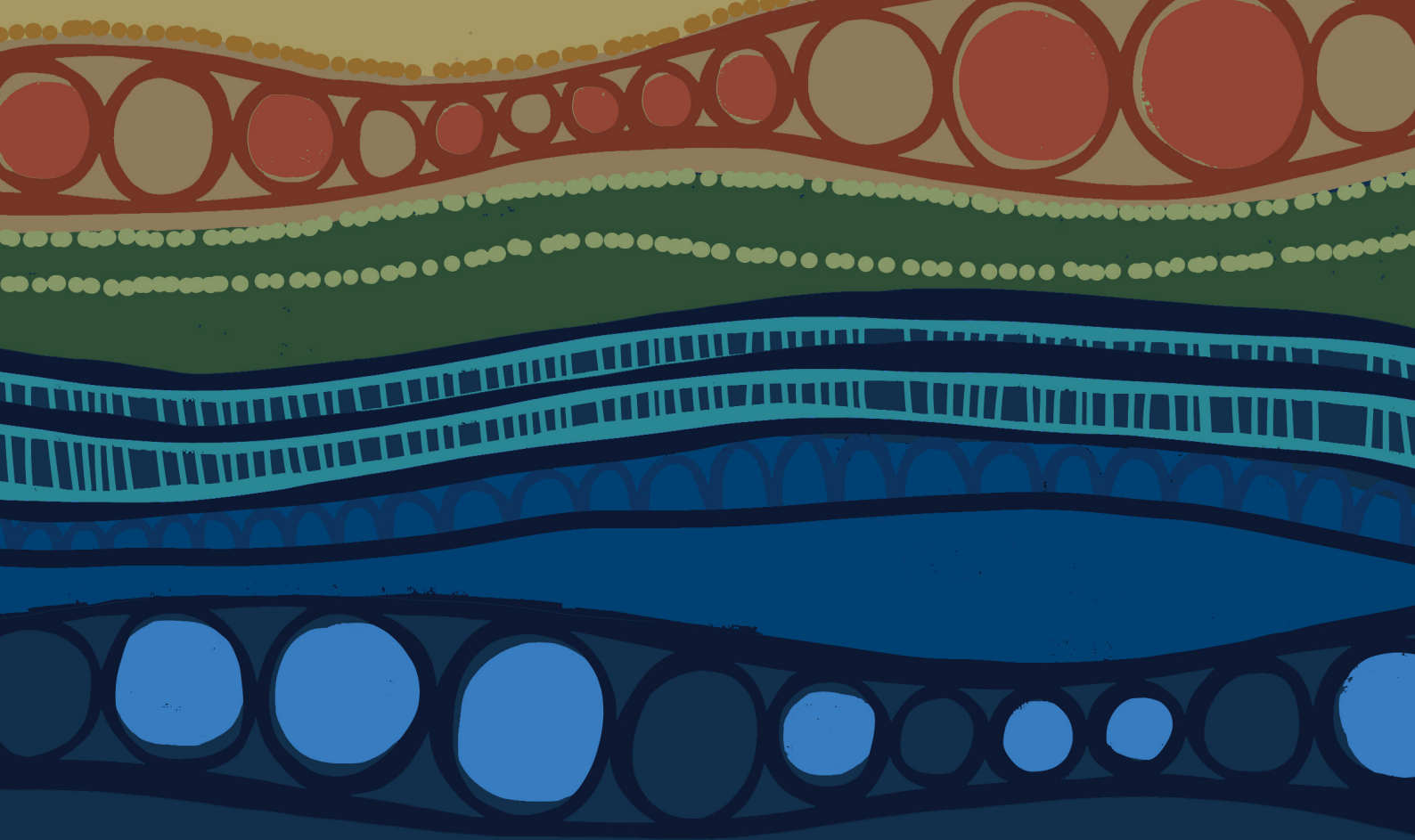




WORKSHOP REPORT

2024 National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change

Tubba-Gah Country, Dubbo
NESP Climate Systems Hub



National First People's
Platform on Climate Change



Climate
Systems

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CSIRO acknowledges that the term Traditional Ecological Knowledge may not be wholly appropriate as it does not include lore and spiritual knowledge, it may only be referring to the tangible ecological Traditional Knowledge.



Foreword

We are pleased to present the report from the 3rd National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change on Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri country at Wilay Gunyah (formerly known as Jinchilla) near the town of Dubbo NSW in October 2024. The National First Peoples Platform on Climate Chnage, previously known as the steering committee, hosted its first international guests from First Nation communities from Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, and the USA. Our International Brothers and Sisters made very moving and emotional comparisons on our similar situations; how devastating climate change events impact small and isolated countries that are third-world countries by economic status.

There is strong interest from our international Indigenous colleagues to continue to develop a collaboration between First Nations Peoples to bring together traditional knowledge on nature-based solutions to climate change. We are grateful that all our Countrymen and Women were able to be a part of this and hopefully will be able to continue to build these relationships going forward.

Australia’s changing climate has increased in intensity over the past century and more. These changes have been depicted in rock art and oral stories passed down from generation to generation. Our Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Indigenous elders from all around the world have been working tirelessly together to share this knowledge of these changes in our cultural landscapes that are constantly changing at a fast rate. But one thing has not changed, and that is our culture, Lore, customs and protocol and our obligation to look after air, lands, waters, and sky.

We were honoured to be elected as the National First Nations Peoples’ Climate Change Gathering Co-Chairs, as we are enthusiastic about helping carry our message stick on and continue the legacy of strengthening our peoples’ whispers into a stronger voice to be heard.

Our onward journey led us from the Coastal Reef of Cairns in 2021 to our inland Freshwater Elders Lewis Burns’ traditional lands of Tubba-Gah in NSW, 2024. Dubbo became the third meeting place to conduct the next dialogue and vision from building on the 2018 statement from First Peoples on Yorta Yorta land, Barmah in 2018 and Cairns in 2021.

Samarla Deshong and Glen Wingfield

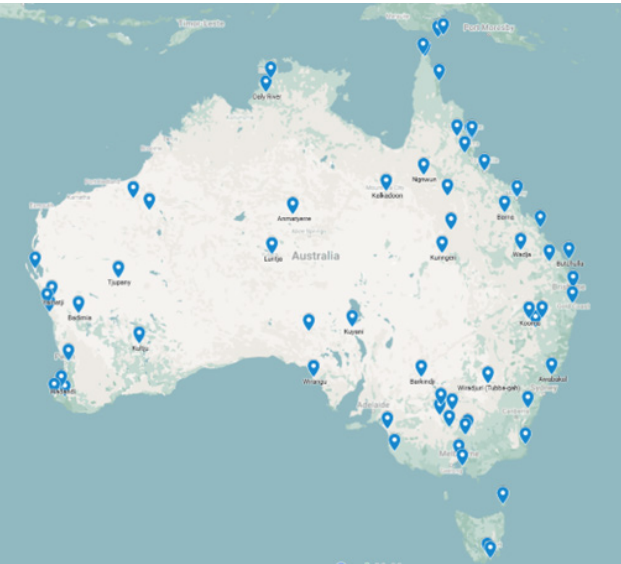
Co-Chairs of the First Peoples Platform on Climate Change – 2024



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Executive Summary



The 2024 National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change (the Gathering) brought together over 130 First Nations, Elders, youth, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders from across Australia and internationally. The Gathering was held on Tubba-Gah Country from 14 to 18 October 2024.

The 2024 Gathering built upon previous Gatherings on Yorta Yorta Country (2018) and Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrigandji Country (2021), and for the first time, included global Indigenous voices from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Fiji, the US, and Canada.

The Gathering aimed to:

- strengthen cultural identity, kinship, and wellbeing
- combine Indigenous and Western knowledge systems to care for Country
- enhance national and international recognition of First Nations-led climate initiatives.

The event supported dialogue around climate impacts and solutions, guided by cultural protocols and co-designed with community leaders.

Key themes and discussions

Reflections on progress and legacy

Participants reflected on earlier climate gatherings and climate change statements (between 2012 and 2021), tracing the growing momentum for Indigenous-led climate dialogue. Presenters, including Lee Joachim (Yorta Yorta), Rowie Bullo, and Jason Wilson, shared milestones achieved in Indigenous climate research, the integration of Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) into scientific processes, and the increasing visibility of First Nations voices in national and international climate forums.

Global Indigenous perspectives

A panel of international guests shared strategies and learnings for Indigenous-led climate action:

- **Professor Kyle Whyte (USA):** Advocated for Indigenous-led climate assessments and a just renewable transition.
- **Brett Huson (Canada):** Emphasised storytelling and art as vehicles for traditional knowledge.
- **Dr Simon Lambert (NZ):** Urged the integration of cultural authority and place-based environmental knowledges into planning.
- **Serina Pickering (Fiji):** Called for youth and women’s leadership in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) processes.

Participants and speakers reinforced that the common narrative around Indigenous peoples as merely ‘vulnerable’ to climate change needs to change. Indigenous peoples should be recognised as innovators, knowledge holders, and leaders.

Youth leadership and intergenerational knowledge

Young leaders like Jazmin Bingham and Wilfred Reuben talked about their readiness to lead and the importance of Elder guidance. A strong call emerged for youth involvement in shaping climate responses and for continued mentorship and shared responsibility across generations.

On-Country experience

Gathering participants visited Willow Gunyah, a culturally significant site, recently returned to the Tubba-Gah community. They walked Country with Uncle Lewis Burns and explored grinding grooves and riverside ecosystems while sharing stories and learning about the interconnected impacts of climate change, including invasive species, river health, and the spiritual and ecological responsibilities of Caring for Country.

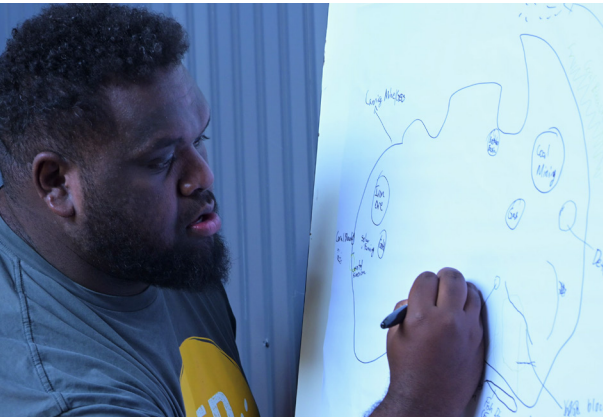
Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change (IPCC) and Indigenous inclusion

A key session focused on how Indigenous peoples can influence IPCC processes. Speakers highlighted the lack of Indigenous voices in peer-reviewed literature and called for new collaborations to produce credible, community-informed content. Opportunities for involvement include co-authorship, case study submission, expert review, and national policy influence.

The 2024 First Nations Climate Statement

Work began on the next iteration of the First Nations Statement on Climate Change, building upon the legacy of the 2018 and 2021 statements. Participants expressed the need for the statement to reflect:

- culturally safe and inclusive authorship
- youth involvement and a potential youth message
- recognition of women’s roles in cultural care and ceremony
- clear messaging about the wisdom of lived experience and the urgency of action.



