Submission to the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry
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We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry ('the Inquiry'), which has been asked to have regard for many matters including making recommendations relating to "any appropriate use of Indigenous practices" in bushfire management.

We are three non-indigenous academics with a range of experience in research projects including examining bushfire management, Indigenous land rights and public sector practice. Since July 2017, we have been engaged in the 'Hazards, Culture and Indigenous Communities' project, co-led by Neale and Weir, a 3-year research project funded by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) to document and analyse the challenges and opportunities for greater engagement between natural hazards management agencies (meaning both land management agencies and emergency management agencies) and Aboriginal communities in southern Australia. This followed on from our previous research into the use and utility of science by the natural hazard sector (e.g. Neale, Weir et al. 2016, Sherry, Neale et al. 2019).

A substantial focus of our current BNHCRC research has been Aboriginal peoples' fire management initiatives. We have conducted fieldwork and interviews with Aboriginal and non-Indigenous practitioners engaged in these initiatives, as well as reviewed current policies and guidelines, and are in the process of synthesising our final project findings (see Smith, Weir et al. 2018, Thommasin, Neale et al. 2018, Neale, Carter et al. 2019, Neale, Smith et al. 2019, Weir and Freeman 2019). Our comments to the Inquiry are therefore focused on 6) "any appropriate use of Indigenous practices." Nonetheless, this has relevance across the Inquiry's broader Terms of Reference about bushfire management and preparation, mitigation, response and recovery in relation to bushfire events.

1. Intractable academic arguments:

Globally, Indigenous peoples' burning practices have for some time been an object of fascination, research and discussion within academic science and social science (Scherjon, Bakels et al. 2015). In the second half of the twentieth century, scholars examined "fire economies" where humans had evidently applied fire to their habitats over hundreds or thousands of years. Prior to this, the established scientific view in Australia was that Aboriginal peoples' use of fire had minimal ecological effects. Arguably the first substantial research to disagree came in the late 1950s. Anthropologist Norman Tindale (1959), on the basis of his decades of research across the continent, argued that "man probably has had a significant hand in the moulding of the present configuration of parts of Australia".

Subsequently, there has been a proliferation of Western scientific research on the ecological benefits and costs of these long-term burning practices prior to colonisation, which has generated theories and arguments about theories that seem intractable. As scholars who investigate how knowledge is used

and formed in different debates and from different viewpoints, we have synthesised this scholarship into the ecological costs and benefits of Aboriginal peoples burning. This field incorporates a range of disciplines – including ecology, fire science, archaeology, and physical geography – which we are not specialists in. We have identified two enduring paths of inquiry:

- The first has been focused upon the role of intent in these burning practices, debating the degree and kind of precolonial Aboriginal peoples' "predictive ecological knowledge" in relation to fire (e.g. Bowman 1998).
- The second has been in relation to the spatiotemporal pattern of burning by precolonial Aboriginal peoples, including its frequency, seasonality, intensity and size in different regions and climates (e.g. Abbott 2003, Enright and Thomas 2008).

Two features of this scholarship underscore how this field produces and reproduces intractable debates, whilst also constraining learning about Aboriginal peoples' fire management:

- First, many debates about human-ecological interactions prior to colonisation appear intractable, as they require speculation about landscapes and cultures over time scales of multiple millennia based on select sampled points. That is, this scholarship is confounded by its own terms and contains irreducible uncertainties that leave it open to significant debate.
- Second, there is little evidence of living Aboriginal peoples ever being involved or considered in these complex academic debates. Where contemporary Aboriginal peoples have been included, and this has been relatively rare, they have usually been treated as indexes for their ancestors rather than the holders of rights or interests in the production of knowledge about those ancestors. That is, scholars have looked to Aboriginal peoples' oral histories and philosophies, rather than seriously considering the knowledge they use today – this is an understanding of traditional practice as only set in the past.

As other studies have also shown, many scientific researchers have seen the relevance of contemporary Aboriginal peoples' fire practices as "more philosophical than scientific" (Penman, Christie et al. 2011) in the sense that their continuity with precolonial practices cannot be scientifically verified. There are important exceptions to this summary (e.g. Russell-Smith, Whitehead et al. 2009) however these are almost exclusively focused upon central and northern Australia.

2. Previous inquiries:

These two features of the field of academic scholarship are important because they inform how expert evidence is sought and judged in other forums, including in more recent efforts to apply this scholarship on Aboriginal fire management to government fire management policy or examine the issue through inquiry processes.

For example, the *Inquiry into the 2002-03 Victorian Bushfires*, devoted a chapter to the potential utility of Aboriginal peoples' "traditional burning practices" in reducing bushfire risks. The inquiry's

authors concluded that there was little published research on this specific topic and "that repositories of this knowledge are mostly lost and any reconstructed [fire] regime would largely be speculative" (Esplin, Gill et al. 2003). Subsequently, the Victorian parliament's *Inquiry into Fire Season Preparedness* did not cite the above 2003 inquiry but nonetheless also addressed the potential use and effectiveness of traditional burning practices for reducing bushfire impacts. This inquiry decided there was "very limited data available" on the effectiveness of these practices to mitigate future bushfires in temperate regions, recommending that a pilot scheme be established in Victoria and overseen by a research organisation (EPC 2017).

In short, these two recent inquiries repeated the features of the academic literature, focusing on intent and spatiotemporal pattern while doing little to engage with contemporary peoples. Other inquiries either have not addressed Aboriginal fire knowledge and Aboriginal peoples at all or, as in the more comprehensive 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission, placed them in the past tense. As Williamson et al. (2020) state,

> "Aboriginal peoples are primarily relegated to an historical footnote, rather than featuring as contemporary residents, as First Peoples, as land and rights holders, or as part of contemporary fire management".

From this record of inquiries (see also Lawson, Eburn et al. 2017), we conclude that there is a close relationship between the kinds of scientific research that have been done, and the options that are considered in policy and inquiry processes. There is a real risk this Inquiry and others pending will repeat the research of previous inquiries on this matter, searching a scientific literature dominated by the perspectives of non-indigenous researchers for evidence of technical benefits to standard measures of bushfire management and, reaching similar conclusions, recommend no immediate action or further scientific research. This would constrain the Inquiry's task and its policy implications but also, more importantly, neglect to address the rights, interests and knowledge of contemporary Aboriginal peoples. Such a pathway would neither source nor address the matters our research has revealed with respect to the natural hazards management sector's engagement with Aboriginal peoples' fire practices today. Further, this is why drawing on scientific research must also include close and comprehensive attention to its social and political context (Chilvers and Kearnes 2019).

3. Natural hazard resilience:

In our view, this Inquiry presents an important opportunity to depart from the intractable debates synthesized above. Indeed, the natural hazards management sector has already taken the initiative to challenge these dynamics, with policies centred on resilience and partnership, and working directly with Aboriginal people and their organisations on fire management. Further, there is now a wider range of expert social science scholarship on these matters, including scholarship led by and co-authored with Indigenous people. These moves are informed by the trend in the academy and public sector towards interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary expertise in environmental studies. They are also informed by policy trends towards greater partnership with both local communities and

Indigenous peoples specifically, including the importance of co-design to inform how problems are identified in the first place, before working together to engage with their complexity.

