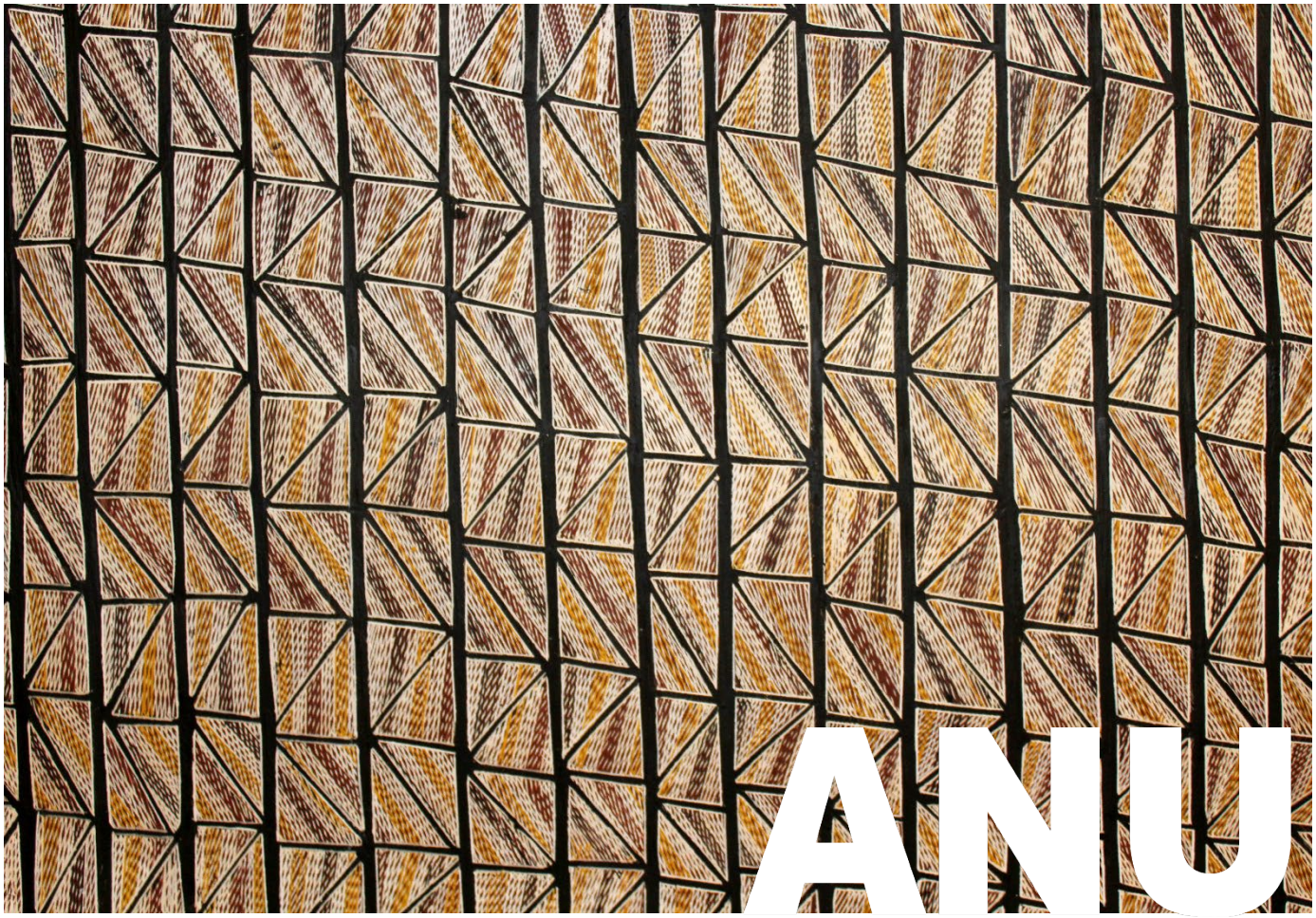
Australian National University



ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THE RESPONSE TO THE 2019–2020 BUSHFIRES

B. WILLIAMSON, F. MARKHAM AND J.K. WEIR

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

CAEPR WORKING PAPER 134/2020

Series note

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) undertakes high-quality, independent research to further the social and economic development and empowerment of Indigenous people throughout Australia.

For 30 years, CAEPR has aimed to combine academic and teaching excellence on Indigenous economic and social development and public policy with realism, objectivity and relevance.

CAEPR maintains a substantial publications program, including Research Monographs, Discussion Papers, Working Papers and Topical Issues.

The CAEPR Working Paper series exists to disseminate preliminary research findings, to share ideas about a topic, or to elicit discussion and feedback. Papers in this series are peer reviewed by academics affiliated to CAEPR.

All CAEPR publications are available in electronic format for free download from CAEPR's website:

caepr.cass.anu.edu.au

CAEPR is located within the Research School of Social Sciences in the College of Arts & Social Sciences at the Australian National University (ANU). The Centre is funded from a range of sources, including ANU, the Australian Research Council, industry and philanthropic partners, and Australian state and territory governments.

As with all CAEPR publications, the views expressed in this Working Paper are those of the author(s) and do not reflect any official CAEPR position.

Professor Tony Dreise
Director, CAEPR
Research School of Social Sciences
College of Arts & Social Sciences
The Australian National University, March 2020

CAEPR LINKS

Click here to open bookmarks, and to access quick links to the CAEPR website, including:

- Discussion Papers
- Working Papers
- Research Monographs
- Topical Issues
- Census Papers
- Commissioned Reports

Working Paper No.134/2020

DOI https://doi.org/10.25911/5e7882623186c
ISSN 1442 3871
ISBN 978-1-925286-46-5

An electronic publication downloaded from <caepr.cass.anu.edu.au>.

For a complete list of CAEPR Working Papers, see <caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/working-papers>.

CAEPR
Research School of Social Sciences
College of Arts & Social Sciences
The Australian National University

Front cover image:
Terry Ngamandarra Wilson, Gulach (detail), painting on bark, private collection © Terry Ngamandarra, licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Suggested citation:
Williamson, Markham & Weir (2020), *Aboriginal peoples and the response to the 2019–2020 bushfires*, Working Paper No. 134/2020, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra. https://doi.org/10.25911/5e7882623186c

Aboriginal peoples and the response to the 2019–2020 bushfires

B Williamson, F Markham and JK Weir

Bhiamie Williamson is a Euahlayi man from north-western NSW with family ties to northwest Qld. He is an Academic Associate and PhD scholar at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), Research School of Social Sciences, College of Arts & Social Sciences, the Australian National University (ANU). **Francis Markham** is a Research Fellow at CAEPR. **Jessica Weir** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, and a Visiting Fellow, Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU.

Abstract

Aboriginal people were among those most affected by the 2019–2020 bushfires in south-eastern Australia. Yet aside from renewed public interest in cultural burning practices, Aboriginal people have received little attention in the post-bushfire response. In this paper, we describe population geography of Aboriginal peoples affected by the 2019–2020 bushfire season in New South Wales and Victoria, and the geography of Aboriginal legal rights and interests in land across these states. We find that over 84 000 Indigenous people, or one-quarter of the Indigenous population of NSW and Victoria, live in the bushfire-affected area. While Indigenous people comprise nearly 5.4% of the 1.55 million people living in fire-affected areas, they are only 2.3% of the total population of NSW and Victoria. Because Indigenous people in the bushfire-affected area have younger population profiles, more than one-tenth of children in the bushfire-affected area are Indigenous, raising the diverse effects of bushfires on infants and children in particular. Aboriginal people also have a variety of distinct and spatially extensive legal rights and interests in land as First Peoples, including across much of the fire-affected area. Presenting a series of quotations from published accounts, we demonstrate that the Aboriginal experience of the 2019–2020 bushfires have been different from those of non-Indigenous Australians.

We go on to show that despite the presence of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal legal rights across the fire-affected area and the distinctiveness of the Aboriginal experience of bushfire disaster, Aboriginal peoples have been marginalised in recent previous public responses to bushfires. Taking the reports of two post-disaster inquiries as examples, we show that Aboriginal peoples have largely been ignored in these important fact-finding and policymaking forums.

We conclude by arguing that the response to the 2019–2020 bushfires must be different. We call for governments to acknowledge the erasure of Aboriginal people in previous bushfire disaster responses; to establish

terms of reference for the post-2019–2020 bushfire inquiry to prevent this from being repeated; to ensure adequate Aboriginal representation on relevant government committees involved in decision-making, planning and implementation of disaster risk management; and to centre Aboriginal people's voices in understandings across the bushfire planning, preparation, recovery, and response spectrum.