Yarning Themes

Participants[MH7.1] engaged in yarning circles across five major climate themes:

- **Extreme wet and dry:** Participants highlighted ecological, economic, and cultural disruptions caused by floods and droughts. They called for water rights reform, legislative protections, Indigenous governance models, and place-based adaptation strategies.
- **Fire:** Participants explored the cultural and ecological importance of fire. Traditional Owners called for government support for cultural burning and the removal of bureaucratic barriers that prevent safe, appropriate cultural fire practices.
- **Marine heatwaves:** Participants described the devastating effects of ocean warming and marine heatwaves on coral, seagrass, and species migration. Cross-regional collaboration was encouraged, with proposed case studies from Shark Bay, Bruny Island, and Cairns.
- **Coastal impacts sea level rise:** Impacts in the Torres Strait and Aotearoa highlighted the need for localised adaptation data, better community representation in global reports, and culturally relevant risk planning.
- **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP):** Participants called for greater legal protection of Indigenous knowledge, improved timelines for engagement, and robust governance structures underpinned by Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).



Key outcomes and calls to action

The 2024 Gathering reaffirmed that First Nations Peoples are not only experiencing the worst effects of climate change but are also leading the way in responding to it. Drawing on cultural authority, collaboration, and science grounded in Country, the message was clear: First Nations communities must lead effective climate action. Key outcomes and calls to action during the Gathering include:

- Embed First Nations voices into national and international climate policy processes and frameworks, including the IPCC and upcoming UNFCCC meetings.
- Protect Indigenous knowledge systems through ICIP, consent protocols, and community governance.
- Fund and support Indigenous-led climate projects, adaptation planning, and case studies.
- Recognise cultural burning, traditional water management, and traditional food systems as core components of climate resilience.
- Strengthen intergenerational dialogue and ensure youth are empowered as future leaders.

This report summarises the yarns, discussions, outcomes and calls for action that emerged over the 4 days of the 2024 National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change.



Introduction

The third National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change (the Gathering) was held on Tubba-Gah Country, Dubbo, from 14 to 18 October 2024.

The event was co-designed and led by the National First Peoples Platform on Climate Change (NFPCCC) Steering Committee in partnership with the Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation, supported by the NESP Climate Systems Hub.

The Gathering built on the 2021 Gathering held on Gimuy Walubarra Yidinji and Yirraganydji Country and earlier meetings on Yorta Yorta Country in 2012 and 2018.

'Being the Hosting Community Group is an honour for the Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation. It helps us to show that our priorities lie in working closely with organisations that value the Environment. This gathering will be instrumental in the First Nations-led dialogue on climate change.'

– Lewis Burns, Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation



Purpose of the Gathering

The Gathering aimed to continue efforts to celebrate, learn from, and enhance First Peoples-led climate change action.

Activities at the Gathering aimed to:

- Provide opportunities for Traditional Owners to discuss, share and understand how climate change and high-impact weather events affect Country, communities, and cultural activities.
- Bring scientific information about how climate change and high-impact weather events affect Country in suitable formats that are visual and useful to Traditional Owners.
- Identify policy response options based on a common understanding of the evidence from Traditional Owners and scientists.
- Produce tangible information on climate change, adaptation and solutions to take back to communities.

These activities were designed to deliver three important outcomes:

1. Strengthened kinships, cultural identity and wellbeing
2. Strengthened caring for Country utilising both Indigenous and scientific knowledge systems
3. Enhanced national recognition and support for First Peoples' cultures and land and sea initiatives, including the Gathering's host community.

The Gathering delivered these activities and outcomes through a five-day program in Dubbo, NSW, from 14–18 October 2024. The agenda for the Gathering is provided in Appendix A.

About the NESP Climate Systems Hub

The Climate System Hub (the Hub) was established in 2020-21 under phase 2 of the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program (NESP). The Hub will run until 2026-27.

The Hub helps shape national climate resilience by developing a climate research program that advances our understanding of Australia's climate, its extremes, and the associated drivers. The research will have practical on-ground results integrated across broader risk and resilience initiatives for Australia. The Hub provides an opportunity to further develop Australia's climate science capability while working directly with adaptation practitioners.

The Hub is committed to strong, continued and embedded co-design between researchers, practitioners, First Nations People, data users and decision-makers to establish collaborative partnerships and ensure our science directly informs decisions, policies and adaptation responses.

The Hub values and commits to strong, lasting and respectful partnerships with First Nations Peoples. These engagements encompass principles of Free Prior Informed Consent and Indigenous-lead and co-designed protocols to ensure our research and engagements respect and value cultural protocols and safety.

By integrating modern science with traditional culture and knowledge, the Hub aims to facilitate the provision of all communities with knowledge to protect Country in the face of climate change.

“Look to the future and where the terrible path we are on leads us. Listen to our knowledge and culture...”

About the National First Nations Peoples Platform on Climate Change

The Hub's Indigenous engagement activities are guided by the Climate Systems Hub's Indigenous Facilitator with support from the National First Nations Peoples Platform on Climate Change Steering Committee (the Committee).

The Committee is an apolitical advisory body comprised of Traditional Owners who have been endorsed by their Traditional Owner group to participate.

The purpose of the Committee is to work with the Hub to:

- provide advice and guidance on the research agenda
- develop culturally appropriate projects established under the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
- develop and implement the National First Nations Peoples Gathering on Climate Change
- identify opportunities to include First Nations Peoples and communities in Hub research projects.

The Committee are:

- Sarmala Deshong (Queensland) – Co-Chair
- Glen Wingfield (South Australia) – Co-Chair
- Djarra Delaney (Queensland)
- Learna Langworthy (Tasmania)
- Jason Wilson (New South Wales)
- Peter Reeve (South Australia)
- Sonia Cooper (Victoria)
- Hilda Mosby (Torres Strait)

Previous Gatherings

After holding a dialogue with First Nation participants on Yorta Yorta Country in 2018, it was agreed that an Indigenous-led process was required to provide guidance and advice to the Hub on how engagement should be led by First Nation Peoples. A steering committee of 10 participants from different communities was endorsed to provide this guidance and to help prepare protocols, processes, and tools for internal and external stakeholders. The 2018 First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change (see Figure 2) called for the Australian Government to stop, look, and listen, subscribe to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and provide adequate resourcing.

“We call on the Australian Government to formally and permanently subscribe to articles 31 – 39 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to treat us with the dignity and respect that these principles outline.”

The 2021 First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change (see Figure 3) was released at the second national Gathering in Cairns, 2021. The Statement called for the Federal Government to financially support an annual First Nations-led dialogue on climate change.

“First Nations people of Australia contribute the least to climate change, yet the impacts of climate change are affecting us most severely. When Country is healthy, we are healthy. Our knowledge systems are interconnected with our environment, and it relies on the health of Country. This knowledge is held by our Elders and passed on to the next generation. Solutions to climate change can be found in the landscapes and within our knowledge systems.”

– ugudju, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Tradition



Figure 1: Previous Gathering Attendance Rates (Barmah 2018, Cairns 2021, Dubbo 2024)