National policies on resilience and sustainability through partnerships with the community include the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Department of Home Affairs, 2018b), the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (Council of Australian Governments, 2011), and the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework (Department of Home Affairs, 2018a). The importance of 'shared responsibility' – the emphasis that natural hazard resilience is everybody's business – is stressed in many of these policies. This approach has developed in response to the far-reaching effects of natural disasters, which are understood as whole-of-society concerns more than simply being land management issues. This includes addressing cultural attitudes from populations that may unrealistically expect to be protected from the effects of natural hazards (McClelland 2012, Productivity Commission 2014).

The first known national natural hazards policy advice explicitly in support of engagement with Indigenous peoples is the 'National Bushfire Management Policy Statement for Forests and Rangelands', as endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (FFMG 2014). Two of its 14 national goals state:

- "3) Promote Indigenous Australians' use of fire: Where relevant to Indigenous people, and appropriate, further integrate traditional burning practices and fire regimes with current practices and technologies to enhance bushfire mitigation and management in Australian landscapes."

And:

- "4) Employment, workforce education and training: Build employment opportunities and the skill base of people working in land and bushfire management (including Indigenous communities) to ensure that Australian agencies continue to have access to graduates, technical and field personnel with appropriate specialised education and training."

Further, in 2016, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) endorsed the 'National Position on Prescribed Burning'. One of its principles is: "Traditional Owner use of fire in the landscape is acknowledged". As the national position states:

> "Fire is culturally significant to Indigenous Australians… Where Traditional Owners have not been able to continue these practices the depth of spiritual and cultural knowledge and connection to the land is maintained through stories and memories. Integration of this retained knowledge into current agency practices should be actively supported and promoted. Where knowledge gaps exist, agencies should work with Traditional Owners to build that knowledge, and, where appropriate, revive practices" (AFAC 2016).

These national policies have been informed by, and are informing, national Reconciliation and 'Closing the Gap' policies. COAG policy on 'Close the Gap' has also recognised that they must form "genuine, formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they are the essential agents of change" (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). This involves "recognising and building on the strength and resilience" of Australia's Indigenous people

(Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). Fire agencies also have their own Indigenous inclusion and cultural capability plans (e.g. CFA 2014, DELWP 2015, QFES 2017).

Clearly, these frameworks and policies establish broader terms of engagement with Indigenous peoples burning practices than the narrower technical examinations that have dominated the scholarly field and informed previous inquiries. Current policy has moved on from debates about the specific techniques and purposes of these burns in precolonial times. Instead, Aboriginal peoples' fire management is often framed as not just important for bushfire risk mitigation but also important due to Aboriginal peoples' rights and their connection to Country.

4. Our research:

Previously, the majority of research into contemporary fire management by Aboriginal peoples have been almost exclusively in northern and central Australia (however, see Prober, Yuen et al. 2016, Darug Ngurra, Dadd et al. 2019, McKemey, Patterson et al. 2019). The BNHCRC funded the 'Hazards, Culture and Indigenous Communities' project in recognition of the lack of corresponding research in southern Australia, where the majority of Indigenous-identifying people live.

i. The changing context in southern Australia
In the last decade in southern Australia, there has been a convergence of Indigenous-led grass-roots initiatives, new recognition of Aboriginal rights within land management governance, and a growing receptiveness to collaboration within many government agencies. This has provided a fertile context for dozens of collaborative projects between Aboriginal groups and a diverse array of government agencies that, to varying degrees, either support or implement fire management by Aboriginal peoples. All states and territories in southern Australia now have at least one active cultural burning project and some have several. While this may sound small to those unfamiliar with these issues it actually represents rapid growth over the last decade.

The limited but growing application of Aboriginal peoples' fire practices in southern Australia represents a tangible manifestation of revived and resurgent cultural practices and has been widely covered by regional and national news and institutional media as successful examples of intercultural collaboration (e.g. DELWP 2017, Waters 2017). This positive reporting, however, establishes a linear trajectory of success and obscures the considerable contingencies that are evident from closer study of these emergent collaborations and the experiences of practitioners.

ii. Approach
Our research is based on collaborative work with both Aboriginal peoples and policymakers and practitioners within the natural hazard sector. This is reflected in our research team and end user panel, which has been convened to ensure relevance and iterative learning from project design, execution to the dissemination of results.[1] We have taken an intercultural approach to explore and

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[1] See BNHCRC webpage: https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/indigenouscommunities

analyse the perspectives and experiences of both Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples engaged in collaborative bushfire management initiatives.

Our qualitative research uses tools of interpretation, argument and synthesis to understand how facts and values are understood and negotiated in practice. In addition to literature reviews (Thommasin, Neale et al. 2018), interviews with practitioners across southern Australia (Smith, Neale et al. Under Review), and tools to assist practice, we conducted two in-depth ethnographic case studies of:

> 1) the 'Djandak Wi' cultural burning initiative involving Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners and Victorian government fire and land management agencies (Neale, Carter et al. 2019); and,

> 2) the Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Program's cultural burning initiative, which occurs in consultation with Ngunnawal Traditional Owners (Weir and Freeman 2019).

Across the project, we have conducted over 50 interviews with Aboriginal and non-indigenous fire management practitioners, attended cultural burns, workshops, policy meetings and other related activities.

iii. Findings

The Inquiry seeks to give advice on "any appropriate use of Indigenous practices" in support of bushfire preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. As noted earlier, there is existing evidence that a convergence of factors is already leading to greater engagement and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge in bushfire management across southern Australia, as well as in New South Wales. Such engagement and collaboration is already supported by federal and state policies focused on building relationships with local communities, as well as federal and state policies focused on bushfire management and prescribed burning that affirm commitments to Aboriginal peoples. Further, as nationally, it is appropriate to work in partnership with Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales as distinct communities, leaders of diverse organisations, holders of distinct land rights and interests, governance members for substantive parts of the national conservation estate, and as significant land holders.

Therefore, it is self-evidently appropriate to collaborate further with Aboriginal peoples in bushfire management, and to that end we provide here research-based advice regarding the challenges for sustaining and expanding collaborative bushfire management initiatives. Given the diversity of groups engaged, it is difficult to summarise how state governments, like the New South Wales government, might best support these initiatives. Context is not just important, it is critical. However, there are clearly identifiable challenges that are widespread if not universal across southern Australia.

> 1. *Persuasion:* it has been up to individual Aboriginal and non-indigenous staff in the natural hazards sector to turn national policy guidance into changes in practice. Where collaborations have been successful, they have also been vulnerable to the ongoing involvement of these individuals. In some agencies, cultural burning has been encouraged by top-down mandates

from state institutions to produce more diverse and inclusive workplaces that remain dominated by white, male staff (Neale, Smith et al. 2019). Greater policy and regulatory support are needed if these emerging collaborations are to become a sustainable part of sector learning and practice.