This paper constitutes a call for the needs, aspirations and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples to be taken seriously in the response to the 2019–2020 bushfires.

Keywords: emergency management, bushfires, Aboriginal peoples, natural hazards.

Acknowledgments

We thank Diane Smith and Annick Thomassin for their helpful comments on an early draft of this manuscript. We are also grateful to Frances Morphy and Hilary Bek for their judicious editorial assistance.

Bhiamie Williamson is a current member of the ACT Bushfire Council. Jessica Weir acknowledges the funding she receives from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGIL	Australian Government Indigenous Programs & Policy Locations
ANU	Australian National University
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
EMSINA	Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia
ERP	Estimated Residential Population
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ha	hectare
ILSC	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
km	kilometre
NSW	New South Wales
PPRR	Planning Preparation Response and Recovery
RSA	Recognition and Settlement Agreement

Contents

Series note ii

Abstract iii

Acknowledgments v

Acronyms v

Tables and Figures vii

Introduction 1

The 2019–2020 bushfires in NSW and Victoria, Indigenous population geography, and Aboriginal legal interests in land and waters 1

Aboriginal people and the bushfire response 12

Conclusion 17

References 18

Tables and Figures

Fig. 1	Areas in NSW and Victoria burnt and affected by fires of 250 ha or more, July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020	4
Table 1	Estimated Residential Population of the fire-affected area by Indigenous status and broad age group, June 30, 2016	5
Fig. 2	Population pyramids for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of the fire-affected area, June 30, 2016	6
Table 2	Estimated Residential Population of the 10 largest fire-affected towns and portions of cities by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016	7
Table 3	Estimated Residential Population of the fire-affected discrete Indigenous communities by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016	8
Table 4	Estimated Residential Population of fire-affected towns and cities with an Indigenous population greater than 15% by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016	9
Fig. 3	Areas in NSW and Victoria burnt and affected by fires of 250 ha or more, July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020, and Aboriginal legal interests in land.	10

Introduction

The impact of the Australian bushfires over the long, savage 2019–2020 summer has been immense. Traditional Aboriginal burning practices became a prominent feature of the narrative surrounding this fire season with academics (e.g. Bowman & Bradstock, 2020; Cumpston, 2020) and journalists (e.g. Allam, 2020b; Fuller, 2020; Nunn, 2020) adding to and amplifying Aboriginal people's voices (e.g. King, 2019; Morrison, 2020) about the importance of cultural burning as part of fuel management. However, largely absent from this discussion is the fire season's impact on Aboriginal people as residents, distinct communities and First Peoples, together with the role of Aboriginal people in disaster recovery and planning more generally (cf. Cavanagh, 2020; Funes, 2020; Williamson et al., 2020). This Working Paper begins to address this absence. As governments and others turn their attention to community recovery, including setting terms of reference and making appointments to oversee inquiry processes that will influence long-term planning, Aboriginal people's needs and priorities must constitute a core and ongoing thread woven through the fabric of the response. It is difficult to see how these responses will support their recovery otherwise.

In this paper we present some initial information about the Aboriginal population that has been affected by the 2019–2020 fires. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) methods and data from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing, we present demographic statistics relating to the 'bushfire-affected area', which we have defined as including both the fires' path and immediate surrounding localities in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria. We also present maps describing some of the legal rights and interests Aboriginal people hold in relation to the bushfire-affected area. After summarising these findings, we draw on the literature to identify research priorities and the importance of these priorities for the responses to the 2019–2020 bushfires. We argue that Aboriginal peoples have interests, responsibilities and contributions to make across the 'PPRR' spectrum: planning, preparation, recovery, and response. Further, that deliberate measures need to be taken to ensure these are addressed and supported.

Please note that in this paper we mostly use the term 'Aboriginal' rather than 'Indigenous', reflecting the preference of many Aboriginal people we work with in the fire-affected area. However, Torres Strait Islander people also live in the affected area, and the census data we use are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Thus, we use the term 'Indigenous' when referring specifically to the population geography data. We also use the term 'First Peoples' to denote the specific relationships that some Aboriginal peoples have as Traditional Owners or Traditional Custodians. First Peoples is used strategically to link their status as Traditional Owners with legal interests (both western and Indigenous) in areas affected by fire.

The 2019–2020 bushfires in NSW and Victoria, Indigenous population geography, and Aboriginal legal interests in land and waters

In this section we describe the Indigenous population geography of the 2019–2020 bushfires and illustrate the Aboriginal legal rights and interests in land in the bushfire-affected area. We first use GIS methods and data from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing to describe the number of people who live in what we have defined as 'the fire-affected area', their distribution across towns and cities, and age structure. We then go on to map both the fire-affected area and various forms of Aboriginal legal rights and interest in land to demonstrate the diverse and distinctive nature of the Aboriginal rights in the fires' proximity.

Data and methods

We draw on 2016 Census data and preliminary fire maps to describe the social and spatial distribution of fire-affected communities. Taking an exploratory approach, we overlay census geographies with spatial data outlining the area burnt ('burnt area data') to identify the places and people most affected by the fires.

We limit our analysis to NSW and Victoria due to data availability, as only these states had burnt area data available for the whole fire season at the time of writing. Furthermore, the fire data we use spans the period July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020 – the day that we undertook the quantitative analysis. More research is needed to cover the whole fire season.[1]

We have defined a location as 'fire affected' if it was located within 15 km of a fire which burnt an area of 250 ha or more. This conservative decision was made to focus on the most extreme effects of the bushfires on the basis that smaller fires, while dangerous, generally do not have the same collective effect on communities as large fires. Clearly, the impacts of these fires are much more substantive. The geographic area scoped does not reflect the wider impact of road closures and smoke or carbon pollution, nor the effects of a small fire burning valuable infrastructure or heritage.[2] Moreover, there are far-reaching economic, political, sociocultural and environmental impacts that have affected and continue to affect many more people nationally and globally.

Burnt area spatial polygon data was obtained from the Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia (EMSINA). New South Wales data were created by the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service (EMSINA Group, 2020). It was captured via operational fire mapping in Rural Fire Service fire control centres. It is described as representing 'the visible but unrefined external boundary of the fire extent'. Victorian data were produced by the Country Fire Authority, and identified as 'any fire perimeter that has been mapped since July 1, 2019' (EMSINA Group & Geoscience Australia, 2020). Because these polygons show the extent of fire boundaries, it is likely that they incorrectly include internal pockets of unburnt areas. This is unlikely to affect our calculation of fire-affected areas.

Bushfire-affected areas were identified by overlaying the polygons larger than 250 ha with 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Mesh Blocks. Mesh Blocks are the smallest geographical unit at which the ABS make census data available, and typically either contain no dwellings or around 30–60 dwellings. Any Mesh Block located within 15 km of a burnt area was designated as 'fire affected'. The list of fire-affected Mesh Blocks was imported to into the ABS' (2020) TableBuilder software as a custom geography for the purpose of tabulating the population of affected areas, as counted in the 2016 Census of Population and Housing.

Census counts of the population within affected areas were tabulated on the basis of 'place of usual residence'. This means that a person is identified as being resident in a fire-affected area if they lived or intended to live there for six months or more in 2016. Notably, this definition excludes temporary visitors such as tourists and holiday-home owners, who can be a considerable portion of the population of some affected areas during summer. Hugo and Harris (2013, p. 15), for example, estimated that in peak times tourists and second-home owners account for 20%, 32% and 25% of the population of East Gippsland, Eurobodalla and Shoalhaven shires respectively. We do not attempt to estimate the effects of the bushfires on temporary visitors or holiday-home owners here, except to acknowledge that additional people were present in the fire-affected area.

[1] Indeed, one of the authors of this paper was evacuated from their home after January 23, 2020.
[2] There is a need for further research to investigate an appropriate geographical scope for determining the 'fire affected' status of regions. This has both policy implications (in terms of the targeting of government assistance) and research implications (in terms of understanding the extent of fire impacts). Survey research suggests that the impacts of the 2019–2020 fire season have been more diffuse and far reaching that the extreme impacts we have modelled in this paper (Biddle et al., 2020).

It is well-established that a considerable proportion of the Indigenous population is not counted in the census (ABS, 2017b; Taylor & Biddle, 2010). Consequently, unadjusted census tables will underestimate the Indigenous residential population. Thus, we have inflated census counts to adjust for undercount by using age- and sex-specific Indigenous and non-Indigenous undercount rates. These undercount rates were derived by comparing 2016 Census counts with the 2016 Estimated Residential Population (ERP) for NSW. We have not attempted to account for population change since the 2016, year for which Indigenous ERPs were published by the ABS. Therefore, our population estimates should be considered accurate as of 30 June 2016.