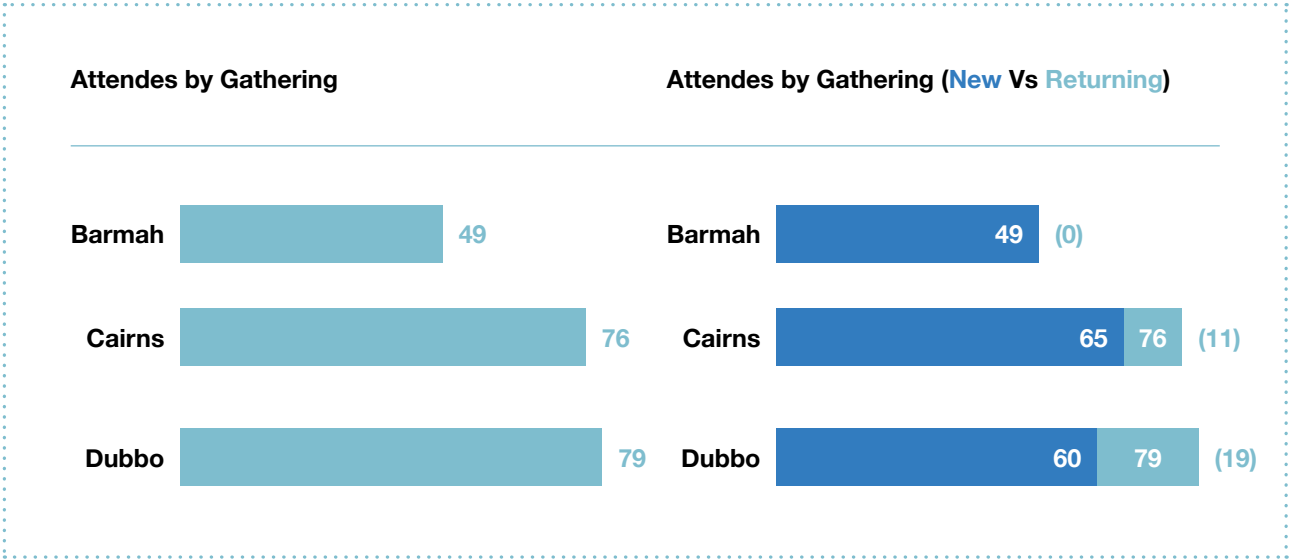


Figure 2: Statement from the 2018 Dialogue, hosted by Yorta Yorta

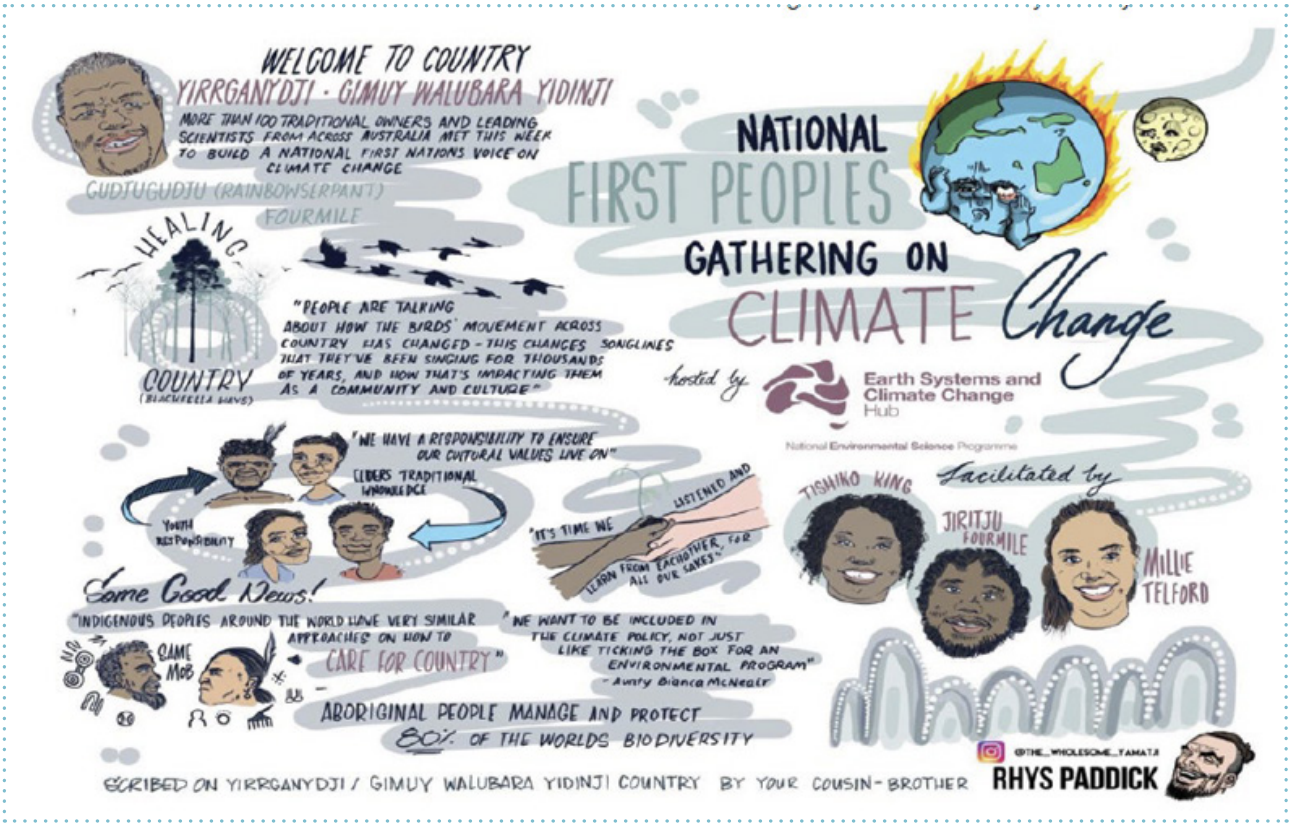


Figure 3: Statement from the 2021 Gathering held in Cairns



National First Peoples
Platform on Climate Change



Indigenous
Partnerships



Climate
Systems

2024 First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change

On the lands of the Tubba-Gah people of the Wiradjuri Nation, we the participants of the National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change, submit the *2024 First Nations Peoples Statement on Climate Change* to the Australian Government.

We the participants, pay respect and acknowledge Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, and Indigenous Elders globally who hold sacred knowledge of land and water management of our earth systems.

Our Elders share their ancient knowledge on how to care for Country in the interests of maintaining the health and wellbeing of all peoples that are connected by the land and sea across the globe.

Our young people have energy, capacity, skillsets and tools to enable action on Climate Change.

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous children and youth globally, are future holders of our Traditional knowledge, through the facilitation of cultural protocols, cultural authority mentors and education.

Climate change and its increasing impacts are a challenge for Australia as a nation. Partnerships built on trusted relationships and respect delivered through a co-designed process that leads with traditional knowledge sharing. These partnerships are essential now to ensure the continued health of our Nation.

A just transition to renewable energy and climate change adaptation and mitigation must respect our rights.

Due to the impact of colonisation and a changing climate, the ability to manage Country using the knowledge handed on down from our Elders has been significantly reduced.

We call on the Australian Government to:

- fund a National Gathering of First Nation Peoples, every second year, to network, exchange knowledge & develop strategies that enable sustainability of Country in a changing climate.
- support the development and establishment of an International Indigenous peer-to-peer network to share cultural learnings and the delivery of placed based activities that will increase the connection between Nations. This will enable a more consistent collective approach to participation at international climate forums initiated by the UNFCCC.

- commit to fund First Nation groups to deliver Climate Adaptation projects within their communities through place-based traditional knowledge.
- allocate funding to fully support the National First Peoples Platform on Climate Change as an independent voice on climate change, with the purpose to achieve cultural safety for First Nations.
- support the establishment of a First People Digital Platform to protect Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property and ensure Indigenous-led data sovereignty security.

We continue to call on all Australians to join alongside the First Peoples of this nation to actively engage in the crisis that we all currently face in a rapidly changing climate. Together, we can create a better future grounded in collaboration, guided by shared knowledge, and driven by action against climate change to leave a lasting legacy.

Welcome to Country and handover ceremony

Gathering opening

The Gathering was opened on the evening of Monday, 14 October, with a special Welcome to Country by Tubba-Gah Elder Uncle Lewis Burns. Indigenous peoples and participants from across four Countries attended the Gathering. In his opening, Uncle Lewis hoped for good outcomes on Country and that participants would “leave with a smile”. This set the tone for the rest of the week for a culturally grounded and collaborative gathering. A smoking ceremony was conducted to assist in cleansing the area and to promote the protection and well-being of visitors.



Handover ceremony

An official handover ceremony was performed to mark the handover of hosting responsibilities, as the role was passed from Yidinji Country to Tubba-Gah Country, symbolising the transition and continuity of leadership across Gatherings. Jiritju Fourmile, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Traditional Owner, presented the gift of a blank shield to Uncle Mel, Tubbah Gah Traditional Owner, to signify unity, strength and power among First Nations communities. Uncle Mel thanked the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people and offered a coolamon (a traditional, multi-purpose carrying vessel) in return, thanking them for hosting the previous gathering in Cairns.



Story of the Gathering

The Gathering brought together a range of respected Indigenous leaders, Traditional Owners, researchers, and stakeholders to reflect on and share stories on the journey taken by First Nations communities on climate change action, research, and knowledge sharing. This session highlighted decades of progress, identified ongoing challenges, and laid the groundwork for stronger collaborations rooted in respect, cultural integrity, and co-design. Co-chairs of the National First Peoples Platform on Climate Change, Glen Wingfield and Samarla Deshong, opened the session by reading out the 2021 First Nations Peoples Statement on Climate Change. A video on the platform was also launched and introduced by Djarra Delaney. The video tells the story of the Platform’s evolution and impact, highlighting how it has grown from the first dialogue on Yorta Yorta Country in 2018 into a powerful, ongoing movement connecting Traditional Owners, researchers, and international Indigenous voices. The video showcases personal reflections on climate impacts and community resilience, while showcasing the role of First Nations Peoples as global stewards of Country. The video celebrates the Platform’s growing reach and unity, its focus on youth and intergenerational knowledge transfer, and its mission to ensure that First Peoples’ voices shape climate adaptation and action locally and globally.



Looking back: progress throughout the early 2000s

Lee Joachim

Lee Joachim, former Chair of the Yorta Yorta Nation, reflected on the remarkable progress since the early 2000s. He noted that 14 years ago, “there were no black fellas in the room,” underscoring how far things have come.

He recounted the community’s early focus on climate change, drought, and water shortages between 2001 and 2010. This led to extensive collaboration with Elders and researchers across the Murray and Lower Darling regions. A key milestone was the 2012 climate change workshop in Echuca, hosted by Yorta Yorta, with 80 participants from 11 nations.

Lee described critical early collaborations, including with Charles Sturt University (2004), the Murray–Darling Basin Commission and the Victorian Environment Commissioner (Dr Kate Auty) in 2008, alongside Monash University and international experts, on topics such as land use and occupancy and how the waterways had changed over time.

Lee explained how Yorta Yorta was the only applicant for a key NCCARF research grant at a time when climate research rarely involved Indigenous communities. Their first project prioritised intergenerational dialogue and sought to integrate “white data” (from MDBA, water authorities, CMAs, etc) about Country with Yorta Yorta knowledge systems, including Dreamtime stories.

In 2014, Yorta Yorta contributed to a conservation conference in Sydney where a National Science Foundation was formed to investigate investment across the Pacific and assess the involvement of First Nations Peoples. Although some funding attempts were unsuccessful, such as with the World Bank, this engagement facilitated regional coordination and collaboration with Indigenous people in the region, including with Solomon Islands and Vanuatu communities.

Lee emphasised early struggles in data recognition and protection and ethics. If knowledge wasn’t documented in Western formats, it was often disregarded. First Nations People had to fight for the legitimacy of their language and knowledge systems.

2018 Yorta Yorta dialogue

Damian Morgan-Bulled

Damian reflected on the 2018 National Indigenous Dialogue on Climate Change, held at Barmah National Park and hosted by the Yorta Yorta Nation. Despite initially having “little interest from white Australians to provide support”, after 2 years of collaboration and relationship building, the event gathered 90 participants and helped foster essential relationships, including with CSIRO.

A significant milestone from this first Gathering in 2018 was the development of the initial First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change, where Traditional Owners collectively articulated their perspectives on climate change. Ethical considerations and protocols were at the heart of the discussions at this Gathering, establishing a strong foundation for future dialogues.



2021 Cairns Gathering

Rowie Bullio

Rowie shared insights from the 2021 National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change held in Cairns, hosted by Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrigandji. With 120 participants from 45 First Nations, this second Gathering marked several significant developments.

- Broader representation through an inclusive participant identification process.
- Formation of a steering committee for the Platform, prioritising cultural safety and Indigenous governance.
- Support from the Climate Science Hub for incorporating Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) into contracts for the first time.

Rowie shared insights from the 2021 National First Peoples Gathering on Climate Change held in Cairns, hosted by Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrigandji. With 120 participants from 45 First Nations, this second Gathering marked several significant developments.

Rowie also highlighted the increasing prominence of Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The importance of integrating Indigenous Lore with Western systems was again stressed at this second Gathering. She emphasised the need for flexible support structures and the urgency of ratifying the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Rowie outlined some key learnings for the Hub and the National Environmental Science Program more broadly. These include:

1. The importance of staff retention.
2. Embedding Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) into policy.
3. The critical role of social science alongside physical science in climate research.

The here and now: Dubbo 2024

Glen Wingfield

Glen spoke about this third 2024 National First Nations Peoples Gathering on Climate Change in Dubbo on Tubba-Gah Country. This Gathering hosted about 130 participants from across Australia and, for the first time, included international guests.

Samarla Deshong

Samarla reflected on the growing awareness of sea level rise and its implications for Country. She noted concerns raised by Elders in 2010 about the future of freshwater and saltwater ecosystems and their impact on bush tucker and medicinal plants.

Samarla talked about the development of the first Country Sustainability Plan and emphasised that while First Nations communities and Elders welcome collaboration with Western science, they also bring their own scientific knowledge.

She emphasised the good work of the National First Peoples Platform on Climate Change in building relationships and enabling communities to work with researchers, noting the need and desire for communities to understand climate change data.

Samarla advocated for strong relationships, grassroots engagement with traditional Owners, and co-design as essential ingredients for meaningful partnerships.

She reflected that at each passing Gathering, the representation by First Nations peoples is growing, with more communities involved. But she also highlighted the need for continuity beyond Gatherings: “No use seeing us all for one day and then everyone disappearing again.”

Northern Murray–Darling Basin perspectives

Jason Wilson

Jason shared his long-standing involvement with climate change efforts in the Northern Murray–Darling Basin dating back to 2008. He called for renewed attention to traditional stories, encouraging communities to explore how climate change is embedded within these stories.

Reflections on the Climate Change Statements and future directions

Reflections on the two First Nation Peoples' climate change statements (2018 and 2021) highlighted the importance of inclusive and ongoing co-design processes. Participants noted that these statements represent a collective expression of what First Nation peoples want to convey about climate change, grounded in co-design, voiced independently, informed by knowledge held by Elders, and passed on to future generations.

The 2024 iteration of the Statement is currently under development, with participants invited to nominate representatives for a working group to help shape its direction.

Sonia Cooper, Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner, offered a reminder of the lived experiences of First Nations Peoples and the need for recognition beyond academic or policy frameworks. "Just because someone is saying it's climate change, doesn't mean we haven't lived it."

Attendees viewed the short film 'Nhawul Bultjubl Ma', produced by the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and filmmaker Michael O'Dwyer. The video powerfully expressed community voices and an urgent call to protect Country.