2. *Regulation:* while there are sound reasons for the bushfire sector to be heavily regulated, regulations applied to prescribed burning present significant challenges for cultural burns to be undertaken. On all land tenures, land and bushfire management agencies have overall oversight and control of the application of fire. Assessments of site values, site preparation, rostering of trained staff, advice to community, risks of escape, clearance to light the fire, and so on all take place at the discretion of these agencies and, almost exclusively, non-indigenous staff. Aboriginal peoples typically have little procedural traction within these regulatory processes. Relationships of trust built between regulators and Aboriginal peoples have facilitated collaborative work to achieve better bushfire risk mitigation outcomes.[2] Such relationships are not a quick fix. They require time and are inherently complex, not least because collaboration requires sharing resources and decision-making authority.

3. *Training and qualifications:* bushfire and land management agencies also set and administer the qualifications required for individuals to plan, oversee or attend a burn. There are various reasons why Aboriginal peoples might not be able or willing to complete these qualifications. For example, Aboriginal peoples may not be aware that this training is free and available to anyone. They may also be hesitant to get involved because training is conducted by non-indigenous people, and conducted within local communities where fraught histories have been entrenched between Indigenous and non-indigenous neighbours across generations (Weir and Freeman 2019). Some Aboriginal peoples find the idea that they require training or certification from non-indigenous peoples in the use of fire to be condescending, and thus avoid engagement. Further, some Aboriginal peoples are not able to complete these qualifications due to lack of resources, criminal records, lack of drivers' licence, literacy or other reasons. There are known examples of fire agencies making exceptions in order to support Aboriginal peoples completely fire management qualifications, however these occur at the discretion of regional staff and regional budgets and therefore do not affect the need for statewide policy reforms and budgets for more culturally appropriate and equitable training regimes.

4. *Economic model*s: supporting Aboriginal peoples' burning practices has resourcing implications, and funding to date has not been fit for purpose in southern Australia. Federal programs have been designed around large Indigenous land holdings, which are less common in southern Australia, and are project-based. As both our project and other existing research suggest (Maclean, Robinson et al. 2018), greater consideration needs to be given to the wide variance in the costs of completing a cultural burn, and the fit of current funding schemes. For example, state government grant programs, native title settlements, philanthropic sources, and federal government ranger initiatives such as the Indigenous Protected Area (1997-present), Working on Country (2007-present) and Caring for our Country (2008-present) programs.

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[2] For example, in the Kimberley, the Dampier Peninsula Fire Management Group
https://rangelandswa.com.au/dampier-peninsula-fire-making-a-difference/

5. *Co-located governance:* Australia has co-located Indigenous and non-indigenous governance authorities in land, which are being retrospectively worked through in policy and law. These matters are often raised as the first order of business by Aboriginal people in burning collaborations. Bushfire and land management agencies have their own plans for 'inclusion,' but the implications of this co-located governance are greater than their remit and require whole-of-government coordination and response. Nonetheless, the practice of the collaboration is resulting in practical skills and opportunities to better approach Aboriginal peoples' inter-generational experiences of discrimination through government policies of dispossession, exclusion and assimilation.

6. *Knowledge practices:* How knowledge is judged as 'expert' or 'authoritative' is fundamental to making risk mitigation decisions, and land management more generally. Whilst the sector recognises the importance of resilience, there is a lack of qualitative and transdisciplinary expertise, and the predominance of scientific and technical expertise, in part a legacy of previous sector priorities. Two knowledge practices are particularly influential in learning from Aboriginal peoples' burning. First, as already discussed, Aboriginal peoples' knowledge is assumed to be set in the pre-colonial past. This is now being explicitly addressed through sector policy and activities. Second, science is automatically privileged in risk mitigation matters as evidence (Weir, Neale et al. 2019). As a result, natural hazard decision-makers are routinely faced with answering decisions about values but with only scientific evidence, exposing the sector to additional risks and complexities. Before deciding on technical matters of how best to mitigate risks we need to interrogate what we are protecting and why.

5. Recommendations

Our research has shown that governments and official inquiries should not seek to ask Aboriginal peoples, who have born the impacts of over two centuries of colonisation and discrimination: 'how can your knowledges help our resilience?' Instead, they should ask: 'how can we support Aboriginal peoples and their engagements with bushfire management as part of their and our resilience?' Therefore, we interpret the "appropriate use of Indigenous practices" in terms of what is appropriate to this end, and supporting the good work already occurring in collaborations between Aboriginal peoples and natural hazard management agencies.

There are many ways in which more substantial support for contemporary Aboriginal peoples' engagement in bushfire management could improve bushfire management in New South Wales. We recommend three critical steps:

1. *Funding:* the Inquiry should recommend that the New South Wales Government creates two statewide funding streams specifically to develop Aboriginal fire management initiatives, one relating to building capacity and the other relating to research to support that capacity. The first would include within its scope funding for Aboriginal-led bushfire training and qualifications, purchasing bushfire management equipment for Aboriginal communities and land holders, ways to transport that equipment to burn sites, and the development of Aboriginal-owned bushfire management enterprises (e.g. offering fee-for-service bushfire management). The second would include within its scope funding for research examining the

social, economic, and ecological benefits of contemporary Aboriginal fire management initiatives.[3] Both funding streams should only be available to projects led by an Aboriginal organisation based in New South Wales, direct a majority of their funding to Aboriginal parties, and contain protections for Aboriginal peoples' intellectual property and self-determination.

2. *Partnership:* the Inquiry should recommend that the New South Wales Government establishes clear policy support for 'partnership' approaches in relation to all land and bushfire management issues. Existing approaches address Aboriginal individuals, communities and landholders as stakeholders, meaning they are addressed as one voice amongst others with no special status as First Peoples and distinct rights holders. A partnership approach, like that developed in the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy* (VTOCFKG 2019), would give Aboriginal peoples greater procedural equity in regulatory and governance structures from which they are currently excluded or marginalised. Such an approach needs to be supported with appropriate funding and developed in collaboration with representative Aboriginal bodies, providing a context for partnership arrangements and management objectives to be appropriate to each regional and cultural landscape context.

3. *Performance indicators*: the Inquiry should recommend that the New South Wales Government establishes performance indicators relating to its collaborations with Aboriginal peoples in bushfire management. Like many other branches of public administration, targets and reporting are key drivers of activity and achievement in bushfire management, however the only relevant quantified performance indicators currently used across southern Australia relate to the employment of Aboriginal peoples. In this context, bushfire and land management agencies can therefore both state that they 'support' cultural burning while making few or no actual budgetary or resourcing commitments to cultural burning. In partnership with representative Aboriginal bodies, bushfire and land management agencies in New South Wales should identify and report on clear and quantifiable indicators of their performance in collaborating with Aboriginal peoples.