Towns and city boundaries are based on the 2016 Urban Centres and Localities geography produced by the ABS (2017a). Discrete Indigenous community names and locations were adopted from the Australian Government Indigenous Programs & Policy Locations (AGIL) database (Department of Human Services, 2019). While this database reflects Australian Government service delivery patterns rather than discrete communities' locations per se, it provides a useful approximation for discrete communities and is used 'as is.'[3]

In the second part of this section, we overlay our maps of the burnt area and the fire-affected area with various layers indicating different regimes of Aboriginal legal rights and interest in land. Spatial data relating to different Aboriginal interests in land were retrieved from various state and federal government departments and statutory authorities. This second map of the impact of the fires on land in which Aboriginal peoples hold legal rights is intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive. It does not include the entire array of rights, interests and agreements including with regard to cultural heritage, conservation joint management, and negotiated agreements such as those provided for by the Indigenous Land Use Agreement mechanism in the *Native Title Act 1993*.

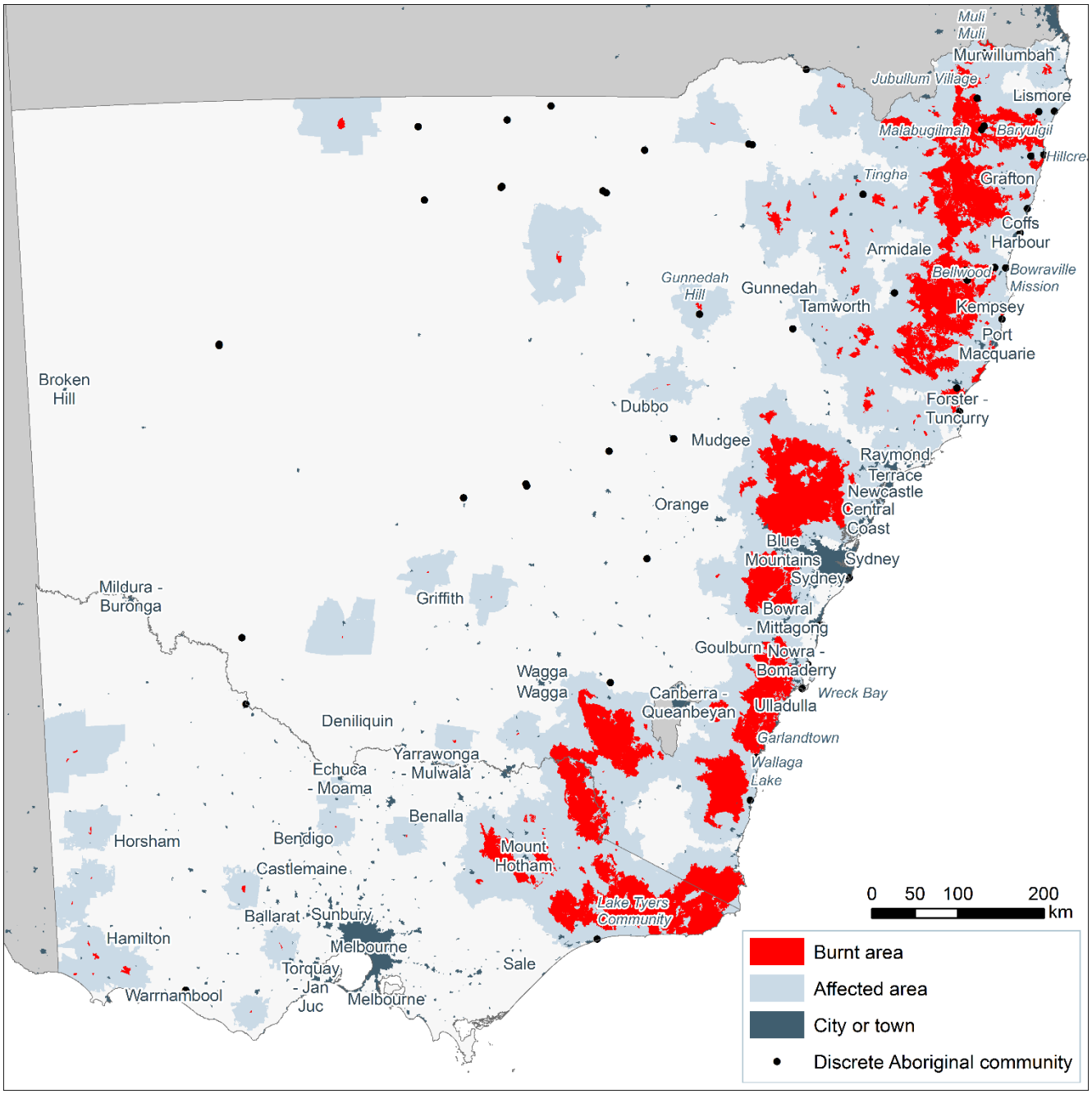
The population geography of the fire-affected area in NSW and Victoria

The fire data document that over 6 500 000 ha were burnt by fires of greater than 250 ha in Victoria and NSW between July 1, 2019 and January 23, 2020**.** Fig. 1 shows that burnt areas were mostly concentrated in seven regions: NSW North Coast from Foster to the Queensland border; from the NSW Central Coast to the Blue Mountains; southwest of Sydney to the Southern Highlands; much of the South Coast of NSW to Bega; the Snowy Mountains; East Gippsland; and the alpine region of Victoria south of Mount Buffalo. There were also dozens of other smaller but still significant fires across the two states. Our inclusion of a 15 km buffer zone around this burnt area results in our defined fire-affected area of 26 800 000 ha.

Table 1 shows the ERP of the fire-affected area. Over 84 000 Indigenous people and 1.47 million non-Indigenous people are estimated to live in the fire-affected area in NSW and Victoria. This is a considerable number and indicates the vast scale of necessary disaster response. Furthermore, a very considerable proportion of the Indigenous population has been affected. More than one-quarter of the whole Indigenous population of NSW and Victoria live in the fire-affected area, while only one-tenth of the whole non-Indigenous population of those states live in the fire-affected area. Put differently, Indigenous people comprise nearly 5.4% of the 1.55 million people living in fire-affected areas of NSW and Victoria, but only 2.3% of the total population of NSW and Victoria. They are thus, on a proportionate basis, more highly represented in the residential populations in the fire-affected area.

[3] We use this database rather than the Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) as the geocoded community locations in the CHINS data are not accurate enough for use in this study.

Fig. 1 Areas in NSW and Victoria burnt and affected by fires of 250 ha or more, July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020



Sources: Data from EMSINA (burnt area data); ABS (2016 Census of Population and Housing); Department of Human Services (AGIL).

Table 1 Estimated Residential Population of the fire-affected area by Indigenous status and broad age group, June 30, 2016

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous %
Less than 5 years	10 279	82 170	11.1
5–14 years	20 161	176 629	10.2
15–29 years	21 808	235 755	8.5
30–64 years	27 657	657 692	4.0
65 years or more	4 284	317 612	1.3
Total	84 189	1 469 859	5.4

Source: Authors' calculations from 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2020) and 2016 ERP (ABS 2017b).

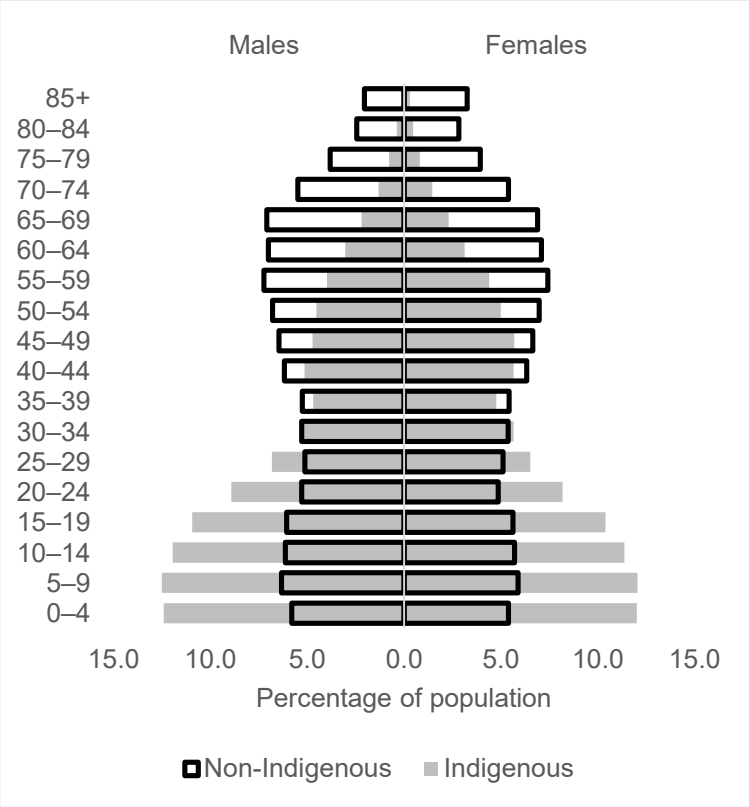
As Table 1 and Fig. 2 show, the age distribution of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in the fire-affected areas are remarkably different. The largest five-year age cohort for the Indigenous population is that aged 5–9 years, while the largest cohort of the non-Indigenous population is that aged 55–59 years. Over 36% of the Indigenous population are less than 15 years old, while only 5% are 65 years old or more. In contrast, only 18% of the non-Indigenous population are younger than 15 years old, and 22% are at least 65 years old.