The historical context was provided through references to:

- the 2012 NCCARF Report, noted for its insights
- the 2018 National Indigenous Dialogue on Climate Change Report, which carried forward the momentum of earlier discussions
- the 2018 First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change, noted for its clear stance of resistance.
- the 2021 First Nation Peoples Statement on Climate Change, which, while differing in tone from the 2018 statement, builds upon it.



Participants noted that the collective narrative developed across 2012, 2018, and 2021 from dialogues, Gatherings and statements, and the emerging dialogue in 2024 has formed a progression of intent, resilience, and advocacy, with calls directed at the Australian Government to:

- Stop, look, and listen
- Resource First Nations people adequately
- Engage with humility
- Stop desecrating Country

Participants revisited the 2018 Statement, which called for the development of a Torres Strait Climate Taskforce – a commitment that has since been achieved.

- "If you only see with one eye, surely you can't see" – a call for holistic understanding that integrates Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.
- Justice for First Nations Peoples is climate justice.
- A reaffirmed commitment to honouring sovereignty, collaborative knowledge sharing, the merging of two worlds, and a shared vision for the future.

The session concluded with reflections on how international Indigenous perspectives could align with the aims and goals of the Gatherings and Platform.

Ethics and climate science

This session of the Gathering focused on ethical practices in climate science and research, particularly when engaging with Indigenous knowledge systems. The discussions focused on the need for a transparent, respectful, and Indigenous-led approach to co-design and data governance.



Co-design consent process and code of conduct

The co-design consent process and code of conduct, developed and approved at the 2021 Cairns Gathering, were presented as guiding frameworks for ethical engagement:

- The process is Indigenous-led and co-developed with the Climate Systems Hub, ensuring that research and collaboration respect cultural protocols.
- An Indigenous facilitator plays a central role in engagement and collaboration.
- A code of conduct has been created specifically for non-Indigenous participants and researchers, establishing clear expectations for respectful behaviour and accountability.

Consent forms need to include the following:

- an outline of the purpose of the research or engagement
- the desired outcomes
- an explanation of how knowledge will be shared and applied
- the importance of listening to science while hearing from Country
- strategies for impacting systems of government
- clear explanation of how the actions will return tangible benefits to communities.

The consent form has evolved over time to ensure it is culturally appropriate and accessible. It was emphasised that no information will be included in reports without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Concerns were raised about allowing the consent forms to be made available online, noting that “once it is online, we lose all control.” How is a safe space created to allow stories to be held respectfully over time?

Authorship and report governance

The session reinforced that authorship of Gathering materials must be shared. All Indigenous participants will be credited as authors—not just as contributors but as authors and knowledge holders.

Samarla Deshong confirmed that everyone will receive a copy of the report before publication, allowing individuals to provide feedback and request changes. This approach ensures Indigenous voices are front and centre, with each participant listed as an author.

It was agreed that the Gathering’s final report would be structured by themes or sessions covered at the Gathering, allowing participants to opt in or out of specific sections of the report and withdraw their contributions at any stage.

The NESP Climate System hub will manage the publication process to ensure cultural safety and protect intellectual property. During the review phase, any content flagged by participants can be removed. Participants are not required to share personal or cultural knowledge if they are uncomfortable doing so.

Audience questions and concerns

Key insights from participants included:

- calls for clarity on the ‘ownership’ of the report by NESP
- concerns about potentially losing control of information once it is published online
- discussions about distinguishing between common knowledge, which should be shared publicly, and sacred knowledge, which requires protection.

International perspectives

This panel session brought together global Indigenous leaders, researchers, and advocates to explore how traditional knowledge systems can lead the way in understanding and managing climate risk.

With shared experiences across continents, the panel emphasised the following:

- collaboration
- opportunities to leverage the next two United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings for influence and visibility
- the need to reframe dominant narratives within climate science.

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Dr Jo Mummery

Climate System Hub Steering Committee Chair

Jo opened the session by acknowledging the crucial role of emerging Indigenous youth in shaping climate futures. She stressed the value of two-way knowledge sharing, guided by cultural protocols and built on mutual respect

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Professor Kyle Whyte

US Science Envoy

A leading voice in environmental justice, Kyle talked about the need to integrate Indigenous rights and knowledge in climate planning.

Key insights from Kyle included:

- Collaboration across communities helps break silos and build collective power.
- Politics is not separate from the environment, and government systems need to reflect this

interconnectedness.

- First Nations people are not merely ‘vulnerable’ but adaptive and visionary. Dominant climate science narratives must shift to recognise this.
- Indigenous communities must resist the fossil fuel system and advocate for just renewable transitions.

Kyle shared that in the U.S., Indigenous leaders helped shape the National Climate Assessment, ensuring Indigenous-led conclusions inform national climate directions. However, concerns persist around:

- loss and damage negotiations potentially leaving Indigenous communities behind
- carbon markets and some renewables replicating colonial extraction
- the need for a unified global Free, Prior and Informed Consent voice, especially with COP31 to potentially be hosted in Australia following Brazil.

“It’s really been amazing to be at this gathering because it reminds me of what we do as tribal nations in the United States.

We started getting together [several decades ago], and we’ve really achieved a lot domestically in terms of transforming climate policy for the sake of Indigenous wellbeing.”

“And I can see that same energy and that same momentum here.”

– Professor Kyle Whyte, US

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Brett Huson (Hetxw’ms Gyetxw)

Gitxsan Nation, British Columbia

As a science communicator and storyteller, Brett highlighted how traditional knowledge is preserved and conveyed through music, stories, and art. How communication and the way information is shared between nations should be multidisciplinary. Don’t silo research; instead, work together collaboratively.

Brett shared that:

- Canada’s National Risk Profile overly focuses on economic impact, neglecting socio-ecological knowledge.
 - Mythologies and oral traditions are carriers of truths. They can be used to communicate and share learnings about adaptation responses and next steps.
 - Quantitative frameworks often fail to value what matters most to Indigenous Peoples.
 - Qualitative, place-based knowledge must be integrated into climate assessments.
-

Dr Simon Lambert

Chief Scientist, Te Tira Whakamātaki

Simon, an expert in Indigenous climate policy and biosecurity, shared reflections from Aotearoa, New Zealand.

- Urban climate planning is critical: 85% of Māori live in urban areas, making the inclusion of climate change in urban planning essential, as urban spaces are also on indigenous land.
- Language shapes inclusion: The 2017 International Indigenous Statement on Disaster Risk Reduction highlights that words matter.

Simon highlighted some ongoing challenges in NZ.

- Environmental and Indigenous advocates face targeted political opposition.
- The short submission windows for policy responses (e.g. as little as 5 days) are structural barriers to Indigenous participation.
- The Treaty of Waitangi is threatened by organised efforts to undermine Māori governance and constitutional partnership.

He advocated for:

- A cultural license to operate – ensuring those who speak have the authority and relational mandate to do so.
 - Supporting diverse technical skills (e.g. satellite mapping) alongside traditional knowledge.
 - Building shared tools for Indigenous communities, such as downloadable ethics governance templates.
 - Mentoring the next generation – ongoing need to practise to gain skills, as ‘None of us are born polished.’
-

Birrin Hooper

*Australian Government
Department of Climate Change,
Energy, the Environment and
Water (DCCEEW)*

Birrin outlined Australia’s efforts to elevate Indigenous voices on the global climate stage.

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Serina Pickering
Fiji, Member of Itaukei Women in Conversation

Serina shared a powerful testimony established in personal experience from Tropical Cyclone Winston: losing her home, power outages, and disrupted access.

She shared that:

- storytelling can help communicate in a more imaginative and compelling way
- there is a gap in traditional knowledge education in Pacific nations
- past Fijian government reforms removed key traditional leadership structures, such as the Greater Council of Chiefs.

Serina called for:

- more youth and women in leadership roles at international forums
- ensuring Indigenous voices are not just a side event at global climate summits
- dedicated Indigenous-led sessions within the IPCC and COP frameworks.

“I just want to put the message across that climate change is real, you know. Not only does it impact our environment, but our daily life also.”

– Serina Pickering, Fiji

Samarla Deshong
Great Barrier Reef and Climate Change Initiatives

Samarla echoed the global voices on the panel, stressing that the experience of 278 First Nations communities across Australia aligns closely with international concerns.

She stated that climate change is one of the most significant issues affecting culture, impacting food, bush medicine, and cultural practices.

Samarla highlighted that the relationship with the NESP Climate Systems Hub and its co-design approach is critical. She noted that Indigenous perspectives must reshape how non-Indigenous systems approach to care for Country and adaptation activities.



Key themes from audience questions

Networking and collaboration

- How can First Nations groups connect across regions and internationally?
- How can safe spaces be created?
- Non-governmental networks need to be created, and strong communication fostered,
- Look to influence risk assessment and adaptation planning activities.

Challenges in research and authority

- Climate research often profits from communities without returning benefits.
- Calls to unify with self-governing, community-embedded leaders.
- Greater authority, consent, and accountability are needed.

Colonial legacies and ecological futures

- Australia is the only developed nation listed as a deforestation hotspot. We also hold 15 of 35 global biodiversity hotspots.
- Colonial land management is still prevalent, and the system needs to move beyond this.
- More non-Indigenous Australian people need to care about climate change and the environment, embrace Indigenous narratives, and support systemic change.
- Solutions could include building relationships with allies, better communication (such as through social media), and connecting songs and storylines.

Data is knowledge

- Traditional practices and stories must be recognised as valid data.
- Control of this data (online distribution and appropriate authorship) remains critical.

COP and global Indigenous engagement

- Australia must signal its intent to do things differently when hosting COP.
- Ceremony and cultural protocols must be used to bring together government, researchers, youth, and Elders for meaningful engagement.
- Prioritise the inclusion of First Nations voices in key documents, such as the State of the Environment, Nature Positive papers, and IPCC reports.
- Interconnectedness between nations and connections between Traditional Owners and researchers is required.

“We are all fighting individually. The way forward is collaboration. Only then can we be heard together.”

– Serina Pickering, Fiji

Traditional Owners sharing climate change knowledge and experiences

This session brought together Traditional Owners from across the country to share lived experiences, place-based insights, community-led research, and reflections on the cultural and environmental impacts of climate change on Sea Country. Speakers provided examples of how Traditional Owners are leading climate adaptation work, both in community-based projects and national planning contexts.

Jade Gould
Butchulla Nation, K’gari (Fraser Island) and Wapaburra (Keppel Islands group)

Jade presented on the K’gari Climate Adaptation Project, which began in 2019 and concluded in 2024 and was a partnership between the Butchulla people, World Heritage Managers, and the NESP Climate Systems Hub. The project assessed the impacts of climate change on K’gari and Butchulla Country. The region recently experienced burning of 65% of the island and the hottest, driest conditions on record.

Key outcomes for the Butchulla community included:

- An increased shared understanding of climate change risks to Country.
- Collation of knowledge about cultural and natural values that can be held by the Butchulla people and used for other purposes.
- Information provided to inform Butchulla planning activities and other projects, such as the Butchulla seasonal calendar, National Park Management Plan, and the World Heritage Strategic Plan.

- Integration of information on future climate risks into the Butchulla work program and on-ground management activities and priorities.

Outcomes for the NESP Climate Systems Hub included:

- Testing of co-design adaptation methodologies.
- Further development of the World Heritage adaptation planning toolkit and plain-language guide.
- Influence on World Heritage management processes.