We thank the Inquiry for their consideration of this submission and these recommendations which, we contend, will increase the capacity for the natural hazards management sector in New South Wales to better engage with Aboriginal peoples, and vice versa. This will increase the overall land and fire management capacity more generally, supporting existing efforts by Indigenous and non-indigenous groups to improve the governance of land and its fire hazards.

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[3] This would be different to existing commitments made by the NSW Government to the Bushfire Research Hub which, while evidently valuable, is not led by Aboriginal organisations.

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SOUTHEAST AUSTRALIA ABORIGINAL FIRE FORUM

An Independent Research Report

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Cover: Murumbung rangers burning at Gubur Dhaura ochre pit, Franklin, ACT. May 2018. Photo: ACT Parks and Conservation

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SMOKING CEREMONY

Ngunnawal man Adrian Brown invited forum delegates to walk through the smoke, as part of being welcomed to Country.

Photos: forum delegates participate in the Smoking Ceremony, hosted by Adrian Brown, with Ambrose House (Otis Williams)

FOREWORD

Just kilometres from the doorstep of Parliament House we sat and we shared food, space, warmth, laughter, knowledge of Country, and connection to it and each other. We spoke of times gone past and hopeful times ahead when our old ways will prevail back on Country. For too long our old people sat without recognition on the fringes of their once rich and abundant Country as they saw country decline and fall sick.

The once common fires dotted across country, lit with intent and purpose slowly went cold and dull as the fires and spirit of the old people waned. Overtime, there was less and less fire until almost no more campfires were left – but now – we are going another way. Now, there are more campfires and the sticks to carry them further and faster than the old people would believe. Whether on foot, wheeled or flying we travel to share our stories. With our knowledge and practice we are reforging out fire pathways back on Country.

We must take up the firesticks in honour of the old people and lore for country. It is time to not only light campfires on the edges of change but to also walk the paths of our ancestors and create the change that country teaches. Country has taught us lore, it is our responsibility to walk the land and learn.

The same spark that taught our ancestors is here today. Fire starts and ends with the same elements – needing fuel, air and heat. Despite the diversity of fire, all fires have an intrinsic relationship with the elements of Country. Working with fire in the ways of the old people we create light, warmth, food and above all lore. Lore from Country.

During the gathering it was a real honour to sit and yarn with so many inspiring people, especially those young ones, our future elders. As you read this report think of the old people and their connection to Country and how you can share and play your part in honouring them and the ones to come.

Oliver Costello
Bundjalung man
Director of Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southeast Australia Aboriginal Fire Forum was a landmark event, bringing together Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples personally invested in expanding the use of cultural burning and supporting the authority of Aboriginal peoples in the management of bushfire in southeast Australia and across the Australian continent more generally.

As the diverse presentations demonstrated, Aboriginal fire management practitioners in southeast Australia face distinct challenges and opportunities moving forward.

This report identifies several key themes that emerged from across the forum: **creating knowledge, sharing knowledge, everyone together, and making it genuine**.

1. Creating knowledge

I. There were repeated references to knowledge generation as occurring through and with Country, and as part of belonging with country.

II. Forum presentations clearly identified that many Aboriginal people have a historically-grounded mistrust of academic research and researchers.

III. 'Research' was also presented as a much broader term, encompassing diverse efforts by Aboriginal and/or non-indigenous peoples that can positively inform land management and a range of collaborations. At times this specifically included academic research.

IV. While the forum demonstrated the importance of research in supporting different kinds of collaboration, it also highlighted the need for clearer dialogue between Traditional Owners/Traditional Custodians and other institutions regarding what research is important for their priorities and how it should be produced.

2. Sharing knowledge

I. Strong interpersonal networks and institutions have been vital in the reintroduction of cultural burning throughout southern Australia. These have been important for sharing knowledge across Australia.

II. Discussions emerging from the forum highlighted the increasing importance of links between Aboriginal people across southern Australia in the recognition and revitalization of cultural burning.

III. The forum identified a need for Aboriginal leadership to develop and communicate appropriate cultural protocols for cultural burning and the sharing of fire knowledge. It is not appropriate for all such knowledge to

be made freely available, and if knowledge repositories are created then access must be controlled in culturally appropriate ways.

3. Everyone together

I. The forum demonstrated the strengths and future potential of personal and institutional relationships between Aboriginal fire practitioners and government agencies involved in fire management. The case study presentations emphasised the mutually beneficial nature of such collaborations to date.

II. Cultural burning was shown to be a focal point and interest for many different people, and this energy offers much for the potential for positive relationship-building between Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians around a common concern for the health and safety of Country.

III. There is a need to include a wider range of participants in discussions surrounding cultural burning. The forum demonstrated, in particular, the important knowledge and interests of women, elders and young people in relation to cultural burning.

4. Making it genuine

I. There is also a strong recognition by Aboriginal people that their engagement in cultural burning and bushfire management more generally needs to move beyond tokenism. Collaboration has to be on meaningful terms to all parties.

II. Identified barriers to future collaborations include: uneven distribution of funding between government and Aboriginal land managers, the unwillingness of bushfire agencies and others to engage in Aboriginal perspectives, overly bureaucratic risk management and regulations that do not account for cultural knowledge and practice, and a widespread reliance on narrow measurements of success (e.g. scientific biodiversity metrics) over other measures valued by Aboriginal peoples.

III. As many presentations noted, some keys to successful and supportive collaborations include a shared emphasis on Aboriginal leadership, joint decision-making and a willingness amongst non-indigenous partners to give up some of their control and authority.

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BACKGROUND

Purpose of the research report

This report was written as part of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre's 'Hazards, Culture and Indigenous Communities' research project (BNHCRC's HCIC). The HCIC research project focuses on collaborations between Aboriginal groups and natural hazards management agencies across southern Australia (see further Appendix 3). The BNHCRC is funded through a combination of Commonwealth research monies, as well as financial and in-kind contributions from government organisations, research institutions and non-government organisations.

We were invited to attend the Forum and write this report by the Murumbung Rangers, with whom we have one of our case study relationships; nevertheless, this is an independent research report written with respect to the HCIC project's research priorities. The Forum facilitators, Coolamon Advisors, prepared an official Forum Report which summarises key findings and provides recommendations emerging from the speakers and participants over the first two days of the forum (Coolamon Advisors 2018). This research report includes excerpts from the Forum Report in textboxes. These reports are valuable for the work of key actors involved in cultural burning, whether they attended the forum or not.

Background to the Forum

The Southeast Australia Aboriginal Fire Forum was organised in partnership between Murumbung Yurung Murra network, ACT Natural Resource Management, and ACT Parks and Conservation Services. The Murumbung Yurung Murra network (Ngunnawal for 'Good Strong Pathways') are Aboriginal staff working mainly in heritage, land and natural resource management in the ACT government. Murumbung Rangers are Aboriginal staff in the Parks and Conservation Service. The ACT Parks and Conservation Service protects and conserves the natural resources of the ACT through managing parks and reserves. ACT NRM (Australian Capital Territory Natural Resource Management) is one of 56 regional NRM bodies across Australia that delivers projects funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. ACT NRM's Aboriginal NRM Facilitator, lead organiser of the Forum, is a member of the Murumbung Yurung Murra network.