When considering the composition of the population, the data show that while 5.4% of all people in the fire-affected area identify as Indigenous, more than one in ten children in the fire-affected area are Indigenous. Specifically, 11.1% of infants and pre-school aged children and 10.2% of children aged 5–14 years are Indigenous. In contrast, only a very small proportion of the retirement age population (65 year or more) in the fire-affected area are Indigenous (1.3%).

The Indigenous population is unevenly distributed within the fire-affected area. Table 2, for example, shows the 10 largest towns and portions of cities affected by fires. Indigenous people comprise 10.6% of residents (or 3370 Indigenous people) in fire-affected Nowra–Bomaderry, compared with 1.9% of residents (or 421 Indigenous people) in fire-affected Bowral–Mittagong. Indigenous people are also significantly represented as residents in suburban areas, for example comprising 4.6% of residents (or 21 440 people) in fire-affected parts of Newcastle, the Central Coast and Sydney.

There are also 22 discrete Indigenous communities in the fire-affected area, as listed in Table 3. The needs of communities are likely to be quite different in discrete communities where Indigenous people generally form the majority of the population. Twenty of these communities are in NSW, and many relate to former reserves and missions where the land was transferred to Local Aboriginal Land Council ownership following the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW). Lake Tyers is the only discrete Indigenous community within the fire-affected area in Victoria, while Wreck Bay is located in Jervis Bay Territory. In some instances the population statistics for discrete Indigenous communities have not been separated from adjacent towns, and we have identified them together in Table 3. In Table 4 we list six towns in the fire-affected area that are not discrete Indigenous communities according to the AGIL database, but at least 15% of the population identifies as Indigenous. The cumulative Indigenous population of the towns listed in Table 3 and Table 4 is 8600, or around 10% of the Indigenous population of the total fire-affected area. Thus, only a small minority of the Indigenous population of fire-affected areas live in discrete Indigenous communities or towns with a high proportion of Indigenous residents.

Fig. 2 Population pyramids for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of the fire-affected area, June 30, 2016



Source: Authors' calculations from 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2020) and 2016 ERP (ABS 2017b).

Table 2 Estimated Residential Population of the 10 largest fire-affected towns and portions of cities by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous %
Newcastle	9360	176 668	5.0
Central Coast (portions of)	8346	132 002	5.9
Sydney (portions of)	3734	126 138	2.9
Maitland	4895	73 624	6.2
Port Macquarie	2158	44 134	4.7
Nowra - Bomaderry	3370	28 326	10.6
Blue Mountains	1034	29 286	3.4
Cessnock	2188	20 357	9.7
Bowral–Mittagong	421	21 551	1.9
Forster–Tuncurry (inc. Cabarita)	1291	19 027	6.4

Note: Only people resident in the fire-affected area of a town or city (i.e. the sections of a town or city within 15 km of a burnt area) are counted in this table. For example, the vast majority of Sydney residents did not live in the fire-affected area, and so are excluded from this tabulation.

Source: Authors' calculations from 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2020) and 2016 ERP (ABS 2017b).

Table 3 Estimated Residential Population of the fire-affected discrete Indigenous communities by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous %
Kempsey (inc. Greenhill)	2674	8143	24.7
Forster–Tuncurry (inc. Cabarita)	1291	19 027	6.4
Nambucca Heads (inc. Bellwood)	754	5750	11.6
Coonabarabran (inc. Gunnedah Hill)	494	2064	19.3
Yamba (inc. Nyguru Village)	339	5803	5.5
Culburra Beach–Orient Point	332	3246	9.3
Bowraville	300	680	30.6
Maclean (inc. Hillcrest)	268	2403	10.0
Wreck Bay	189	10	95.0
Tingha	185	296	38.5
Coraki (inc. Box Ridge Reserve)	161	929	14.8
Purfleet	153	0	100.0
Corindi Beach	148	1474	9.1
Jubullum Village	129	0	100.0
Wallaga Lake	89	608	12.8
Cabbage Tree	86	0	100.0
Bellbrook Mission	65	0	100.0
Crescent Head	63	858	6.8
Muli Muli	62	0	100.0
Baryulgil	38	0	100.0
Malabugilmah	33	13	71.7
Lake Tyers Community	22	8	73.3

Note: In this table we use the AGIL database to identify discrete Indigenous communities. Where discrete Indigenous communities fall within what the ABS term an Urban Centre or Locality then population statistics for the whole urban centre (i.e. town or city) are presented.

Source: Authors' calculations from 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2020) and 2016 ERP (ABS 2017b).

Table 4 Estimated Residential Population of fire-affected towns and cities with an Indigenous population greater than 15% by Indigenous status, June 30, 2016

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous %
Mogo	98	171	36.4
Jervis Bay	68	131	34.2
Bodalla	92	221	29.4
Werris Creek	359	1080	24.9
Urbenville	36	149	19.5
Glenreagh	81	420	16.2

Source: Authors' calculations from 2016 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2020) and 2016 ERP (ABS 2017b).

Aboriginal legal interests in fire-affected lands and waters

Aboriginal people hold significant legal rights and interests, including cultural heritage, in lands and waters in the fire-affected area. This includes both Aboriginal peoples who have some rights and interests in land recognised by state, Commonwealth or common law, and others who have rights and interests according to Aboriginal law that are not formally recognised by any government. We acknowledge that the entirety of the fire-affected area is Country belonging to Aboriginal peoples according to Indigenous law.

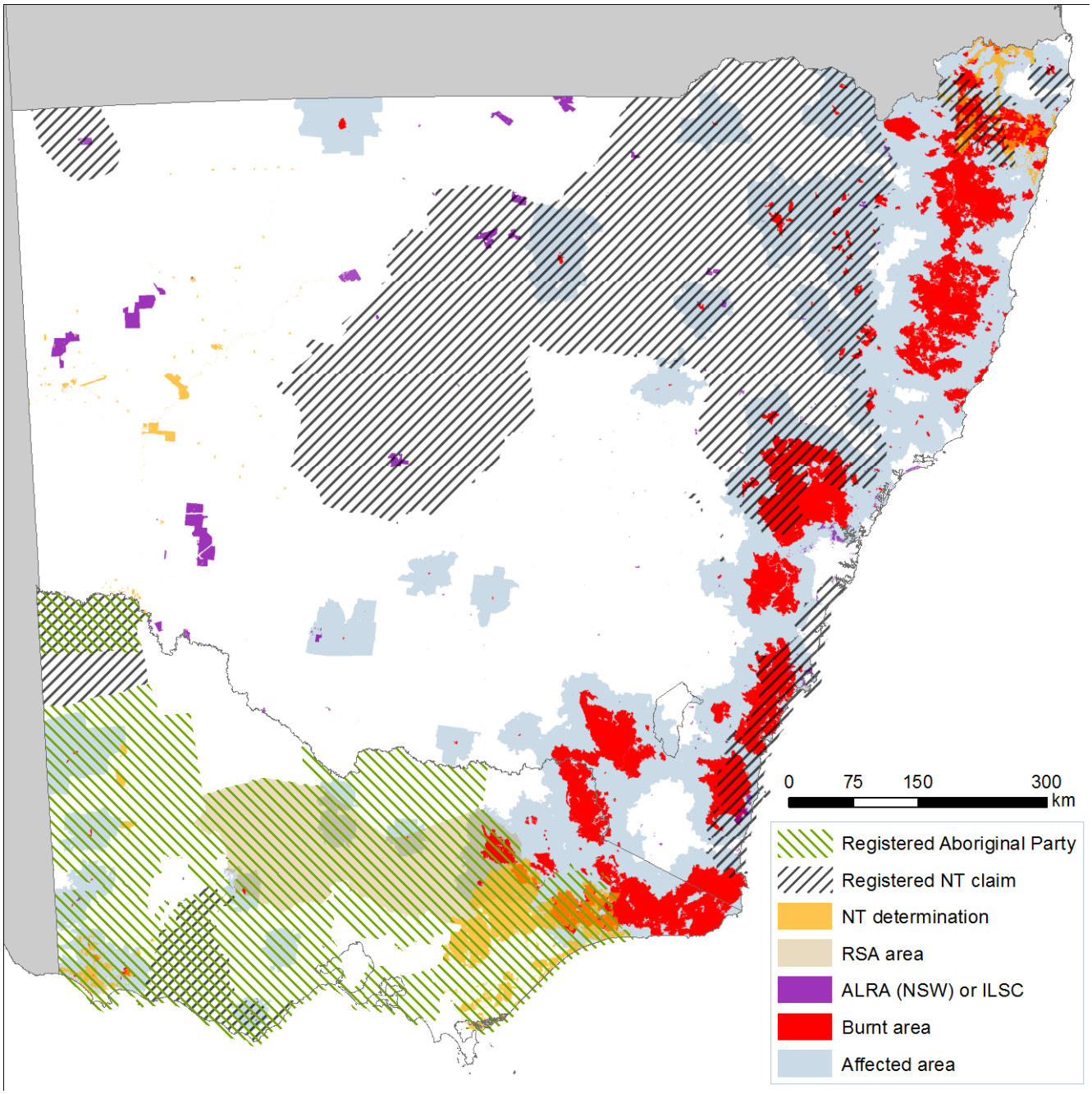
In Fig. 3 we have shown some of the legal interests recognised by the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW), the *Traditional Owners Settlement Act 2010* (Vic), the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic), Schedule 14 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) and communal land holdings purchased by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC). Fig. 3 is intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive. For cartographic clarity, it does not represent some agreements in relation to conservation estates, including Indigenous Protected Areas and other co-management arrangements. Further, Fig. 3 does not depict ownership of Country – the lands and waters that are the homelands of different language and nation groups, as part of regional and national networks of responsibilities between Countries and peoples, and as passed down from ancestors and ancestral beings.

