Extreme Heat in a Changing Climate

Coober Pedy Write-shop Summary Report | 20-21 April 2026

Indigenous Partnerships

Climate Systems

National Environmental Science Program

Contents

1. Report overview
2. Purpose and context
3. Day 1: consent, energy and planning
4. Day 2: knowledge of Country and observed change
5. Key themes
6. Outcomes and next steps
7. Participants and name notes
8. Sources

1. Report overview

Project: CS5.10 - Indigenous-led literature and products to inform national and international processes on climate action

Location: Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (AMYAC), Coober Pedy, South Australia

Timing: 20-21 April 2026

Summary

The return visit and write shop brought community knowledge holders and project partners together to progress an Indigenous-led paper on extreme heat and climate change. The sessions focused on informed consent, community control over wording, energy and housing challenges, environmental and societal impacts, and long-term observations of change on Country.



Workshop participants during the Coober Pedy return visit and write shop, April 2026.

2. Purpose and context

The return visit built on earlier work to co-design an Indigenous-led case study on extreme heat in a changing climate. The workshop aimed to move community discussions into a written product while maintaining free, prior and informed consent, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights, respectful engagement and community control over how knowledge is represented.

Progress the paper through a community-led write shop process.

Confirm options for individual and community consent.

Document environmental, cultural, health, housing and energy impacts associated with extreme heat.

Bring Indigenous knowledge and lived experience into the paper alongside climate science.

Agree on the paper framework and next steps for review and approval.

3. Day 1: consent, energy and planning

Opening and informed consent

Jonathon Fatt-Clifton began with an Acknowledgement of Country and introductions.

Damian Morgan-Bulled thanked the group for welcoming the project team back and explained that the visit would focus on getting the community's voice into the paper.

Participants discussed individual and community signing options and were encouraged to consider the consent wording overnight. The group was reminded that changes could be requested.

Maria Stewart indicated that she would seek Council endorsement regarding signing.

Extreme heat, electricity and community infrastructure

Discussion focused on electricity and contingency planning for extreme heat, including air-conditioned community gathering places during very hot conditions.

Participants discussed the limitations of evaporative coolers during humid conditions and concerns about black mould and health.

The group considered relationships between large energy companies and small communities, local wind-generated electricity and opportunities for solar energy.

Participants raised uncertainty about housing ownership, eligibility to install solar and what could be connected locally.

The discussion noted that renewable energy projects could leave a positive legacy through good-quality housing construction.

Mandy Hopkins noted that the project had been raised with the Australian Government as an example of policy failure. Jonathon stating that this was part of why the project was important.

Developing the paper

The group focused on converting discussion into written material about environmental and societal impacts.

Material from the AMOS presentation was identified as supporting evidence.

The group viewed an IDA climate change story video presented by Shannon Palmer.

Damian Morgan-Bulled shared Climate Systems Hub project webpages, the Gathering video and written and video versions of the 2024 National First Peoples Statement on Climate Change.

Participants were reminded to consider the consent forms overnight. The next session would focus on developing the paper framework and placing community words under agreed topics.

4. Day 2: Knowledge of Country and observed change

Knowledge, culture and movement

Participants described growing up learning Anangu ways through language, Lore, culture, kinship, Tjukurpa, ceremony, hunting and gathering, bush medicine and caring for Country.

Seasonal signs informed burning, bush food collection, hunting, gathering and travel.

People recalled travelling long distances on foot, guided by knowledge of water places, bush foods and animal movement. Water, shelter and food shaped where families travelled.

The notes record women carrying children over long journeys, acting as midwives when hospitals were unavailable and families hiding children from welfare authorities.

Water, plants and animals

Rock holes, waterholes, creek soakages and natural springs were identified as important places.

Participants reported invasive weeds, sediment and animal carcasses affecting water places, alongside reduced availability of root-based bush foods.

Participants described changes in the presence, location and size of species. Witchetty grubs were reported in different places and some species were said to be less common than in the past.

Rainfall was described as increasingly uneven: some places become wet while some creeks remain dry.

Plastic-lined dams were identified as a danger for animals because the slippery lining can prevent animals from getting out.

Participants compared water conditions in 2010 and 2026, reporting poor water quality, dirt in taps, chlorine, high water costs and a need for water tanks.

Increasing heat and changing practices

Participants recalled being able to walk barefoot when younger and described temperatures becoming noticeably hotter from around the late 1990s.

The notes describe burnt feet, blisters and conditions that now make outdoor activity more difficult.

Greater heat, changing water conditions and the cost of vehicle travel were associated with reduced camping, swimming and time spent outside and on Country.

5. Key themes

Theme	What the workshop highlighted
Indigenous knowledge in parity	Community observations provide long-term, place-based knowledge of environmental change and must be valued alongside climate science.
Consent and community control	Participants need clear options for individual and community consent, control over wording and opportunities to amend the paper.
Heat and health	Extreme heat affects safe outdoor activity, cooling systems, housing conditions and access to suitable community refuges.
Energy and housing	Electricity systems, renewable energy access, housing ownership and infrastructure quality shape local capacity to respond.
Water and Country	Changing rainfall, water quality, weeds and sediment affect water places, bush foods, plants, animals and cultural practice.
Intergenerational responsibility	The paper is an opportunity to protect knowledge, support future generations and strengthen community-led climate action.

6. Outcomes and next steps

Develop the paper framework using the agreed topic areas and workshop material.

Continue placing community words and knowledge into the draft.

Provide the draft to participants and relevant community bodies for review and approval.

Confirm individual and community consent arrangements before publication or wider use.

Clearly identify unresolved names and attributions rather than guessing.

Continue connecting Indigenous knowledge, lived experience and climate science in the final product.

7. Participants

Names recorded in the Day 1 notes included: Jonathon Fatt-Clifton, Charmaine Mongodi, Jillian Williams, Dawn Brown, Patricia Fatt, Maria Stewart, Louise Mc Cullum, Peter Amos, Steven Chamberlain, Sammy Brown, Damian Morgan-Bulled, Mandy Hopkins, Jill Cainey, Simon Marsland, Jason Evans, Shannon Palmer and John Hodgetts.