Outcomes for World Heritage Managers (QLD Department of Environment and Science) included:

- Development of an approach to planning for climate change for the K’gari World Heritage Property.
- Co-developed adaptation planning options, including tools, information and strategies.

The project’s governance model included collaboration across various government and Native Title bodies, with First Nations participation coordinated through expressions of interest and Elder sign-off. A significant aspect of the work was the ability to assess climate impacts on cultural values – something not possible under traditional World Heritage frameworks.

Jade also described examples of climate change impacts on Butchulla Culture:

- Rising sand temperatures lead to only female turtle hatchlings, posing a long-term threat to turtle populations and cultural harvest practices.
- Under a high emissions future, the number of hot days will increase, and the average temperature may increase from 21°C to 25°C by 2090. This will increase the risk of more flying foxes overheating and dying from heat stress.

The project team developed several versions of the climate adaptation plan:

1. A visual, storyline-driven version for community use.
2. A more technical document for decision-making and planning purposes.
3. A case study outlining the project’s methodology and achievements.



Peter and Marilyn Wallace
Wujal Wujal, Far North Queensland

Representing Quinkan Country (located near the small town of Laura, extending from Mossman to Cooktown in North Queensland), Peter and Marilyn shared their lived experiences of the disruptions caused by Tropical Cyclone Jasper, which devastated Wujal Wujal.

Despite their home being built on a ridge 1km from the river, it was inundated. They were forced to relocate

to Cairns and, 10 months on, continued to face road closures and limited access to Country.

They shared that:

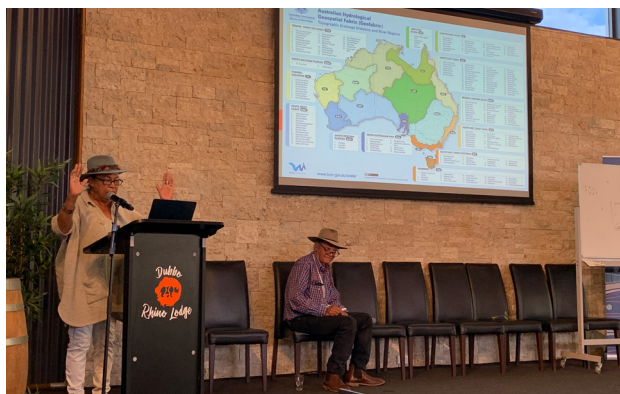
- A similar cyclone event in 2018 took 6 years to recover from—now, following Jasper, the community is once again displaced.
- Sacred and cultural sites have been damaged, some through landslides and others through vandalism. The full extent of the physical damage is not yet evident.
- Teaching places and access tracks need significant repair, not just physically but with interpretive materials that encourage respect and understanding.
- Despite the damage, no one has asked the Elders what they need to see happen.

Peter and Marilyn stressed the importance of recording stories and teachings for younger generations.

They also called for the re-establishment of a national cultural lore council to preserve and pass on cultural stories.

“If young people aren’t listening, we need to record stories so they can listen later.”

– Peter and Marilyn Wallace Wujal Wujal, Far North Queensland



**Auntie Suzanne Thompson and
Uncle Vincent Forrester**
Iningai Country (Barcaldine, QLD)

Representing the Yambangu Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Aboriginal Corporation, Auntie Suzanne and Uncle Vincent spoke about the importance of Country as a teacher and their ongoing cultural tourism and land care initiatives.

Their reflections included themes such as:

- Marra Wonga, an ancient site, a “place of many stories,” located on the coastline of a prehistoric inland sea.
- The need to understand ancient lore and stories to understand today’s environment and apply this learning to help restore Country.
- A belief in ‘Ngapadji Ngapadji’ (reciprocity) — “You give me, I’ll give you.”
- Emphasising that only those who truly respect Country should be welcomed as guests.
- Referencing the Bureau of Meteorology Geofabric map, which visually mirrors Traditional Owner boundaries.
- A call for unity: “One song, one people, one story.”

Auntie Suzanne Thompson also called for the establishment of a cultural law council.

Jazmin Bingham
Mount Gambier, South Australia

At just 16 years old, Jazmin was named SA Limestone Coast Young Person of the Year. Representing South Australian youth, she spoke about her personal observations of climate shifts in her region, including more frequent bushfires, dry winters, and shorter summers marked by extreme heat.

She posed the question:

“What is young people’s role in climate justice?”

Jazmin believes young people must keep raising awareness and take action to protect their future, even if others don’t yet understand the urgency.

Jade Gould added to this, stating that young people must gain the backing of Elders and recognise that the opportunities they have today result from past struggles.

“We’ve been given the opportunities our old people fought for. Now we need to get outcomes for our mob.”

**On-Country experience at
the Gathering**

Participants spent a day on Wiradjuri Country to experience knowledge-sharing, walking, and cultural learning at a site known as Willow Gunyah – a culturally significant area that recently returned to the care of the Tubba-Gah Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation.

Led by Tubba-Gah Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation Chairperson Lewis Burns, participants explored the property, learning about the local landscape and cultural features, such as the jerramungup grinding grooves and a riverside talking circle.

Throughout the day, speakers reflected on the importance of integrating First Nations knowledge with scientific approaches. Co-chair of the National First Peoples Platform on Climate Change, Glen Winfield, emphasised the urgent need to address the environmental consequences of colonial land management. CSIRO climate scientist Simon Masland spoke about his growing awareness of interconnected water systems and the value of Indigenous perspectives in understanding environmental flows and sustainability.

“There were many lessons I took from his [Lewis Burns] stories, but it reaffirmed to me that negotiating is key for our mob. They compromised and negotiated to achieve something great for their community.”

– Professor Kyle Whyte, US

The visit highlighted the impacts of environmental changes, particularly the damage caused by invasive carp to local river systems.

“The carp is in there, and we need to do something to get the carp out because it’s changing the rivers. It’s changing what fish we can get out of the rivers. And we need to try and reverse that.”

– Lewis Burns, Tubba-Gah Traditional Owner

“It’s really of fundamental importance that we listen to the First Nations’ voice. There’s a lot of knowledge that can be gained from that listening, and it’s fundamental to how we care for our country, how we care for the water in our country, that we listen to people who have been managing a changing country for many thousands of years.”

– Simon Marsland, CSIRO

Suzanne Thompson, Yambangu Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Aboriginal Corporation reminded attendees of the resilience embedded in Indigenous knowledge – knowledge that has seen First Nations peoples survive multiple climate transitions. She called for genuine respect and inclusion of Indigenous voices in climate conversations, noting, “We actually have a gift for humanity... all we ask for is just to be heard.”

The day reinforced the power of on-Country engagement in sharing stories and fostering deeper understanding between First Nations peoples and scientific communities.

Ministers' Messages

Minister McCarthy's address to the Gathering

In her address to the Gathering, Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for Indigenous Australians, acknowledged the Wiradjuri people and the importance of First Nations knowledge in addressing climate change. She emphasised the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are at the centre of climate solutions, recognising both their exposure to climate impacts and the strength of their cultural and ecological knowledge.

The Minister outlined several key initiatives aimed at giving communities a greater say in climate and energy policies and initiatives, including the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy, the National Climate Risk Assessment, and the National Adaptation Plan. Minister McCarthy also noted the government's substantial investment in expanding the Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas programs, which support land and sea management in accordance with Traditional Owner aspirations.

"Climate change can and does affect each of us and our communities differently," she said, underlining the need for inclusive, collaborative solutions that reflect the realities and expertise of First Nations Peoples. She concluded by encouraging participants at the Gathering to continue sharing ideas and working together, stating that "we need to work together on finding solutions to the challenges we all face".

Assistant Minister Wilson's video message

The Hon Josh Wilson MP, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy, addressed the Gathering via a video recording, acknowledging the Wiradjuri Nation and reaffirming the Albanese Government's commitment to placing First Nations Peoples at the centre of Australia's climate and energy transition.

Minister Wilson emphasised that climate change is already disrupting lives, damaging ecosystems, and threatening cultural, environmental, and economic resilience. He recognised the disproportionate impacts of climate change on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including threats to Country, housing, health, and food and water security. These communities, he said, are often on the frontline of climate impacts. He emphasised that "there is no greater or more far-reaching challenge facing Australia than climate change" and that First Nations perspectives are critical to shaping an inclusive, effective response.

He stressed that First Nations Peoples bring unique and essential knowledge systems that must work in tandem with science to build stronger, more sustainable solutions. "Your experiences, wisdom and leadership are critical". The Minister outlined the central role of First Nations knowledge and leadership in key national initiatives, including Australia's first National Climate Risk Assessment, the National Adaptation Plan and the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.



Minister Wilson also highlighted how the government had acted on the **2021 National First Peoples' Statement** by establishing the Torres Strait Island Task Force. One of the task force's earliest actions was a **\$15.9 million investment in a climate centre** for the Torres Strait Northern Peninsula area. "The centre will provide a First Nations-led coordinated response to hazards like sea level rise and more frequent natural disasters, bringing together traditional knowledge, lived experience and scientific method to design effective community-level climate action," he explained.

The Minister recognised the importance of elevating First Nations knowledge and practices in global climate action. He outlined the Australian Government's commitment to creating new avenues for First Nations peoples to contribute to international responses, stating:

'We're providing more avenues for First Nations people to contribute knowledge and practices that will form global climate action.'

The Minister also welcomed discussions around the National Environmental Science Program's Indigenous-led IPCC literature project, noting it would contribute to strengthening this global knowledge exchange.

“First Nations people need to be at the centre of the decision-making right from the start... We start by recognising the ingenuity, strength, wisdom and resilience shown for more than 60,000 years of stewardship on country by First Nations...”

– Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy Josh Wilson

Reflections on the Gathering

Mid-way through the Gathering, participants, presenters and Elders stopped to reflect on the insights heard so far, including themes of collective strength, shared learning, cultural resilience, and forward momentum of action after the Gathering.

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Dr Simon Lambert
*Chief Scientist, Te Tira
Whakamātaki Aotearoa,
New Zealand*

Simon spoke about the methodological challenges in Indigenous-led climate research. While climate modellers may work with gigabytes of data, Indigenous knowledge is often shared by just a handful of people, deeply connected to place and stretching back millennia.

“We work in the qualitative space... with four or five people whose knowledge spans thousands of years. How do we protect each other and avoid burnout?”

He cautioned against accumulating resilience case studies without meaningful change, without asking ‘so what’?

Simon stressed that unless recovery efforts are community-led, the same mistakes will continue. He described the intergenerational dynamic of the Gathering as ‘fantastic’, with participants ranging from 15 to 70 years old, and emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum after the Gathering and continuing conversations in person.

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Lewis Burns
Tubba-Gah Elder and Host

Lewis highlighted the significance of yarning and informal conversations as critical spaces for knowledge exchange. He spoke of the value of learning from other mobs and the shared desire for collective progress.

“We’re all one mob. We want to see other mobs progress. Through the Gathering, I see it happening.”

He reflected on the success of hosting the Gathering on Tubba-Gah Country, remarking, “I need an external hard drive for my brain as all the new knowledge won’t fit in!”

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Dr Jo Mummary
*Climate Systems Hub Steering
Committee chair*

Jo described the Gathering as an impactful event, noting the welcome and on-Country experience and the insights drawn from each session.