The forum had several objectives (Coolamon 2018), to:

- Honour experiences and exchange knowledge about cultural burning across southeast Australia;

- Hear from First Nations people, fire agencies and researchers speaking about their work in fire, ecology, land management and caring for Country;

- Reflect on the future of Aboriginal burning in southeast Australia – how are we evolving with community and Country?; and,

- Develop and support First Nations fire networks.

The forum was held over three days (10-12 May 2018), with about 150 delegates attending. The first two-days comprised of the formal program of presentations and discussion (see Appendix 1). A cultural burning field trip was planned for the third day at the Gubur Dhaura ochre site. The forum also included stall holders showcasing their community, organisation or business, and a dinner (see Appendix 1). Funding for the forum was provided by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the ACT Government.

The forum was particularly significant because it was a landmark gathering of Aboriginal fire practitioners, researchers and government agencies involved in fire management, that focuses explicitly on cultural burning across southeast Australia. The forum builds on the mobilisation of cultural burning activity elsewhere in Australia. This includes, for example, the Firesticks Initiative in New South Wales, which has taken up a coordination and leadership role through convening state-based meetings (e.g. UTS Sydney symposium in 2010 and Walgett Cultural Burning Forum in 2013) and other activities. The Firesticks Initiative is part of the diverse Aboriginal governance networks that are prioritising cultural burning knowledge and practice.

KEY THEMES FROM THE FORUM

In this section we present on what we saw as the key themes that emerged and were debated across the forum. These key themes are: **creating knowledge, sharing knowledge, everyone together, and making it genuine**. We illustrate these themes with examples from the presentations and discussions. This section provides neither a comprehensive documentation of the forum, nor an exhaustive discussion of the themes, but a brief overview of where we identified significant interest and debate converging. The themes reflect a central HCIC research priority of ours, to investigate how knowledge practices inform the opportunities and challenges of engagements between the natural hazards sector and Aboriginal people.

1) CREATING KNOWLEDGE

The need to create and share knowledge of cultural burning was a key theme throughout the forum.

Participants recognised the damaging impact of settler-colonial institutions and authorities in terms of the inter-generational transmission of knowledge and practice between Aboriginal people in southeast Australia, and the necessity of reconnecting with knowledge about Country.

There were repeated references to knowledge generation as occurring through and with Country, and as part of belonging with country.

- More than just place-based experiential learning, this is a recognition of Country as teacher and participant, across relationships held through time and into the future. It is also a positioning of human knowledge, belonging and existence as *within* Country, not external to it. As Ngambri elder Matilda House said, "I am not a TO [Traditional Owner]. The land owns me. And it has taught me many things through my life… No matter where you go on the lands of your ancestors, you will always see your footprints, and we must cherish that for the generations and the times before."

Photo: Aunty Matilda House welcomes delegates to the forum (Otis Williams)

- This co-located mutually supportive relationship provides for a healing and strength-based approach, that is also responsive to loss. The Ngunnawal people, for example, their country is now Australia's growing capital, and this has had immense consequences. As Ngunnawal elder Wally Bell said, "We've lost so many sites through residential development." Aileen Blackburn/Mongta (Aboriginal Women at Yam's Project) emphasised that bringing people and country together is needed, "to get back that laughter and that soul". She also emphasised the mutual beneficial relationships held between fire, water, country and people; especially the yam which, "transcends the landscape like a 'warm blanket'."

- Victor Steffensen (Mulong) presented on how knowledge, Country, and cultural burning co-emerge through the practice. As he said, "It's a formula where the country continues to teach us. ... Not just a knowledge system, but a formula of connecting with a system, and becoming more and more part of the landscape."

Photo: Victor Steffensen presenting on 'Sharing the Fire the Right Way' (Otis Williams)

Many presentations were also concerned with the role of academic research in either supporting or hindering cultural burning. There were several key concerns from presenters, namely:

- Relationships between Aboriginal peoples and non-indigenous researchers have historically been extractive and, sometimes, exploitative. In some cases, these practices of appropriation continue today. This involves researchers recording information in ways that result in communities losing control of knowledge. As a result, many participants in the forum held a justifiable scepticism of research in general.

- Many presentations identified a sense of expectations amongst various stakeholders, and particularly bushfire agencies, that cultural burning will need to be 'validated' or 'confirmed' through scientific research as part of becoming valued by government policy. While relationships with ecologists and fire scientists are often positive, some noted, practices of scientific 'validation' can be viewed as burdensome and condescending by Aboriginal peoples. For example, Sally Moylan (ACT Parks and Conservation Service) noted in relation to ongoing efforts to validate

cultural burning activities, "We all know this, it's just a matter of putting it to paper".

- Research is perceived as potentially damaging if it contradicts or misinterprets Aboriginal knowledge of burning and therefore Aboriginal peoples' ability to speak about land management and their responsibilities to Country.

Photo: Adam Shipp, Yurbay Consultancies, with local bush tucker (Otis Williams)

These concerns suggest that academic research in the context of cultural burning and bushfire management is often equated with the biophysical sciences and as conducted by non-indigenous researchers. However, the presentations also demonstrated a much more diverse academic research agenda, including examples of Aboriginal people controlling and accessing academic research processes to positively inform land management and a range of collaborations.

- Aboriginal people are increasingly involved in the production of research that has the potential to explore questions that can support cultural burning projects. For example, Ray Lovett (Australian National University) presented on the relationship between culture and well-being in land

management programs, research that has the potential to provide further evidence to support ranger programs.

- While the need for scientific 'validation' was seen as a burdensome replication of what Aboriginal people already know, some participants were hopeful that biophysical research could help produce useful ecological knowledge either directly for community use or as a means to draw the support of government agencies towards cultural burning.

- To date, much of the academic research surrounding cultural burning is focused on exploring the social dimensions of Aboriginal land management rather than directly examining issues of ecological resilience or mitigating wildfire hazard outcomes. A better understanding of why collaborations are (or are not) successful in southern Australia may help support future cultural burning projects.

- There was a desire by some participants to access research related to historical and colonial accounts of burning by Aboriginal peoples that could help support localised revitalization projects.

- As such, participants highlighted the need for clearer dialogue between Traditional Owners/Traditional Custodians and other institutions regarding what research is important for their priorities and how it should be produced.

Photo: Ngunnawal elder Wally Bell (left) during a break (Otis Williams)

2) SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Discussions about the creation of knowledge were also linked to issues surrounding the sharing of knowledge.

- Strong interpersonal networks and institutional relationships between Aboriginal peoples have been vital to the reintroduction of cultural burning throughout southern Australia. This has been particularly true with regards to the sharing of knowledge about bushfire from northern to southern Australia, notably through participation in the National Indigenous Fire Workshops in Cape York and the Firesticks Initiative. As Victor Steffensen noted, fire knowledge is distributed across different community members and that "no one fella was a big know-it-all".

