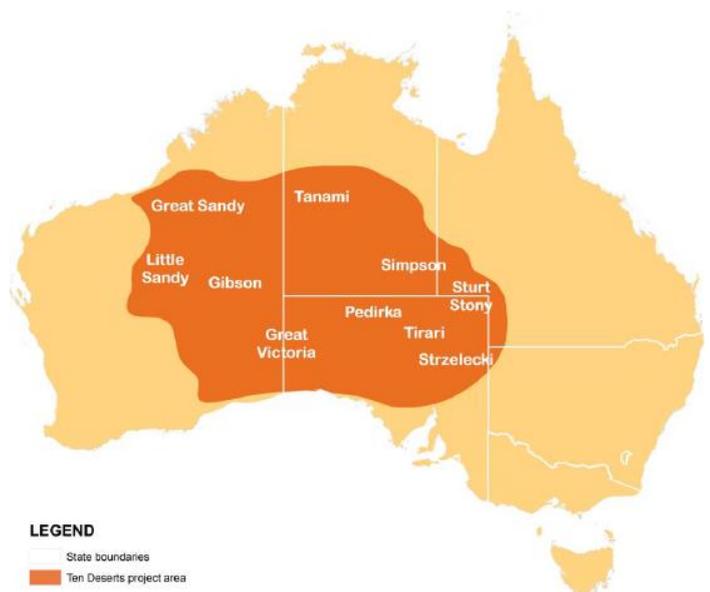
By working together with key partners, such as DSS, and aligning aspirations behind a common goal, we can achieve lasting change.

Through this project, the Foundation seeks to:

- deliver a high-impact, enduring intervention in this area of international significance;
- engage with the people who live in this landscape to build their capacity and support their livelihoods;
- pilot new approaches towards environmental resilience and share learnings; and
- develop replicable environmental policy frameworks to advance the future of conservation.

This project is a unique opportunity to demonstrate collective action to build environmental resilience at an unprecedented scale worldwide, led by Indigenous organizations with the support of external stakeholders.

## The Ten Deserts of Australia



For more information on the BHP Billiton Foundation and the *Environmental Resilience Global Signature Program*, visit [bhpbilliton.com/foundation](http://bhpbilliton.com/foundation)