She reflected on:

- The powerful reflections from the international panel and the importance of connecting local insights to global action.
- The opportunity for First Nations voices to influence major international forums such as the next COPs and the IPCC.
- The need to shift climate narratives.

“Climate systems science is not the only science we need to understand climate change impacts.”

She noted and agreed with the need to challenge the dominant vulnerability framing of First Nations peoples and encouraged recognition of traditional knowledge as a powerful science in its own right.

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Suzanne Thompson
Iningai Country

Suzanne spoke of her excitement about reawakening culture and questioned how meaningful programs could be scaled. Despite serving on a Landcare Traditional Owners panel for two years, no tangible outcomes have emerged. She highlighted the imbalance of responsibility: “How do they expect one person to carry the weight of all of our people?”

Suzanne called for:

- greater support to translate policy into action for communities
- recognition of Traditional Owners as critical voices in the agriculture sector, where previous land mismanagement requires Indigenous leadership
- the power of cultural tourism as a platform to share knowledge and values.

Suzanne noted that the Gathering has helped her reconnect and reawaken ancient songlines and see their relevance globally.

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Jiritju Fourmile
*Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Traditional
Owner*

Jiritju described the Gathering as ‘deadly’ and spoke of the power of sitting alongside like-minded people.

“We are generational thinkers; we need to become generational doers.”

He urged participants to act now and continue the conversation on their Country. “If not us, who? If not here, where? If not now, when?”

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Wilfred Reuben
*Seed Mob, Torres Strait (residing
in Gosford)*

Wilfred celebrated the vibrant networks and relationships formed during the Gathering.

He noted that each generation has its fight, and this one is ready:

“We are ready to lead, learn, and teach—even to teach our Elders.”

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Uncle Vincent Forrester
Iningai Country

Uncle Vincent expressed pleasure in seeing young people stepping into leadership roles and connecting with one another. “Young people own tomorrow. That’ll be your responsibility—run with it.”

He advocated for a model where Elders support and assess the learnings of the younger generation, ensuring cultural continuity.’

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Jade Gould
Butchulla Nation

Jade shared a message of hope and empowerment:

“Hope is powerful. We have the solutions to the impacts we’re feeling.”

She praised the Climate Systems Hub for being one of the few spaces where Indigenous voices are genuinely respected and where researchers value what First Nations peoples want to share.

Jade acknowledged the importance of collaboration in bringing projects like the K’gari Climate Adaptation Project to life.

“I don’t feel I’m wasting my time. We’ve seen benefits for our Country.”

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Developing the 2024 First Nations Climate Change Statement: sharing ideas

Participants discussed the evolving work to develop the next iteration of the First Nations Climate Change Statement, contributing ideas for input and approach to the statement. They confirmed the need for inclusive, respectful, and actionable messaging.

General themes discussed included:

- songlines and trade routes
- the urgency of responding to irreversible damage
- calls to protect wetlands, maintain Country, and act now to save what is left
- the need to be proactive, uphold Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and respect cultural terminology
- recognition that wealth creation under current systems can represent acts of harm against culture and Country.

While these reflections are powerful, participants acknowledged that not all cultural protocols or teachings can or should be written into the Statement. Elders continue to guide these boundaries, ensuring cultural safety.

“We are all connected—Elders, middle mob and youth—and we are the people the Elders spoke about.”

Speakers, including Angel Owen from SEED Mob, Jiritju Fourmile, and Jade Gould, raised the possibility of attaching a youth message to the Statement. They noted that many young leaders will be living with the consequences of climate change and that the younger generation brings energy and capability, and they stand ready to help carry the work forward.

It was agreed that youth are not separate from Elders and middle generations—they are part of a continuous cultural lineage.

Bianca McNeair noted that it can be challenging to get started and know whether you are doing the right thing. But she encouraged people to “Walk proudly through the doors the ancestors opened for you.”

Participants also talked about the importance of recognising the role of women. Water ceremonies, childbirth, and cultural responsibilities tied to water were emphasised.

Participants noted that conventional Western land management practices are not the solution. Indigenous land management offers proven and effective solutions, especially when First Nations peoples are empowered to lead.

“If there are no women, there will be no future.”

Indigenous-led literature for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



This session explored how First Nations Peoples can actively engage with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global body responsible for assessing the science related to climate change. The discussions highlighted the current gaps in representation and the urgent need to strengthen Indigenous voices within global climate policy frameworks.

Jade Gould Butchulla Nation

Jade outlined the role of the IPCC in shaping global and national climate policy. IPCC reports inform government policy worldwide. However, First Nations voices are largely absent from these reports.

She highlighted the consequences of this gap—where poor or limited representation directly affects how Country and community experiences are recognised at a policy level.

Djarra Delaney Quandamooka

Djarra emphasised the structural barriers to the inclusion of First Nations voices in IPCC processes:

- First Nations perspectives are often excluded due to a lack of peer-reviewed literature.
- ‘Black literature’, such as oral traditions, lived experience, and community knowledge, is rarely cited or included in academic sources.
- The IPCC process relies heavily on existing literature: “If the voice isn’t there, it won’t be picked up.”

Djarra advocated for collaboration with scientists who understand these systems to enable the creation of First Nations literature that meets the IPCC’s criteria. These partnerships could serve as an entry point into this process.

Julio Salcedo-Castro University of Tasmania

Julio highlighted the importance of building communication pathways. “How do we connect with more communities so communication flows in both directions?”

He noted that when combined with traditional knowledge, data and science can deliver powerful and credible messages.

Dr Pep Canadell
CSIRO

Pep described the IPCC as the most significant and global scientific process. “No other topic undergoes such a comprehensive synthesis of global knowledge.”

Pep outlined 4 ways First Nations Peoples can influence and contribute to IPCC processes:

1. Work with the Australian IPCC Focal Point Team and the International Branch of DCCEEW.
2. Participate in IPCC scoping meetings, such as the upcoming Seventh Assessment Report meeting in Kuala Lumpur (December 2024).
3. Submit materials (research papers, reports, etc) to be assessed by the IPCC – especially in areas such as cultural burning or the impacts of climate extremes on communities.
4. Join expert review panels to provide feedback on multiple report drafts.

Sean Harte
DCCEEW

Sean provided insights into how governments engage with the IPCC:

- All member governments must agree line-by-line to the wording of reports, which is why the documents are so highly respected and often cited.
- DCCEEW has supported reports that explore how to increase First Nations participation and knowledge coverage in future IPCC reports.
- He encouraged First Nations experts to reach out for nomination opportunities. “You can be nominated as a First Nations expert.”

Australia has also supported recent calls (e.g. in Istanbul) for greater inclusion of diverse knowledge systems across IPCC chapters, including the Australasian chapter on impacts and vulnerability.

Brad Murphy
Bureau of Meteorology

Brad highlighted the role of Indigenous Partnerships in Climate (IPIC) in ensuring that Indigenous data is properly cared for, shared and made accessible to contribute to research and assessment frameworks.

He emphasised the importance of working from the inside to help align Indigenous knowledge with global systems of evidence and review.

Neil Holbrook
University of Tasmania

Neil spoke about marine climate trends.

- Ocean temperatures are changing rapidly, with marine heatwaves already affecting ecosystems.
- In 2011, an event off the WA coast caused devastation in Shark Bay, affecting a third of the area.
- Off Tasmania, waters are warming 2 to 3 times faster than the global average, impacting kelp forests, fish, and habitats.

Dr Simon Marsland
CSIRO

Simon concluded with an important reminder: “Please don’t think you are not experts just because you are not scientists.”

He stressed that traditional knowledge holders are experts, and their contributions are valid and essential in addressing climate change.

Yarning themes and breakout session

Participants broke into smaller yarning circles to discuss key climate change themes and share experiences, concerns, and strategies from across Country and international contexts. The following themes were discussed in the breakout groups:



Youth (Seed)

This group explored the lived impacts of climate change and land use, such as coastal erosion, mining and sea level rise. These environmental and land use changes were linked to significant social impacts such as anxiety and relocation. This group discussed the “best way” to educate people on the impacts of climate change. Participants shared how at Seed they are encouraged to share their personal experiences on how they have been impacted, e.g. one participant shared about their deep connection with a local beach that her family visit often, and how after a cyclone the area was wrecked. This story can resonate with other people who have experienced something similar. Other participants talked about the power of sharing data, and having the data to “back-up” what they are saying e.g. one participant spoke about having science to back up what they were experience back in their community to try and communicate the importance of getting support for community.

Extreme wet and dry

A large group discussion focused on governance structures and the need to remove systemic barriers to caring for Country. Participants shared stories of flooding, drought, and the whiplash between these extremes, reflecting on how these events damage infrastructure, disrupt ecosystems, threaten cultural heritage, and intensify social and mental health challenges. They called for clear distinctions between land use, land management, and climate change and recommended legislative protections for water rights and ecosystem buffer zones.

Discussions linked local changes, like shifting river health, species loss, and agricultural decline, to the broader systemic issues of water rights, governance, and climate resilience.

Concerns about ecological disruption were widespread—species migration, altered rainfall patterns, soil degradation, and chemical runoff were all cited. Participants identified a clear need for Indigenous-led governance, cultural authority, and inclusion in climate decision-making. They called for reform of water rights, protection of native species through cultural aquaculture and native nurseries, and stronger legislative support for sustainable catchment management.

Many raised concerns about Indigenous knowledge being harvested without meaningful inclusion in frameworks such as the IPCC and urged for a more impactful, rights-based approach to climate adaptation.

Case studies were proposed to demonstrate Traditional Owner-led models of climate adaptation, including governance and collaborative land management. Case study ideas included water sheds (e.g. Martuwarra), Lake Eyre Traditional Basin Alliance, Fitzroy catchment, and a governance-based case study.

Participants emphasised the need for culturally informed, place-based solutions and for First Nations people to be recognised as decision-makers and rightful stewards of their land and waters.



Fire

Discussions in this group highlighted both challenges and opportunities for cultural burning, as well as the structural barriers that hinder the use of fire as a land management tool.

Participants emphasised the importance of restoring fire practices led by Traditional Owners, particularly women rangers. Cultural burns were presented as vital for healing Country, maintaining biodiversity, and reducing bushfire risk. Participants compared cultural burns with Western-style planned burns, with concerns raised over resistance from agencies such as National Parks.

Gloria Fogarty, Badimia Traditional Owner, shared an example from the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in WA, where a lightning strike damaged Jam trees due to a lack of understorey clearing—an example of poor fire preparation.

Case study comparisons and potential research papers were suggested to highlight the ecological and carbon benefits of First Nations-led fire practices. Suggestions included developing accreditation pathways, feasibility studies, monitoring frameworks, and case studies across diverse Nations. Participants called for stronger recognition of cultural fire knowledge in land management and climate adaptation strategies.

Participants proposed developing up to 4 possible papers on fire management approaches. Possible topics include:

1. Types of fire from a First Nations perspective
2. Managed/unmanaged Country: National Parks vs IPA quality study
3. Fire and pollinators on Yorta Yorta case study
4. Good fire and bad fire – comparative study across multiple First Nations Countries



Marine heatwaves

Participants shared experiences from across WA, Queensland, Tasmania, and the Torres Strait, where rising ocean temperatures have caused coral bleaching, seagrass loss, and changes to marine species' migration and availability. These changes are threatening food systems, cultural identity, and biodiversity.

