

Statement from Sean Willmore, Founder of The Thin Green Line Foundation

19/11/2025

Dear Friends, Supporters and Rangers (some of you are all three!),

After 21 years of working on the Thin Green Line I've decided that it's time to throw my bag over the fence and see what new horizons are waiting for me.

It certainly doesn't mean the work of Thin Green line is done. Far from it! The needs of fallen ranger's families, of training and equipment for rangers, and connecting rangers still goes on.

When I left being a ranger myself and started the Thin Green Line formally in 2007 (started working on it in 2004), I was asked a few years before by the International Ranger Federations (IRF) President, David Zeller, and Secretary Sean Prendergast to use my film (Thin Green Line) and its proceeds to set up the charity arm for the IRF, instead of giving the funds directly to the IRF. I was happy being a ranger, but I realised this huge gap for my colleagues needed some concerted effort, and I accepted the challenge and went 'over the lip of the waterfall' that became The Thin Green Line Foundation.

The primary aim was to support the widows of rangers (Fallen Ranger Fund) and to help with the training and equipping and connecting of rangers. For 18 years we have stayed true to that. I don't have 100% accurate data on all our impacts to date, partly because we've always been busy working on the foundations mission rather than crowing about how much we've done, but I estimate something like 1000+ families of fallen rangers have been supported, and with that some 4000+ children of rangers were kept in school, and with a roof over their head, after they lost their major bread winner. We've helped train thousands of rangers through game changing programs like Lead Ranger in Africa, and individual training programs like that with Marcelo and the indigenous rangers of the Amazon. We've equipped tens of thousands of field rangers with all sorts of things from water filtration, boots, mosquito nets, tents, uniforms and the list goes on. In particular, I wish to send a big thanks to Patagonia and their staff for the 15,000 uniform items donated over the years.

We've also helped to connect thousands of rangers by financing them to attend World Ranger Congresses, Regional Ranger Congresses and exchanges, which is both a massive boost for their morale and an important shared learning experience.

However, we are still losing 175 rangers a year and their families still need support. Lead Ranger is growing its capacity to train more trainers, who then train their own rangers (what a legacy program it is), though it needs more investment to continue and to expand. The need for critical equipment will always remain a feature of the targeted support that Thin Green Line gives these frontline protectors of our living world.

I believe the niche that Thin Green Line has occupied has been critical for a lot of rangers and will continue to be so. Yes, we're committed to game changing projects like LEAD Ranger and Fallen Ranger, though importantly at the same time we've been focussed on the smaller pivotal projects that act like a lever to tip the balance in favour of the Rangers, the environments, and wildlife they serve and protect. Critical projects like a \$3000 boat for the Amazon rangers which was everything to them, are a standout for me.



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Rangers protecting nature

There are many, possibly thousands, of heartfelt stories to tell about the projects we've supported. And then there's the connections I've been fortunate enough to make with rangers, the widows and children left behind, and the communities in which we work. All of them have moved and inspired me.

This will be the hardest thing for me to leave behind, and I hope many of you remain friends. These amazing relationships that I've been able to develop in near 80 countries around the world is a true blessing that I don't take for granted.

To the rangers of the world, you will remain my heroes. None of you get rich from this work in a monetary sense, but you are the richest people I know in terms of living a life full of passion, dedication and sacrifice. These are lives to look back on and be proud of. I am proud to be a ranger, to be associated with you, and to call you family and friends.

It's been my greatest honour to serve you, my ranger family, around the world. You and your families and communities are the heartbeat of humanity that protect our wonderful natural world. I know that the respect for you will continue to grow, and with that we can continue to challenge the world to support your noble mission even further.

To the supporters who listen to me bang on about rangers all the time, and saw that this was really worthwhile cause (or gave support to shut me up) and who front up with either money to fund the programs or who gave their music and talents to the cause, all of you have given so that the mission can be realized- I send you a heartfelt thanks. To those who promised big funds but haven't yet delivered- there's still time 😊

I hope that you, the supporters who stand in solidarity with the rangers continue to do so via Thin Green Line Foundation and its important mission. There are also now a growing number of other organisations supporting rangers (I'm a big fan of Rally for Rangers too!) so please get behind those projects that you feel are legitimately focussed on rangers' welfare, and who get your support direct to the ground.

To the families of the fallen rangers, I send you my admiration and thanks for teaching me so much about resilience and making the most of opportunities. You have taught us to "use that beam of light and grow a seed of hope for the future!"

To our ambassadors over the years, led by the incomparable Dr Jane Goodall DBE, thank you to all of you for putting your names, energy, and kudos to the mission. It certainly helped to short circuit support with your gravitas associated with Rangers and TGL's mission

To the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and all the media - thanks for getting the rangers story out there over the years, including the 7:30 Report, Australian Story ABC Mornings, The Project and many more. You've done a great service to the rangers of the World.

To all of those who supported over the years by serving on the board, or who worked, often above and beyond, for Thin Green Line, I thank you for bringing your skills to the table. I trust that the qualifier that we've always used '*will this be good for rangers on the ground?*' will remain the first question asked when making decisions going forward.



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To my closest family and friends thank you for sticking by me through all of this. An absolute roller coaster, and there has been much sacrifice from all of you to allow me to put everything I had into this over the journey. Thanks for having my back.

I leave now, with not a lot left in the tank, so that possibly means I've given it all I've got for now, and it is time to move on. Who knows how I will contribute going forward, but I've learned so much from all of you. I hope I've made a contribution that has helped make my fellow rangers' mission that little bit more possible and bearable.

Whilst I don't know 100% what my future will look like, I know in some way, I will still have to contribute to the ranger family. It's firmly in my DNA. Let's see what we will do together! You the rangers, your families and communities will always be front of mind for me and remain in my heart forever.

There are many more challenges in front of humanity right now. We must all ACT NOW so that we create the picture that we all wish to see for our shared future, that of a healthy, thriving, living planet. And the rangers of the world are one of the keys to realising that vision.

A sincere heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Onwards.

Sean Willmore

Founder

The Thin Green Line Foundation