- The focused and lively energy of the forum demonstrated the importance of bringing together Aboriginal peoples from different parts of southeast Australia to discuss the complexities of revitalising cultural burning. In particular, discussions around the case study presentations facilitated the sharing of different experiences of Aboriginal groups in realising cultural burning in southeast Australia. For example, how to access land for burning, collaborating with private and public land holders, and building on success.

However, while sharing knowledge was a priority, several participants raised the need to develop appropriate cultural protocols surrounding the sharing of knowledge within Aboriginal communities, across different Aboriginal peoples in Australia and with the broader Australian public.

- Dave Johnston (Australian Indigenous Archaeologists Association) presented on the importance of developing "our own protocols" to address "cultural safety issues" – for example, no go areas, and identifying who the knowledge holders are. Aileen Blackburn wanted to know, "how to do cultural burns without losing the integrity of our protocols, our intellectual property."

Photo: Dave Johnson presenting on 'The Importance of Cultural Protocols' (Otis Williams)

- Thus, while cultural burning is seen to be a practice that is relevant to all members of Aboriginal communities, knowledge of burning is not necessarily seen as something that can or should be shared freely without the responsibilities to country that come with doing it.

- It is not necessarily appropriate for detailed knowledge about cultural burning to be made freely available to the broader Australian public. This can be a source of tension between Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples and may lead to conflict surrounding ostensibly well-meaning projects. For example, efforts to establish national repositories of knowledge can be viewed by government agencies as a supportive step in facilitating cultural burning, but may actually be viewed by Aboriginal peoples as extensions of condescending governance approaches or extractive research agendas.

3) EVERYONE TOGETHER

In the broader context of Australian society, cultural burning was often seen as a source of tension between Aboriginal land managers and a range of government agencies concerned with fire management. However,

presentations from the forum also consistently highlighted the potential of bushfire management in bringing different groups of people together.

- Although fear of bushfire is often seen as a point of difference between Aboriginal and non-indigenous standpoints in Australia, concern over the optimal *management* of bushfire was identified by a range of actors as a uniting concern.

- In many of the case studies, successful supportive relationships were occurring where cultural burning was described as an activity that not only serves Aboriginal peoples' social and cultural interests, but can be a practical tool for government agencies. For example, in the presentation by Greg Packer and Raymond Woods (Riverina Local Land Services), Aboriginal participation in fire management on travelling stock routes in New South Wales was not only seen to be socially empowering but also an important means to conserve biodiversity and reduce fuel loads in remote and underserved areas.

- Further, overlapping goals were identified as having enormous potential more broadly for engagement and positive relationship-building between Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples. Oliver Costello (Firesticks Initiative) noted, for example, that "Fire gives us an opportunity for reconciliation". Similarly, Neil Cooper (ACT Parks and Conservation Service) suggested that cultural burning offers the "power to change together".

Photo: Neil Cooper presenting on 'Fire Management in the ACT' (Otis Williams)

It is not just overlapping interests, but the activity of cultural burning itself that provides beneficial opportunities for engagement, collaboration and partnership.

- Getting on and doing cultural burns was seen as a key opportunity to develop relationships over time. As Heather Tomlinson (ACT Government), contributed form the floor, "We share knowledge and learn mainly through doing." Collaborators Denis Rose (Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation) and Andy Governstone (independent ecologist) talked about "burning as learning". In their engagements with their state government, Andy reported that, "It took a while for them to understand where we were coming from, and for us to understand where they were coming from."

Discussions of knowledge sharing surrounding cultural burning also identified issues of inclusion and exclusion within Aboriginal communities.

- There was consistent acknowledgement of the authority of traditional owners vis a vis Aboriginal people more generally. As Dean Freeman (ACT Parks and Conservation Service) said, "We love our work and what we do, but we are mindful that we are not the Traditional Owners."

- The intergenerational dimensions of cultural burning were a key consideration throughout different segments of the forum. During the participatory workshop, passing on knowledge to the next generation of Aboriginal peoples was consistently identified as central to the future of cultural burning. The case study presentation by Aileen Blackburn/Mongta (Aboriginal Women at Yams project) demonstrated the early age at which young people were previously introduced to their responsibilities for Country and the role of bushfire in managing landscapes.

- Women are underrepresented in both the bushfire management sector and the cultural burning activities of Aboriginal peoples in southeast Australia. The important historical and contemporary role of women, and "women's Country", was repeatedly raised by Ngambri elder Matilda House throughout the forum. The PhD research by Vanessa Cavanagh (University of Wollongong) has significant potential to inform this issue, as it is focused on better understanding the barriers to greater inclusion of Aboriginal women in cultural burning. At the same time, other presentations emphasised the significant interest of women in caring for Country and their cultural responsibilities in relation to bushfire. Aileen Blackburn/Mongta, for example, noted that she learned about burning from both her father and mother.

Photo: Vanessa Cavanah presenting on 'Scoping for PhD Research' (Otis Williams)

Textbox 1: Youth Yarning Circle

On the final afternoon a yarning circle was held with our rising generation of Aboriginal Youth, during which the following points were discussed:

- The importance of mentors, role models and of the support of family, friends and local community

- Passing on cultural knowledge to children is essential and gives you a sense of connection to Country. This learning should be happening in primary school, as waiting till high school may be too late

- Making the most of the opportunity to learn from you Elders, don't be burdened by shame, do it

- Giving young people the chance to speak helps us to be leaders

- The greatest risk is not protecting the environment, and when we have a wildfire through Country we lose something of our cultural heritage, cultural burning can limit this devastation

- Government legislation and cultural heritage act changes allow for cultural sites to be erased

- While we speak about fire with affection, the white experience of fire is one of destruction and trauma

- Bringing back pride in environment helps community wellbeing, but it is complex

This text is from the Southeast Aboriginal Fire Forum Report, by Coolamon Advisors, 2018.
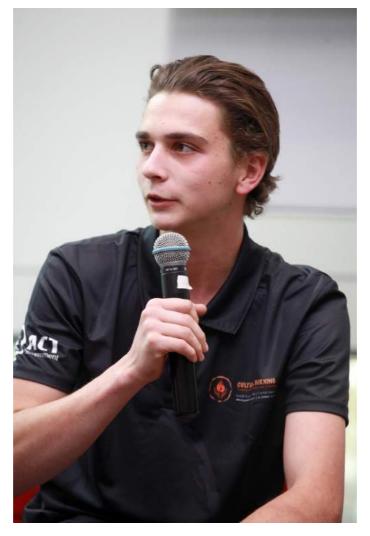
Photo: Ngalan Gilbert speaking in the Youth Yarning Circle (Otis Williams)

4) MAKING IT GENUINE

While there were positive examples of supportive collaborations, there was also a strong recognition by a range of participants that Aboriginal peoples' engagement in bushfire management needs to move beyond tokenism. As Ngalan Gilbert (ACT Parks and Conservation Service) noted in the youth yarning circle, "Get Aboriginal staff and make it genuine". Discussions throughout the forum identified different aspects of non-tokenistic collaboration.