Participants noted the benefits of sharing cross-community learning about marine impacts.

Key impact examples discussed were:

- coral bleaching and seagrass die-off, particularly around the Abrolhos Islands
- observations of dugong migration patterns in Shark Bay
- long-term consequences of the 2011 marine heatwave in Shark Bay, which killed seagrass and impacted turtles, dugongs, mangroves, and fishing practices.

Participants proposed possible co-designed case studies in WA, Tasmania and Cairns to document impacts, conduct cultural exchange and transfer of lessons, and develop community-led responses. Priorities included seagrass restoration, ICIP-respecting knowledge sharing, and the use of storytelling and cultural visuals to raise awareness. There was strong interest in developing a joint paper on marine heatwaves under different emissions scenarios, led by Indigenous authors.



Coastal impacts and sea level rise

Participants confirmed the current and ongoing threat of sea level rise in many places including, the Torres Strait, areas of Queensland (Yarrabah), New Zealand and Fiji. The discussion focused on the importance of community-led case studies and how to include the voices of those most affected.

Participants emphasised the need for collaboration between Indigenous authors and scientists, the importance of community consultation, and the inclusion of locally relevant case studies. Key issues discussed included the mobility of people and species, gaps in coastal erosion data, and the need for accessible data and knowledge to support decision-making.

Participants called for consistency in information, stronger community representation, and trust-building between authors and communities. The group discussed practical tools like beach profiling data, adaptation plans, and a clearer way to translate on-Country experiences into international climate literature and processes.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

Participant discussions focused on formalising the protection and application of Indigenous knowledge through legally binding contracts and protocols. A roadmap was proposed to strengthen ICIP governance, drawing on international frameworks such as those from Māori communities.

Participants also noted the mismatch between government timelines and those of First Nations communities, advocating for culturally aligned approaches.

Reflections on the
yarning themes
*Reflections on each yarning
theme and next steps were
shared:*

Shynekwa Joseph
Torres Strait

Shynekwa called for greater inclusion of more First Nations voices at decision-making tables.

Landon Brady
Narrabri

Landon Brady described climate change as a holistic issue that should be addressed not only environmentally but also as a health and social concern, referencing international examples from Sweden and Switzerland. He also highlighted the weight of responsibility First Peoples carry, as everything – from water to erosion to sea level rise – is their business.

Angel Owens
SEED

Angel reflected on the challenge of walking in two worlds, navigating both Indigenous and Western systems.business.

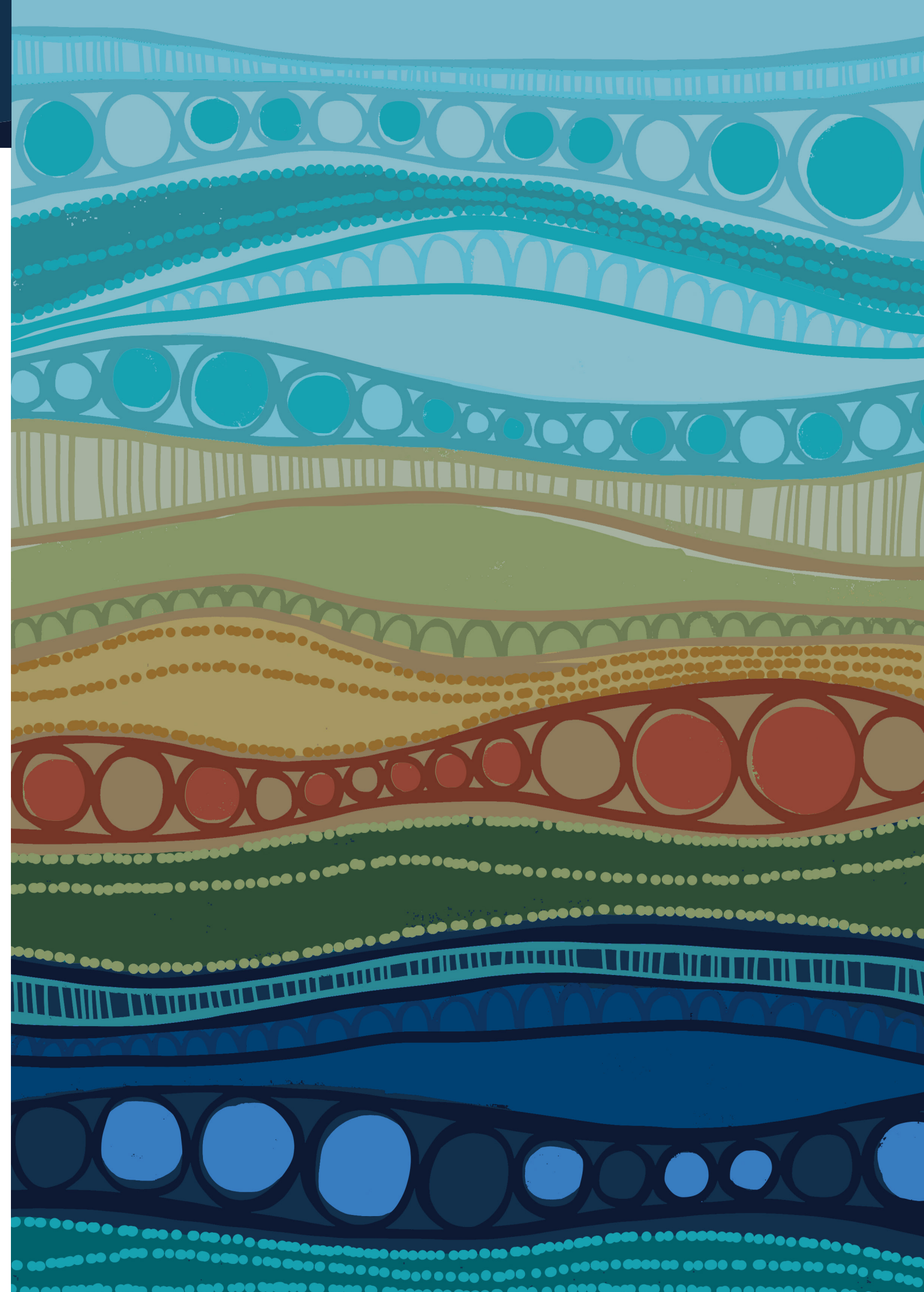
Robert Markham
West Arnhem Land / DCCEEW

Robert shared his journey from working on the Northern Territory State of the Environment report to now supporting the NESP Climate Systems Hub in Canberra. He expressed pride in the Hub’s efforts to bring First Nations voices into national discussions and stressed the importance of early and meaningful engagement in all climate projects.

Sandy Morrison
New Zealand

Sandy questioned how the Gathering’s collective voice and Climate Change Statement could be included in future IPCC reports. He proposed that the experience be translated into academic publications, potentially through the Social Sciences journal or a Centre for Māori Excellence.





Appendix A **Agenda**

Dates: 14–18 October 2024

Location: **Tubba-Gah, Dubbo**, New South Whales

Monday, October 14, 2024 Day 1		
Time	Agenda	Who
Throughout day	Pick up participants from airport and transfer to motels	
10:30 Morning break		
17:00	Busses from Shearing Shed motel to Savannah Room, Dubbo Zoo	
17:00	Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Josh Wilson arrives and meets with Platform	
17:30	Welcome to Country ceremony - Smoking Ceremony - Cultural protocols of host nation and responsibilities and protocols of guests and acknowledgement of their Country	
18:10	Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy gives opening address	
18:30	Dinner at Dubbo Zoo	
21:00	Buses back to Shearing Shed motel	

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 Day 2		
Time	Agenda	Who
9:00	Introduction session	MC: Djarra Delaney
	- Formal Welcome to Country/acknowledgement of Country (host community leaders Tubba-gah Lewis/Mal) - Handover Ceremony – hand over from Gimuy and Yidinji	
	Story of the Platform	Lee Joachim, 2012; Damian Morgan-Bulled, 2018; Rowie Bullio, 2021; and Samarla and Glen, 2024 and beyond
	2012 to 2024 and beyond	Glen and Samarla as co-chairs of NFPPCC and possibly whole Platform
	Statement from Cairns	Damian Morgan-Bulled

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 Day 2		
Time	Agenda	Who
	Co-chairs acknowledge NESP and Climate Systems Hub Introduction to the Indigenous partnership team and Climate Systems Hub science team. Discussion about the 2024 Statement and seek nominations for working group	Sonia Cooper
11:00	Bringing ethics and climate science Present co-design consent process and code of conduct (as approved in Cairns)	
11:30	International perspectives Panel discussion Panelists: • Kyle Whyte, US Science Envoy • Justin Mohamed, Ambassador First Nations People Australia • Simon Lambert, Chief Scientist, Māori Biosecurity Network • Hetxw’ms Gyetxw, also known as Brett Huson • Gitxsan Nation, north-west British Columbia Canada (virtual)	Facilitated by Birrin Hooper, DCCEEW and Jo Mummary, Climate Systems Hub Steering Committee Chair
13:00-14:00 Lunch		
14:00	Local community and seasonal weather calendar	Peter Reeve and Lewis Burns
14:30 Plenary	Traditional Owners Sharing climate change knowledge and experiences 3 x10 min presentations from participants about work on Country • K’gari • Dubbo – Tubba-gah plains zoo • Yamatji Sea Rangers - WA Geraldton	Dean Parkin Jade Gould and Melita Baird Kirsty Destiny McIntosh
15:30	Afternoon tea - Pinpoint Country were attending from on map	

Appendix A Agenda

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 Day 2		
Time	Agenda	Who
16:00 Plenary	Continue Traditional Owners Sharing climate change knowledge and experiences inland	
	Wujal Wujal and surrounding land and sea Country eco-systems, waterways and story places sites of significance Followed by panel discussion with Q&A	Peter and Marilyn Wallace Suzanne Thompson
17:00	Arrangements for field trip to Wilay Gunyah	
17:15	Close day 1 with Reflections from the day	
17:30	Busses back to Shearing Shed motel	
Wednesday, October 16, 2024 Day 3		
Time	Agenda	Who
All day	Yarning on country	
Three parallel sessions which swap after lunch		
08:00	Travel to site visits Group 1: Goonoo Group 2: Wilay Gunyah Group 3: Wellington Caves	
10:00	Site visits - Yarning circles - On-Country walks - Morning tea	
11:30-12:30	Bus back to Wilay Gunyah	
12:30	Lunch at Wilay Gunyah – all participants	

Wednesday, October 16, 2024 Day 3		
Time	Agenda	Who
13:30-16:30	Travel and additional site visits Group 4: Wilay Gunyah Group 5: Goonoo Group 6: Wellington Caves - Yarning circles - On-Country walks - Afternoon tea	
17:00	All groups back at Wilay Gunyah	
17:30	Dinner at Wilay Gunyah	
From 20:00	Busses back to Shearing Shed motel	
Thursday, October 17, 2024 Day 4		
Time	Agenda	Who
8:30	Acknowledgement of country Assistant Minister video address Reflections on Day 1 & 2 panel	Jade Gould Josh Wilson, MP Simon Lambert, Larissa Baldwin Roberts, Lewis Burns, Jo Mummery, Wilfred, Suzanne Thompson/Vincent
10.00	Update on development of draft National First Peoples' Statement on Climate Change 2024 to seek feedback	Sonia Cooper and Rowie Bullio
10:30 Morning break		
11:00	Indigenous-led literature for Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Yarn themes: - Sea Country - Inland Country - Break out groups to discuss IPCC case studies, scoping, delivering where and what and who is involved	Djarra Delaney, Mandy Hopkins, Sean Harte, Brad Murphy, Julian O’Grady, Neil Holbrook, Julio Salcedo-Castro, Pep Canadell, Simon Marsland