The statutory and policy measures represented in Fig. 3 are responsive to two key matters. First, Aboriginal peoples' distinct status as First Peoples, and the legal and political rights and interests that arise from this. Also known as Traditional Owners or Traditional Custodians, these Aboriginal polities have rights and interests arising out of their laws and customs, as also recognised through native title and other laws and policies. This includes places and things of value known as 'cultural heritage'– such as scar trees, stone arrangements, rock art, and so on – which are often inseparable to Country and are also protected by other state and federal legislation. The formal recognition of Aboriginal people's legal rights and interests in lands, waters and cultural heritage requires governments to meet their own regulatory standards with respect to these. Second, the measures in Fig. 3 are responsive to Aboriginal peoples' contemporary and historic experiences of land dispossession. To partially address land dispossession, state and federal governments have introduced specific laws and policies to transfer parcels of Crown lands and establish funds for the purchase of land.

These rights and interests are unique and diverse, and Aboriginal people's ability to enjoy their legal rights have been impacted by the bushfires. As Fig. 3 shows, Aboriginal people hold rights and interests in large areas of land that were directly affected by the bushfires. Furthermore, the distinctive nature of these rights and interests means that the bushfires have different consequences for Aboriginal rights-holders than for non-Indigenous

landowners. For example, native title lands are inalienable, and cannot be bought, sold, or held individually. Thus, while many non-Indigenous land-owning individuals in the fire-affected areas face the difficult decision of whether to stay and rebuild or sell and move on, Traditional Owners are in a different situation. Traditional Owners can leave and live on someone else's Country. However, their Country and any formally recognised communal land and water rights remain in the fire-affected area.

Fig. 3 Areas in NSW and Victoria burnt and affected by fires of 250 ha or more, July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020, and Aboriginal legal interests in land.



Note: 'Registered Aboriginal Party' areas are lands covered by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic). 'Registered NT claim' refers to an area subject to a native title claim that has passed the Registration Test, conferring claimants certain rights regarding future development on claimed lands. 'NT determination' refers to lands where native title has been determined to exist (recognising either exclusive or non-exclusive possession rights and interests). 'RSA area' refers to Recognition and Settlement Agreement areas under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) which indicate that formal recognition has been given to the traditional owners of the agreement area. Portions of

RSA areas are subject to agreements regarding customary activities, land use and may contain areas of former Crown land parks and reserves which are subject to Aboriginal title with joint management. 'ALRA (NSW)' refers to lands granted to Aboriginal Land Councils through the claims process under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW). It also includes so-called 'Schedule 14 Lands' under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW), which cover nine parks or reserves in NSW that have been returned to Aboriginal peoples as freehold title under leaseback arrangements. These titles are mostly held by Aboriginal Land Councils. 'ALRA (NSW)' does not include lands that have come into Land Council ownership through other means such as open market purchases, as the authors are unaware of any comprehensive database of such landholdings. 'ILSC' refers to lands purchased by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) and either divested to Aboriginal interests or still held by the ILSC.

Sources: Data from EMSINA; ILSC; Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning; Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet; NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment; National Native Title Tribunal.

Summary of findings

The maps and tables we have presented highlight the importance and complexity of engaging with Aboriginal people across the PPRR spectrum in response to the 2019–2020 bushfires.

Our population statistics have shown that:

- Over 84 000 Indigenous people, or one-quarter of the Indigenous population of NSW and Victoria, live in the bushfire-affected area.
- Indigenous people in NSW and Victoria are more highly represented in the bushfire-affected area than non-Indigenous people, relative to state population averages. While Indigenous people comprise nearly 5.4% of the 1.55 million people living in fire-affected areas, they are only 2.3% of the total population of NSW and Victoria.
- The numerical minority status of Indigenous people means they are at risk of being overlooked in the bushfire response.
- Indigenous people in the bushfire-affected area have younger population profiles.
- More than one-tenth of children in the bushfire-affected area identify as Indigenous, raising the diverse effects of bushfires on infants and children as a particular concern – including, trauma, health, and access to education and housing.
- In some bushfire-affected towns – such as discrete Indigenous communities – Indigenous people form a substantial part of the population, sometimes 100% of the residents. However, only 10% of the Indigenous population in the fire-affected area live in discrete Indigenous communities.

The legal rights and interests held by Aboriginal people in fire-affected lands and waters show that:

- Aboriginal people have experienced land dispossession, with partial redress by governments
- Aboriginal people have distinct, diverse and spatially extensive legal rights and interests in land as First Peoples, including across much of the fire-affected area.

In summary, there is a significant presence of Aboriginal people, with unique population profiles, spatially uneven patterns of residence, and holding a distinct status in Australian society as both Aboriginal people and First Peoples who have ongoing legal rights and interests. These findings are substantive enough that if government policy is to be fit for purpose, then governments need to consider the particular circumstances and standing of Aboriginal peoples. Indeed, this is already state and federal government policy (e.g. Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2017; Aboriginal Victoria, 2019). These are comprehensive matters that need to be considered across the PPRR spectrum. Of immediate concern is that they inform the processes and structures established in response to the bushfires.

A suite of quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to interpret, analyse and extend our results. This research should be Aboriginal-led if it is to align with best practice research ethics and methods. In the next three sections we draw on scholarly and grey literature to support this research agenda, as well as to further inform the public sector response to the bushfires.

Aboriginal people and the bushfire response

Aboriginal voices from the 2019–2020 bushfires

In this section we present accounts of Aboriginal people's experiences, drawn from different published media. We present these quotations as they are indicative of the distinctive nature of the Aboriginal experience of the bushfire season. While not a substitute for the systematic research needed to deepen our understandings of these experiences, such publicly published accounts provide a useful interim snapshot of perspectives before such detailed research can be undertaken. We believe they highlight the need for Aboriginal difference to be taken seriously in the bushfire response.

Many Aboriginal people have drawn connections between the fires and the ongoing colonisation of lands and waters. For example, Gamilaroi scholar Amy Thunig stated:

> Seeing people start to ask 'what is going on in Australia?!' Ongoing colonisation, that's what's going on. This land was nurtured in reciprocal relationships with First Nations peoples for some 120,000 + years. THIS is the result of 200 odd years of extractive invasion (@AmyThunig, 2020, January 5).

These sentiments were shared by Oliver Costello, Chief Executive of the Firesticks Alliance:

> Since colonisation, many Indigenous people have been removed from their land, and their cultural fire management practices have been constrained by authorities, informed by Western views of fire and land management (Costello, cited in Firesticks Alliance, 2020).