- Moving beyond tokenism requires the creation of knowledge. Bruce Pascoe suggested that he wrote the book *Dark Emu* (Magabala Books, 2014) because he felt lip service was being paid to Aboriginal culture in land management activities. He spoke about a group of academics from The Australian National University, who sought to warn him off his research, telling him "that Aboriginal people were just hunters and gatherers".

- Cultural burning should not be limited to the protection of cultural heritage, but incorporate wider social and ecological landscape values.

As Neil Cooper emphasized, cultural burning needs to be more than just "burning around rock art".

- Control needs to be meaningfully invested in Aboriginal peoples. Dean Freeman defined cultural burning as instances "when Aboriginal people are undertaking each step of the burn".

Photo: Krystal Hurst interviewing Bruce Pasco for a film about the Forum (Otis Williams)

In addition to tokenism, presenters also identified several other barriers to supportive and collaborative relationships with the government agencies engaged in bushfire management and the administration of public lands.

- Presenters identified the presence of tensions between scientific measurements of success and community values. Aileen Blackburn/Mongta noted that the reliance on quantitative metrics in land management is often alienating for Aboriginal peoples and instead emphasised emotional and other meaningful connections. As she summarized, "it is great to have the data … [but] unless you can get back some feeling and some belonging, it doesn't work". She also said, "I don't use words like 'harvest', 'yield', and 'the value of the land'. All that is foreshadowed by the wellbeing of the land."

- Tension was also evident in how non-Indigenous presentations were received by the majority Aboriginal audience, particularly around the issue of whose knowledge and thus whose authority matters. Brian Egloff

(University of Canberra) gave a presentation about the flawed observations of early European colonialists with respect to understanding Aboriginal burning practices, and the importance of reading country. A heated discussion followed on the privileging of colonial voices and written texts over Aboriginal people and their oral histories.

- Relationships between government agencies and Aboriginal staff are often perceived to be "one way". Aboriginal people are required to gain a range of certifications from fire agencies before undertaking cultural burning, but their knowledge is not valued in turn. As Aileen Blackburn/Mongta said, "I had to get my fire fighter ticket so I could do cultural burns... but, yes, we've got regulations too."

As many presentations noted, keys to successful and supportive collaborations are a shared emphasis on shared emphasis on Aboriginal leadership, and a willingness amongst non-indigenous partners to give up some of their control and authority.

- Neil Cooper identified the importance of examining non-Indigenous culture and attitudes about fire management and cultural burning. He said, "We think we have all the knowledge and the power, but that ... is at our own peril."

- Simon Curry (NSW Rural Fire Service), said that they "need to embed cultural burning as a thread through all our prescribed burning." Elaborating what is meant by this, and ensuring that such an engagement is not co-option but meaningful for Aboriginal peoples, is the complex work that forums such as this one help to navigate.

Photo: Aunty Violet Sheridan with dinner speaker Nicola Barker (Otis Williams)

Textbox 2: Recommendations from Coolamon Advisors

It was clear that the first three objectives of the forum were met. The connections required to commence the process of establishing First Nations Network were established. Given this and the other themes emerging from the forum, it is recommended that:

- Further work be completed on how to support the communication channels set up as a result of the forum, e.g. establishing regular meetings, or phone hook-ups where experience and lessons learnt can be shared

- Establish a register of contacts and projects

- Explore ways of increasing community involvement and engagement such as through social media

- Seek funding to establish the forum as an annual event where knowledge can be shared, and achievements celebrated

This text is from the Southeast Aboriginal Fire Forum Report, by Coolamon Advisors, 2018.

Photo: The Murumbung Rangers share a photo with some of the speakers at the end of day two (Otis Williams)

CULTURAL BURN AT GUBUR DHAURA

Given the importance placed on learning and sharing through being and doing, a cultural burn was planned for the third day of the forum. This would be the first time such a large group of people had been invited to a fire management activity in the Australian Capital Territory. A formal fire plan was developed, and a 'pre-burn' was included as a risk mitigation measure. This pre-burn conducted by the Parks and Conservation Service fire unit, created burnt ground to ensure a safe area for forum participants.

Gubur Dhaura is an ochre mining site, an area of European settler heritage, and a small park on top of a hill in the midst of suburban Canberra. Ngunnawal Elder Wally Bell noted that with the protection of this site, "we got lucky." The dual heritage helped ensure the area was protected from urban development. It also added an extra layer of administration for the cultural burn.

Photo: Dean Freeman, Euroka Gilbert and others at Gubur Dhaura (Jessica Weir)

Unfortunately, the rainy weather conditions did not support the cultural burn going ahead that day. Instead, the Murumbung rangers organised a visit to the site to learn about the planned burn from Dean Freeman, and hear about the heritage values from Wiradjuri man Euroka Gilbert. The Murumbung rangers also hosted a visit to the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia at the National Museum of Australia, and the Stromlo Depot of ACT Parks and Conservation Service.

CONCLUSION

The Southeast Australia Aboriginal Fire Forum was a landmark event, bringing together Aboriginal and non-indigenous peoples personally invested in expanding the use of cultural burning and supporting the authority of Aboriginal peoples in the management of bushfire in southeast Australia and across the Australian continent more generally. This report has sought to identify and analyse several key themes from the forum, foremost to support the efforts of Aboriginal practitioners and researchers to realise Aboriginal peoples' priorities for Country. Importantly, the opportunities and risks of the cultural burning activity itself clearly produces a more substantive commitment from non-Indigenous parties to understand and navigate the many governance contexts, priorities and concerns that Aboriginal people bring to this work. As this report documents, presentations and discussions at the forum revealed certain challenges and opportunities in these matters, many of which have to do with the establishment of beneficial collaborative relationships between Aboriginal peoples and between Aboriginal peoples and non-indigenous others.