Appendix A Agenda

Dates: 14–18 October 2024
Location: **Tubba-Gah, Dubbo**, New South Wales

Thursday, October 17, 2024 Day 4		
Time	Agenda	Who
12:30 Lunch		
13:30	Continue yarning themes Break out groups to discuss IPCC case studies, scoping, delivering where and what and who is involved.	All participants
14:30	Report back from yarning themes and presentation of tangible products	All participants
15.:00 Afternoon tea		
15:30	Present draft First Peoples Statement on Climate Change Invite final feedback	All participants
16:00	Finalise and endorse National First Peoples Statement on Climate Change 2024 - Presenting the final statement - Endorsement of final statement	All participants
16:30	Taking the momentum forward - Wrap up by Platform co-chairs - Close with Tubba-gah	
17:00	Buses back to Searing Shed motel	
18:00	Shuttle delegates to convention centre	
18:30	Official dinner, Dubbo Regional Theatre and Convention Centre Cultural exchange and performances	

Appendix B Attendees

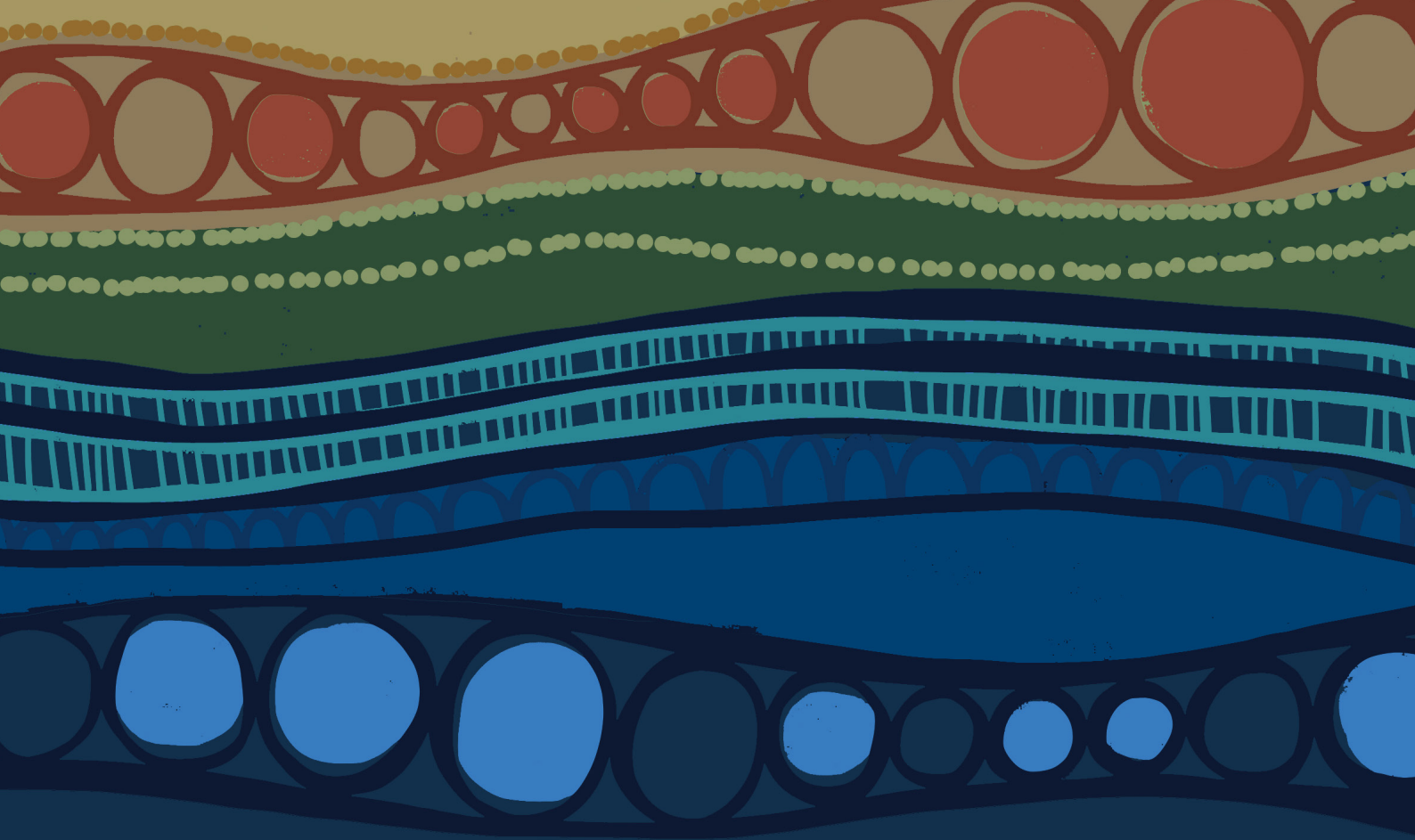
Full Name	Country	Jurisdiction
Damian Morgan-Bulled	Yorta Yorta	VIC/NSW
Sonia Cooper	Yorta Yorta	VIC/NSW
Kotika Morgan - Bulled	Yorta Yorta	VIC/NSW
Ralph Hume	Yorta Yorta	VIC/NSW
Lee Joachim	Yorta Yorta	VIC/NSW
Janice Muir	Yorta Yorta/Watti Watti/Ngarrindjeri	VIC/NSW/SA
Djarra Delaney	Quandamooka	QLD
Jiritju Fourmile	Gimuy Wullaburra Yidinji	QLD
Gerald Fourmile	Gimuy Wullaburra Yidinji	QLD
Dan Joesph	Gambir Yidinji	QLD
Dennis Ah-Kee	Wanjuru-Yidinji	QLD
Jarred Noble	Wanjuru-Yidinji	QLD
Nataliyah Beaut	Wanjuru-Yidinji	QLD
Djungan Paul Neal	Djungan/Gura Buna Gunganghji/Uuuthalangu/Mutimui/Wulgurukaba	QLD
Vincent Forrester	Iningai	QLD
Ezekiel Thompson	Iningai	QLD
Suzanne Thompson	Iningai/ Kunngerri	QLD
Samarla Deshong	Konjimal	QLD
Jena-Rose Miller	Koinjmal people, Koinmerburra Country	QLD
Angel Owen	Butchulla/Woppaburra	QLD
Peter Raymond Wallace	Kalkadoon, Yirandah, Ngnwun	QLD
Marilyn Wallace	Kalkadoon, Yirandah, Ngnwun	QLD
William Munns	Wadja	QLD
Richard Sporne	Wadja	QLD
Shakira Graham	Gundungurra	QLD
Alex Archibald-Binge	Kamilaroi	NSW/QLD
Jazmin Bingham	Gomeroi	NSW/QLD
Lorraine Bingham	Gomeroi	NSW/QLD
Jason Wilson	Gomeroi / Koalaroi	NSW/QLD
Landon Brady	Gamilaraay	NSW/QLD
Jarred Clark	Gamilaraay	NSW

Full Name	Country	Jurisdiction
Jaidyn Chapman	Gamilaraay	NSW
Vincent Hamilton	Gamilaraay	NSW
Taya Barratt	Bundjalung	NSW
Birrin Hooper	Bundjalung	NSW
Larissa Baldwin-Roberts	Bundjalung (Widjabul Wia-bal)	NSW
Lewis Burns	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Mal Burns	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Eileeyo Smith	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Tom Dahlstrom	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Will Burns	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Judy Ryan	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Carl Peckham	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Rob Ryan	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Tristan Ryan	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Nathan Toomey	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Glenn Colwell	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Ngarla Gilbert	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Hayden Clark	Tubba-gah (Wiradjuri)	NSW
Kirsty Hargraves	Wiradjuri	NSW
Philippe Bell	Wiradjuri	NSW
Lee Anne Sutcliffe	Wiradjuri	NSW
Terrissa McEwan	Wiradjuri	NSW
Taieshia Tattersall	Wiradjuri	NSW
Samantha Saddler	Wiradjuri	NSW
Kyanna Hall	Barkindji	NSW
Sally Waller	Gundungurra	NSW
Elvis Talbot	Kwiambul	NSW
Nykita McNeair	Malgana	WA
Bianca McNeair	Malgana	WA
Rebecca Blurton	Noongar	WA
Shannon Clohessy	Wadandi	WA
Andrew Yarran	Yamatji	WA
Kyianie Mongoo	Yamatji	WA
Kyra Lewis	Yamatji	WA
Hazel Edwards	Yamatji	WA
Destiny Shanae Rose McIntosh	Amangu/Wajarri within Yamatji Country	WA

Full Name	Country	Jurisdiction
Andrew Ronan	Amangu	WA
Gloria Fogarty	Badimia	WA
Wayne Abdullah	Kultju	WA
Thomas Pearse	wadjirri/nyulama	WA
Learna Langworthy	Melukerdee	TAS
James Shaw	Melukerdee, Nueonne, Tyreelore	TAS
Peter Reeve	Wirangu	SA
Glen Wingfield	Kokatha	SA
Hilda Mosby	Masig/Yorke Island	TSI
Shynekwa Joseph	Gur A Baradharaw Kod	TSI
Rowie Bullio	Torres Strait Island delegation (mainland)	TSI/QLD
Wilfred Reuben	Daly River/Erub (Darnley) Island/Gooreng Gooreng	NT/TSI/QLD
Jackson Browne	Larrakia	NT

Non-Indigenous and international First Nations guests

Full Name	Country	Full Name	Country
Megan Lockley	Melukerdee (TAS)/ Mamu, Mandubarra (QLD)	Amelia Tandy	Climate Systems Hub: CSIRO
Sandy Morrison	University of Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand	Joy Angelidis	Climate Systems Hub: CSIRO
Simon Lambert	Te Tira Whakamātaki Aotearoa New Zealand	Jaci Brown	Climate Systems Hub: CSIRO
Serina Pickering	Itaukei Women in Conversation, Fiji	Helen Bloustein	Climate Systems Hub: CSIRO
Brett Huson (Hetxw'ms Gyetxw)	Gitxsan Nation, British Columbia, Canada	Eliza Keck	Climate Systems Hub: CSIRO
Kyle Whyte	US Science Envoy, United States of America	Helen Reidy	U.S. Consulate General Office Australia
Jason Evans	University of New South Wales	Javier Sanabria	U.S. Consulate General Office Australia
Sean Harte	DCCEEW	Sarah Boulter	Climate Systems Hub – UTAS
Simon Marsland	CSIRO	Ramona Dalla Pozza	Climate Systems Hub – UTAS
Neil Holbrook	University of Tasmania	Mandy Hopkins	Climate Systems Hub – UTAS
Brad Murphy	Bureau of Meteorology	Chris Bourke	CSIRO
Julio Salcedo-Castro	University of Tasmania	Julian O'Grady	CSIRO
Pep Canadell	CSIRO	Jo Mummary	Climate Systems Hub



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