Some Aboriginal people were directly affected by the fires, and their experience was much more intimate. Gamilaraay and Yawalaraay journalist Lorena Allam wrote for The Guardian that:

> Like you, I've watched in anguish and horror as fire lays waste to precious Yuin land, taking everything with it – lives, homes, animals, trees – but for First Nations people it is also burning up our memories, our sacred places, all the things which make us who we are. It's a particular grief, to lose forever what connects you to a place in the landscape. Our ancestors felt it, our elders felt it, and now we are feeling it all over again as we watch how the mistreatment and neglect of our land and waters for generations, and the pig-headed foolishness of coal-obsessed climate change denialists turn everything and everyone to ash (Allam, 2020a).

Bundjalung and Wonnarua scholar Vanessa Cavanagh wrote about what it meant for her to lose a Grandmother tree she had grown up with on Darkinjung Country:

> The sight of this old tree with her crown removed brought warm, stinging tears to my eyes. It was a deep hurt of losing someone far older and wiser than me. Losing someone who was respected and adored. Someone with knowledge I cannot fathom or comprehend. When I told my mum that evening she reacted similarly, a personal and family loss. To others she might just be a big tree (Cavanagh, 2020).

Tagalaka man and Indigenous fire practitioner Victor Steffensen spoke about the frustration Aboriginal people have of always being excluded from the conversation of looking after Country:

> … just once in this nation's history can you just listen to Aboriginal people, our knowledge system? You know, there's an intelligence there and we have all this information for looking after the environment, and we're not being tapped into, and it's so frustrating (Steffensen in Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2020).

Yuin man and cultural fire practitioner Noel Webster expressed similar feelings, coloured by hope for an emerging generation of Indigenous fire practitioners:

> It's hard, you do see a lot of heartbreak in the country, you feel that emotion…what is pushing me along is that I've been working with a lot of young people. I've been seeing the effort they put in, their commitment, their understanding and it makes my job a lot easier. We're investing a lot in these young fellas who are stepping up and making everyone proud (cited in Knowles, 2020).

Disturbingly, there have also been accounts of interpersonal racism being experienced by Aboriginal people during the recovery process. One incident reported in Far East Gippsland was of a relief centre worker turning away an Aboriginal elder saying 'we've helped enough of you people today' (Moore, 2020).

Absence of Aboriginal voices in 2003 and 2009 bushfire inquiries

Despite the distinctiveness of the Aboriginal experience of a bushfire disaster, Aboriginal voices have seldom been heard in this context. In this section we report on an analysis of the two inquiries that followed the previously most recent destructive and damaging fire events – the Canberra bushfires of January 2003 and the Victorian Black Saturday bushfire on February 7, 2009.

Following the Canberra bushfires, the ACT Government launched the McLeod Inquiry in March 2003. The Inquiry's purpose was to investigate the adequacy of the response of ACT Government agencies, with reference to planning, preparation and response, the structure of agencies and their public information strategy, cross-agency coordination, and the adequacy of agencies' infrastructure (McLeod, 2003, p. 244). The report delivered in August 2003 made 61 recommendations regarding management of fuel loads, access, operations, control and command, equipment, training, interstate support, public education and information and administration of emergency services (McLeod, 2003, pp. 231–238). The ACT Government acted upon these recommendations through the introduction of the *Emergency Services Act 2004* (ACT) to support new policy and operational approaches.

Following Victoria's Black Saturday, in February 2009 a Royal Commission was established with much broader terms of reference than the McLeod Inquiry. The commissioners were appointed to inquire into: the causes and circumstances of the bushfires; planning and preparation by government, emergency services, communities and households; all aspects of the bushfire response; measures taken to minimise disruption to essential services; and any other matters the commissioners deemed appropriate (Teague et al., 2010a, pp. 38–41). Lay witnesses reported their personal experiences of the fires to the Royal Commission, as well as people representing institutions and organisations. In July 2010 a four-volume report delivered 67 recommendations, including public communication, coordination between emergency response agencies, increases in controlled burning, the appointment of a fire commander and changes to building and planning regulations for fire-prone areas. The Victorian government accepted all the recommendations.

For this working paper we executed simple word searches of the two reports, finding only very limited references to Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples.[4]

In these reports, Aboriginal peoples are primarily relegated to an historical footnote, rather than featuring as contemporary residents, as First Peoples, as land and rights holders, or as part of contemporary fire management. The report of the McLeod Inquiry mentioned Aboriginal peoples only briefly in 'a historical perspective' as the erstwhile instigators of cultural burns (2003, p. 85). Similarly, The Victorian Royal Commission mentions Indigenous people in this contextual paragraph:

> Australia is the driest vegetated continent and, along with Southern California and France, one of the most bushfire prone regions in the world. Bushfires have shaped, and continue to shape, all aspects of the environment – landscape, ecosystems, biological diversity and culture. They occur both naturally and as a result of human actions. Indigenous Australians **used** fire for a variety of reasons, among them hunting and land management and for ceremonial purposes (our emphasis, Teague et al., 2010b, p. 2).

This understanding is repeated again under the heading 'The Past' (Teague et al., 2010c, p. 289). While the Royal Commission records the erasure of Aboriginal deaths in 19th Century Victorian fire mortality statistics (Teague et al., 2010b, p. 8, fn. 5), contemporary Aboriginal people remain barely visible in the 2010 report. Indeed, there are more references to 'indigenous ecosystems' than Indigenous peoples.

The only two other references to Aboriginal people in volumes I–III of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report are in relation to protecting Indigenous cultural heritage in bushfire planning activities, specifically in the fire operation plans for prescribed burning and the creation of fuel breaks (Teague et al., 2010c, pp. 303–304). There was no specific mention of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the McLeod Inquiry.

We speculate these two reports are not aberrations. The research report 'Major post-event inquiries and reviews: Review of recommendations', commissioned by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council, failed to find that Aboriginal people and their concerns were an important consideration in 55 post-event enquiries and reviews conducted since 2009 (Cole et al., 2017).[5] This report organised 1336 recommendations into themes so as to 'generate a high-level and comprehensive description of the major recurrent categories of recommendations across multiple post-event reviews' (Cole et al., 2017, p. 3).

Once again, this report does not mention Aboriginal people, whether as First Peoples, a distinct group in the community, or in relation to cultural heritage protection or fire management expertise. Aboriginal people are not identified in the least frequent themes that this report identified as 'important in of themselves'. These themes included the role of police, role of business and industry, personal responsibility, occupational health and safety, and offences amongst others (Cole et al., 2017, pp. 22–24). The report neither acknowledges nor comments upon the absence of Aboriginal people and their interests in the 1336 recommendations made since 2009.

Further research is needed to investigate why the comprehensive 2003 and 2009 inquiries specifically, but also other enquiries and commissions, ignore the experiences, concerns, rights and interests of Aboriginal peoples. Such research could consider whether the omissions concerning Aboriginal people are because Aboriginal people are not considered relevant or relevant enough; or they are assumed to not be present – either completely absent or only present in the past. Or it may be that Aboriginal people are collapsed into the

[4] We searched using the terms 'Aborig*' and 'Indig*'. We were unable to search Volume IV of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report ('The Statements of Lay Witnesses') as it was unavailable electronically at the time of writing.
[5] In the report, 'events' include bushfires, floods, storms and technical accidents (Cole et al., 2017).

category of community. The research could also investigate what role Aboriginal people and their institutions play in inquiry processes and structures, if any, and how this informs the inquiry terms of reference and recommendations. At the same time, this research could investigate Aboriginal people's involvement in the research conducted on bushfire planning, preparation, recovery and response.

Terms of engagement

Our findings show a stark contrast between the large Aboriginal population in the fire-affected area, the diverse and extensive rights and interests Aboriginal peoples hold in those areas, and the omission of Aboriginal peoples from the reports of two major post-bushfire inquiries. We speculate that there are structural features of such inquiries that erase, marginalise and subsume the presence, concerns and roles of Aboriginal people and their institutions. Specific measures need to be put in place to avoid repeating this silencing of Aboriginal people in the inquiry that follows the 2019–2020 bushfires.

In reworking the terms on which Aboriginal people are involved in responses to catastrophic bushfires, it is vital to understand three interrelated matters concerning trauma, vulnerability and strength. First, not only do Aboriginal peoples in the fire-affected area suffer historical trauma stemming from the colonisation of their homelands, but they continue to live in a system that perpetuates ongoing trauma (Atkinson, 2002; Atkinson et al., 2014; O'Shane, 1993; Williamson, 2020). This includes the continued suppression of Aboriginal peoples' rights and access to their homelands (e.g. Feng, 2019; Williamson, 2020), the ongoing removal of children from families and communities (Cunneen & Libesman, 2000; Williamson, 2020), and the continued marginalisation of Aboriginal people in influential policymaking settings (Referendum Council, 2017).