APPENDIX 1: FORUM AGENDA

Day 1 - Thursday 10 May 2018

8.00am – 9.00am	**Registration**
9.00 am – 9.15 am	**MC Introductions** – Coolamon Advisors
9.15am – 9.30am	**Welcome to Country**
9.30am – 9.40am	**Official Opening** – ACT Government
9.40am – 10.00am	**Fire Management in the ACT –** Neil Cooper
10.00am – 10.30am	**Dark Emu** – Bruce Pascoe
10.30am – 11.00am	**Morning Tea**
	THEME: CARING FOR COUNTRY
11.00am – 11.25am	**Acceptances and Challenges** - Dean Freeman
	5 min Questions
11.25am – 11.45am	**Djigan and Bubil (Fire and Water)** – Aileen Blackburn/Mongta
	5 min Questions
11.45am – 12.15pm	**Research and Aboriginal Fire Management** – Bhiamie Williamson, Jessica Weir and Timothy Neale
	5 min Questions
12.15pm – 1.00pm	**Lunch**
1.05pm	**SHORT FILM: 2016 National Indigenous Fire Workshop at Wujal Wujal**
	THEME: RETHINKING BURNING PRACTISES
1.20pm – 1.50pm	**The Local Land Service Cultural Burning: Finding the Balance Project** – Greg Packer & Raymond Woods
	5 min Questions
1.50pm – 2.20pm	**Cultural Burning and Natural Forces in South-western and South-eastern Temperate Forests** - Brian Egloff
	5 min Questions
2.20pm – 2.50pm	**A Centre of Excellence for Prescribed Burning** – Deb Sparkes
	5 min Questions
2.50pm – 3.20pm	**Afternoon Tea**
3.20pm – 3.45pm	**Sharing the Fire the Right Way** – Victor Steffensen
	PANEL DISCUSSION: COMING TOGETHER, WORKING TOGETHER
3.45pm – 4.30pm	• Oliver Costello • Vanessa Cavanagh • Victor Steffensen • Aileen Blackburn/Mongta
4.45pm	**MCs Wrap Up** – Coolamon Advisors
	End

Day 1 - Thursday 10 May 2018

7.00pm	**Dinner**
7.00pm -10.00pm	**Welcome to Country:** Aunty Violet Sheridan **Song/dance:** Billy Tompkins **Entertainment:** Johnny B Bad and Good Seeds **MC:** Steven Oliver **Special Guest Speakers:** Elsie Seriat (Indigenous Marathon Foundation) Michelle Deshong (Australian Indigenous Governance)

Day 2 - Friday 11 May 2018

9.00am	Welcome **THEME: HEALTHY COUNTRY, HEALTHY PEOPLE**
9.15am – 9.45am	**Importance of Cultural Protocols** - Dave Johnston, Uncle Carl Brown, Aunty Matilda House and Uncle Wally Bell
	5 min Questions
9.45am – 10.15am	**Mayi Kuwayu National Research Project** – Ray Lovett & Roxanne Jones
	5 min Questions
10.15am – 10.45am	**Morning Tea**
	THEME: COMMUNITY DEVELOPED, COMMUNITY DRIVEN
10.45am – 11.10am	**Scoping for PhD research** - Vanessa Cavanagh
11.10am – 11.35am	**Firesticks Initiative/Alliance** – Oliver Costello
11.35am – 12.00pm	**Koori Country Firesticks: Our Fire Story** – Den Barber
12.00pm – 12.25pm	**Burning the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** – Denis Rose
12.25pm – 12.45pm	*Q&A*
12.45pm – 1.30pm	**Lunch**
	THEME: HOW WE CAN SUPPORT COMMUNITY FIRE INITIATIVES
1.30pm – 2.30pm	**Firesticks Community of Practice** - Oliver Costello & Victor Steffensen
2.30pm – 3.00pm	**Afternoon Tea**
	YOUTH PANEL DISCUSSION: SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION
3.00pm – 3.40pm	• Justine Brown • Aaron Chatfield • Ngalan Gilbert • Sally Moylan
3.40pm – 4.00pm	**CLOSING THOUGHTS** – Robert Williams
4.00pm	**Wrap Up** – Coolamon Advisors
	End

APPENDIX 2: TERMINOLOGY

Below are some terms used in this report that some readers might be unfamiliar with, as well as terms that require clarification with how they are used in this report because they have contested or multiple interpretations. With respect to capitalisation, for this report we have followed the style used in the forum materials.

Country	A term many Aboriginal people use to generally describe their homelands, although it has a much broader meaning than just territory. Many Aboriginal people have affiliations to multiple countries through their kinship relations, and countries have multiple peoples. The meaning of country is multi-layered, place-based, and always being re-interpreted in the present. More than a simplistic match with people and language, Country might be known as a family area, a clan group, or a language area, it might be similar to a watershed, marked by plant species, major roads and/or towns; but is rarely clearly demarcated. In recent decades, the Federal government and other non-Indigenous parties have adopted the term 'Country', for example, to locate their environmental and natural resource management programs.
First Nations	This term acknowledges a specific political-legal group of people, as distinct to but also part of a larger pan-Aboriginal identity. First Nations have territorial and self-determination rights, whether formally recognised by the Australia government or not. The term connects with the experiences of First Nations people in North America. See also Traditional Owners, Traditional Custodians and Peoples.
Knowledge	Familiarity, awareness or understanding of something. In all societies, knowledge is made and re-made in the present, and is a composite of different sources.

Peoples	To signify status as a political-legal entity, for example as expressed through governance norms, territories and internal memberships. See also First Nations, Traditional Owners, and Traditional Custodians.
Research	A form of knowledge that is generated through systematic methods, such as observation and experimentation. Academic research is just one form of research, and biophysical research and social science research are categories within that.
Traditions	All societies have traditions, which are constituted in the present, with their defining feature being an expressed continuity with the past.
Traditional Custodians	A group of Aboriginal people who have responsibilities for a certain area of land, their Country. The term is often explicitly used as an alternative to the widely used 'Traditional Owners', which is critiqued for representing relationships with Country as ones of ownership. See also Traditional Owners, First Nations, and peoples.
Traditional owners	A particular group of Aboriginal people who have responsibilities for a certain area of land, their Country. The term was popularised by the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (Northern Territory), and is now commonly used throughout Australia, sometimes as the shorthand 'TO'.
Tokenism	To use superficial gestures in order to avoid or distract from meaningful material engagement.

APPENDIX 3: HCIC PROJECT TEAM

Commencing in July of 2017, the 'Hazard, Culture and Indigenous Communities' (HCIC) project is funded by the Bushfires and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. The project is focused on existing and emerging engagements between the natural hazards sector and diverse Aboriginal peoples across southern Australia. Through collaborative research with Aboriginal peoples and sector practitioners, the HCIC project aims to understand how intercultural engagement can be better supported in practice and policy.

More information is available at:

https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/hazard-resilience/3397

PROJECT LEADERS

Dr Jessica K. Weir, Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University
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Dr Jessica K. Weir has over 20 years' experience conducting research with Indigenous peoples on socio-ecological justice issues.

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Dr Timothy Neale has wide-ranging experience working with the natural hazards sector and Indigenous peoples on projects examining knowledge practices.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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Dr Will Smith has several years' experience working with Indigenous peoples on issues surrounding environment management internationally.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Dr Brian Cook (University of Melbourne)
Oliver Costello (Firesticks Initiative)
Professor Tara McGee (University of Alberta, Canada)
Adjunct Professor Jeremy Russell-Smith (Charles Darwin University)

END USERS

Dr Mark Eccleston (Aboriginal Victoria)
Dr Adam Leavesley (Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service)

Dean Freeman (Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service)

Owen Gooding (Country Fire Authority, Victoria)

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Simon Curry (New South Wales Rural Fire Service)

David Nugent (Parks Victoria)

Stuart Gunning (Office of Emergency Management, New South Wales)

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