



WE ARE BORN ON SICK COUNTRY

First Nations Youth Climate Change Measurement Framework

THE PROJECT

Australia's first measurement framework co-designed with First Nations youth to document how climate change is affecting their lives, cultures, and communities — **on their own terms, in their own words.**

There is **no** existing framework in Australia to measure climate change impacts on First Nations youth specifically

First Nations peoples are disproportionately exposed to climate-related harm

Under UN definitions, youth aged 15–35 represent the majority of the First Nations population. (ABS, 2022) **This is not a youth issue, it is a community-wide issue.**

Western climate metrics miss what matters most: the cultural, relational, and spiritual dimensions of climate harm

The framework builds the published evidence base to inform the next IPCC assessment cycle

Key Fact: First Nations Youth (ages 15–35) represent the MAJORITY of the First Nations population (ABS, 2022).

THIS MATTERS BECAUSE

PROJECT INCEPTION

This project was born at the National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change in Dubbo (2024), where First Nations peoples from across Australia named climate change as a priority issue affecting their communities. From that gathering came the call for First Nations-led research - **research designed by and with communities, not done to them.**

PARTNERSHIP WITH SEED & CSIRO

The project was developed in partnership with the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network (Seed Mob) - Australia's first and largest Indigenous youth-led climate network. Seed brought the network, the relationships, and the legitimacy to centre youth voices authentically. CSIRO provided the technical support. Youth are positioned as co-researchers throughout, and not just participants.

HOW THE RESEARCH WAS DONE

- **Co-designed from the outset:** Seed and young people shaped the research questions, methods, and outputs
- **Impact Yarns methodology:** story-centred evidence approach developed through Kowa Collaboration
- **Research Project Working group:** First Nations knowledge holders representative across all states and territories, gender-balanced, competitive process, skills based
- **Methodology adapted in response to participants:** yarning circles shifted to surveys at Seed gatherings based on what young people wanted; genuine co-design in practice in collaboration with the working group

INDIGENOUS DATA SOVEREIGNTY

- **CARE Principles** Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics
- **FPIC** Free, prior and informed consent at every stage
- **ICIP protections via Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)** — Seed holds the copy right licence on behalf of participants. Existing law is sufficient in this case; no new legislation required
- **True Tracks** (Janke, 2021) and AIATSIS Code of Ethics inform the project throughout

RESULTS

Cultural connection and identity:

Relationships to country, cultural practices, language, ceremony, and sense of belonging

Economic Participation and Educational Engagement:

Country based livelihoods, access to education, and economic participation in climate affected communities.

Social well-being and community relationships:

Family and community bonds, mental health, intergenerational relationships, and collective resilience

Environmental Justice and Physical Wellbeing:

Physical health, food and water security, housing, exposing to extreme weather events.

From co-research with First Nations youth, **six themes emerged:**

Country as living kin

Country is not a setting for climate impacts, it is a living relational being, family that is being harms. Climate change is experienced as **violence against kin.**

Orphaned Knowledge and Temporal Dislocation

Climate change severs the transmission of seasonal and ecological knowledge across generations. Youth feel caught between a breaking knowledge system and an uncertain cultural future.

Colonialism as compounding vulnerability

Climate change does not operate in isolation. Dispossession, underfunded services, and geographic marginalisation amplify every climate impact.

Embodied grief and solastalgia

Young people described profound grief at witnesses environmental loss – dying trees, drying waterways, disappearing species. This grief is felt in the body and the spirit.

Youth as a bridge generation

Participants see themselves as carriers of cultural knowledge into an uncertain future – responsible for holding what their elders passed on while adapting to conditions no one has faced before

Adaptation as a cultural innovation

Indigenous knowledge is not a relic, it is a solution. Youth described drawing deeply on cultural knowledge to respond to climate change. Adaptation is not departure from culture, **it is culture in action.**

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SEED
INDIGENOUS YOUTH
FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



Climate
Systems

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