Second, Aboriginal people are often framed as passive vulnerable recipients of assistance, including in relation to catastrophic disasters, and this can elide the colonial causes of 'vulnerability' and instead focus on Aboriginal peoples as a 'problem' to be fixed (Fogarty et al., 2018). Aboriginal people in the fire-affected area are likely to have specific socioeconomic vulnerabilities, such as poorer average physical and mental health status, younger families with higher numbers of kids, reliance on social housing, higher rates of unemployment, and access to fewer financial resources. Without pathologising these vulnerabilities (Fogarty et al., 2018; Howitt et al., 2012), it is critical to identify and then materially address the legacies of colonisation and historic and ongoing discrimination that expose Aboriginal people to these vulnerabilities.

Third, Aboriginal people's strengths are overlooked if they are viewed solely as vulnerable populations, victims, or collapsed into generic notions of community (Howitt et al., 2012; Tran et al., 2014). For example, community recovery research has identified that communities recover more quickly and effectively from disasters if they share common experience, including a shared history and close social bonds (Moreton, 2016). It is exactly these community qualities that exist in Aboriginal communities. In this, the Indigenous healing literature foregrounds the importance of culture and cultural specificity (Feeney, 2009). However, there is a lack of learning from this literature. Instead, the community recovery and disaster resilience literature tends to gloss over culture, neglect it or assume it (for exceptions, see Thomassin et al., 2019). This is evident in ways in which the term 'community' is used to assume a single sociocultural group where people's individual needs are broadly homogenous.

It is important to have nuanced understandings of Aboriginal people's experiences of trauma, vulnerability, and strength because catastrophic bushfires do not just reveal, but can also magnify and deepen vulnerabilities in society, which can then lead to vulnerable people becoming more vulnerable (Lukasiewicz & Baldwin, 2020). That is, there is a very real risk that Aboriginal people's trauma may be exacerbated through inappropriate, insensitive and inaccessible recovery strategies from the 2019–2020 bushfires, including the creation of new traumas and risks in both everyday and emergency circumstances (Howitt et al., 2012, p. 51). For example, in

the immediate aftermath of the fires, accessing services to provide basic emergency relief is important. Noting the shameful rates of child removal from Aboriginal people, particularly in NSW and Victoria (Brennan, 2018), it is quite reasonable that some Aboriginal families may be fearful and hesitant to engage with family services, putting them at risk of accessing sub-standard support or indeed, not accessing support at all, leading to further risks and vulnerabilities. We draw attention to this specific example given the high rates of Indigenous children in fire-affected areas.

The reach and importance of these three interrelated matters means that there needs to be specific consideration across PPRR that is coordinated across a range of services, sectors, and organisations, with leadership roles for Aboriginal organisations and people. This involves two tasks: ameliorating structures that exclude and discriminate against Aboriginal peoples; and, supporting Aboriginal peoples' own approaches and priorities in bushfire recovery. Without specific measures, it is likely Aboriginal peoples will continue to be marginalised in the inquiries that follow major fire events – whether in the structures and processes themselves, or in relation to specific topics, such as land management practices, community recovery, cultural and natural heritage, land use planning, the role of volunteers, research priorities and so on. As Thomassin et al. (2019, p. 169) point out, 'Indigenous peoples often have little to no decision-making power and limited capacity to influence the directions of settler government natural hazard management planning and decision-making.' For example, it is possible that current societal interest in Aboriginal peoples' fire management may be limited to specific burning techniques, without appreciating that this is deeper knowledge about how to live with Country that can inform state, territory and national policy and practice more broadly (Weir et al., 2020).

Governments have recognised that they must form 'genuine, formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they are the essential agents of change' (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2019, p. 156). This requires governments to be ready and willing to 'recognise and build on the strength and resilience' of Australia's Indigenous people (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2019, p. 12). The emergency management sector has taken some steps (e.g. Neale et al., 2019; Weir et al., 2020), but more needs to be done. The importance of such a long-term investment is the mainstay of national policies that focus on sustainability and partnership with all sectors of the community, including the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Department of Home Affairs, 2018b), the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (Council of Australian Governments, 2011), and the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework (Department of Home Affairs, 2018a). Indeed, the people with the longest and most durable interests in these places are the Traditional Owners, and their intergenerational approaches are important to learn from and support.

The relationships between First Peoples and Country are not only a matter of legal rights and interests, but also form an important part of social, cultural and political life. Clearly, supporting this requires a change in practice. For example, funds for recovery for farmers and businesses need to also be allocated for Aboriginal peoples' interests in land that do not fit within these categories. Unfortunately, Traditional Owners are placed in an undesirable position as they continue to be largely excluded from key forums and decision-making roles, even though they have distinct legal responsibilities as different to all others. As the framers of the Uluru Statement from the Heart put it, this is the torment of Indigenous powerlessness (Referendum Council, 2017).

In turning around and setting new terms, we identify four first steps:

- acknowledge that Aboriginal people have been erased, made absent and marginalised in previous bushfire recovery efforts, and undertake the work required to identify and address how and why this continues to happen, as part of identifying where change is needed
- establish, with policy and regulations, clear non-negotiable instructions that Aboriginal people – including their histories, knowledges, perspectives, experiences and unique status – be part of the

terms of reference and membership of post-bushfire inquiries, across the full suite of concerns that Aboriginal people raise, experience and for which they are responsible
- establish, with guidelines and regulations, Aboriginal representation on relevant government committees involved in decision-making, planning and implementation of disaster risk management
- ensure that Aboriginal people's own voices are centred in understanding what matters, and what might be done in response, in both policy and practice.

Though marginalised, there is substantial academic literature about how the government, research, inquiry processes, and others might respond, engage and co-design disaster response strategies and policies. As Hunt (2013, p. 33) demonstrates, successful Indigenous engagement:

> …works best in a framework that respects Indigenous control and decision making and supports development towards Indigenous aspirations. Early engagement to enable deliberation about shared goals is necessary, and support for Indigenous governance development and capacity to engage is important. The development of respectful and trusting relationships is key to success. This takes time, people with the right skills and approaches, good communication and leadership by all parties. Clarity about processes, roles and responsibilities, mutually agreed outcomes and the steps to achieve them and a willingness to share responsibility for progress are essential.

Conclusion

As Australia comes to terms with the devastation caused throughout the summer of fire, efforts from governments, charities and civil society is necessary to support communities to recover. Recent public calls to learn from Aboriginal people's fire practices should not be separated from Aboriginal peoples' lived experiences as residents, distinct communities and First Peoples. We think the most urgent forum where Aboriginal people must have a strong presence is in the context of post-disaster inquiries and commissions, including any co-design of new policies and programs created in response to the disasters. However, past inquiries demonstrate a marked neglect of Aboriginal people's priorities, a rhetorical relegation to the past and only the most cursory inclusion.

The neglect of Aboriginal people in bushfire responses impoverishes the capacity of governments, agencies and communities to successfully carry out their work. Indeed, their continued marginalisation diminishes all of us – in terms of our values in living within a just society, as well as the possibilities offered by new and old ideas of how to live with fire-prone landscapes. As diverse peoples accustomed to living with trauma and the disruption of ongoing colonisation, there is much to be learned about the resilience and inherent strengths Aboriginal communities possess (Williamson et al., 2020). It was never acceptable to silence Aboriginal peoples in the responses to major disasters, and it is incumbent upon us all to ensure that these colonial practices of erasure are relegated to the past.

References

Aboriginal Affairs NSW. (2017). Transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the NSW Government: Aboriginal Affairs NSW research agenda 2018-2023. Aboriginal Affairs NSW. https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/research-and-evaluation/Aborginal-Affairs-NSW-research-agenda-2018-2023-FINAL-FEB-2018.pdf

Aboriginal Victoria. (2019). Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2019. Aboriginal Victoria. https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Victorian%20Government%20Aboriginal%20Affairs%20Report%202019_0.pdf

Allam, L. (2020a, January 5). For First Nations people the bushfires bring a particular grief, burning what makes us who we are. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/06/for-first-nations-people-the-bushfires-bring-a-particular-grief-burning-what-makes-us-who-we-are

Allam, L. (2020b, January 18). Right fire for right future: How cultural burning can protect Australia from catastrophic blazes. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/19/right-fire-for-right-future-how-cultural-burning-can-protect-australia-from-catastrophic-blazes

@AmyThunig. (2020, January 5). Seeing people start to ask ‘what is going on in Australia?!’ Ongoing colonisation, that’s what’s going on. This land was nurtured in reciprocal relationships with First Nations peoples for some 120,000 + years. THIS is the result of 200 odd years of extractive yt invasion. Twitter. https://twitter.com/amythunig/status/1213710096246525953

Atkinson, J. (2002). Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines. Spinifex Press.

Atkinson, J., Nelson, J., Brooks, R., Atkinson, C., & Ryan, K. (2014). Addressing Individual and Community Transgenerational Trauma. In P. Dudgeon, H. Milroy, & R. Walker (Eds.), Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice (2nd ed., pp. 289–306). Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/working-together-aboriginal-and-wellbeing-2014.pdf

Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, February 3). Q+A Bushfires Special. Australian Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.abc.net.au/qanda/2020-03-02/11906192

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017a). Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 4—Significant Urban Areas, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State, July 2016 (Catalogue 1270.0.55.004). Commwealth of Australia. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/1270.0.55.004?OpenDocument

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017b). Census of Population and Housing: Details of Overcount and Undercount, Australia, 2016 (Cat. 2940.0). Commonwealth of Australia. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2940.0

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 2016 Census of Population and Housing. https://auth.censusdata.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml

Biddle, N., Edwards, B., Herz, D., & Makkai, T. (2020). Exposure and the impact on attitudes of the 2019-20 Australian Bushfires (ANUPoll No. 32; p. 47). Centre for Social Research and Methods, The Australian National University. https://csrm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/exposure-and-impact-attitudes-2019-20-australian-bushfires-0

Bowman, D., & Bradstock, R. (2020, January 23). Australia needs a national fire inquiry – these are the 3 key areas it should deliver in. The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/australia-

needs-a-national-fire-inquiry-these-are-the-3-key-areas-it-should-deliver-in-130374

Brennan, B. (2018, January 31). Call for investigation of numbers of Indigenous children in care. In AM. ABC Radio. https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/call-for-investigation-into-number-indigenous-children-in-care/9377632

Cavanagh, V. (2020, January 24). Friday essay: This grandmother tree connects me to Country. I cried when I saw her burned. The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/friday-essay-this-grandmother-tree-connects-me-to-country-i-cried-when-i-saw-her-burned-129782

Cole, L., Dovers, S., Eburn, D. M., & Gough, M. (2017). Major post-event inquiries and reviews: Review of recommendations (p. 34). Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, The Australian National University. https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/policy-and-economics-hazards/3928

Council of Australian Governments. (2011). National strategy for disaster resilience: Building our nation's resilience to disasters. Council of Australian Governments. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-strategy-disaster-resilience.pdf

Cumpston, Z. (2020, January 31). To address the ecological crisis, Aboriginal peoples must be restored as custodians of Country. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/to-address-the-ecological-crisis-aboriginal-peoples-must-be-restored-as-custodians-of-country-108594

Cunneen, C., & Libesman, T. (2000). Postcolonial Trauma: The Contemporary Removal of Indigenous Children and Young People from Their Families in Australia. Australian Journal of Social Issues, 35(2), 99–115. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2000.tb01088.x

Department of Home Affairs. (2018a). Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework: A guideline to develop the capabilities required to manage severe to catastrophic disasters (p. 30). https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/australian-disaster-preparedness-framework.pdf

Department of Home Affairs. (2018b). National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (p. 24). Department of Home Affairs. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf

Department of Human Services. (2019). Australian Government Indigenous Programs & Policy Locations (AGIL) dataset [Data set]. https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/agil-dataset

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (2019). Closing the Gap: Report 2019. Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2019/sites/default/files/ctg-report-20193872.pdf

EMSINA Group. (2020). NSW Burnt Areas 201920 (Version 2) [Computer software]. https://bushfires-esriau.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/6f5565fc533249fd87fd294410438829_0

EMSINA Group, & Geoscience Australia. (2020). BushfireBoundaries (II.I) [Computer software]. https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=6cf4eec9077c443e80bc37560f20c83b#overview

Feeney, M. (2009). Reclaiming the Spirit of Well Being: Promising healing practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (p. 25) [Discussion Paper]. The Stolen Generations Alliance. http://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/files/Feeney_HealingDiscussionPaper_2009-1.pdf

Feng, L. (2019, February 23). Indigenous communities fight for traditional fishing practices to be recognised. SBS News. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/indigenous-communities-fight-for-traditional-fishing-practices-to-be-recognised

Firesticks Alliance. (2020, January 10). Firesticks Alliance: Reinvigorating Australia's cultural fire knowledge. Friends of the Earth Australia. https://www.foe.org.au/firesticks_alliance

Fogarty, W., Bulloch, H., McDonnell, S., & Davis, M. (2018). Deficit discourse and Indigenous health: How narrative framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reproduced in policy. http://apo.org.au/node/172646

Fuller, T. (2020, January 24). Native Solutions to Big Fires. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/us/native-american-controlled-burns-california-wildfires.html

Funes, Y. (2020, January 14). Bushfires Are "Obliterating the Cultural Memory" of Australia's Aboriginal People. Earther. https://earther.gizmodo.com/bushfires-are-obliterating-the-cultural-memory-of-austr-1840933953

Howitt, R., Havnen, O., & Veland, S. (2012). Natural and Unnatural Disasters: Responding with Respect for Indigenous Rights and Knowledges. Geographical Research, 50(1), 47–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2011.00709.x

Hugo, G., & Harris, K. (2013). Time and tide: Moving towards an understanding of temporal population changes in coastal Australia. Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, The University of Adelaide. https://stokes2013.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/report-final-april-2013.pdf

Hunt, J. (2013). Engaging with Indigenous Australia: Exploring the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Issues Paper No. 5). Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/59567/2/01_Hunt_Engaging_with_Indigenous_2013.pdf

King, S. (2019, December 20). Cultural burning boasts range of benefits for Indigenous Rangers, families and communities—National Indigenous Times. National Indigenous Times. https://nit.com.au/cultural-burning-boasts-range-of-benefits-for-indigenous-rangers-families-and-communities/

Knowles, R. (2020, January 10). Talk is cheap, time for action: Yuin man promotes traditional fire management practices. National Indigenous Times. https://nit.com.au/talk-is-cheap-time-for-action-yuin-man-promotes-traditional-fire-management-practices/

Lukasiewicz, A., & Baldwin, C. (Eds.). (2020). Natural Hazards and Disaster Justice: Challenges for Australia and Its Neighbours. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-0466-2

McLeod, R. (2003). Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January 2003 bushfires in the ACT (p. 296). Department of Urban Services. https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/113939/McLeodInquiry.pdf

Moore, H. (2020, January 6). Vinnies Apologises After "Disturbing" Incident With Indigenous Elder Fleeing Bushfires. 10 Daily. https://10daily.com.au/news/a200106hvbqd/vinnies-apologises-after-disturbing-incident-with-indigenous-elder-fleeing-bushfires-20200106

Moreton, M. (2016). A study of four natural disasters in Australia: How the human response to fire, flood and cyclone contributes to community resilience and recovery [Doctoral thesis, The Australian National University]. https://doi.org/10.25911/5d7637a9f2134

Morrison, J. (2020, January 11). How First Australians' ancient knowledge can help us survive the fires of the future | Joe Morrison. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/11/how-first-australians-ancient-knowledge-can-help-us-survive-the-bushfires-of-the-future

Neale, T. (2018). Digging for Fire: Finding Control on the Australian Continent. Journal of Contemporary Archaeology, 5(1), 79–90. https://doi.org/10.1558/jca.33208

Neale, T., Carter, R., Nelson, T., & Bourke, M. (2019). Walking together: A decolonising experiment in bushfire management on Dja Dja Wurrung country. Cultural Geographies, 26(3), 341–359. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474018821419

Nunn, G. (2020, January 12). Why Aboriginal planners say the bush “needs to burn.” BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-51043828

O’Shane, P. (1993). Assimilation or Acculturation Problems of Aboriginal Families. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 14(4), 196–198. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1467-8438.1993.tb00968.x

Referendum Council. (2017). Final Report of the Referendum Council. Referendum Council. https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/report_attachments/Referendum_Council_Final_Report.pdf

Taylor, J., & Biddle, N. (2010). Estimating the Accuracy of Geographic Variation in Indigenous Population Counts. Australian Geographer, 41(4), 469–484. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2010.519695

Teague, B., McLeod, R., & Pascoe, S. (2010a). The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission final report: Summary. Parliament of Victoria. http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports/Final-Report.html

Teague, B., McLeod, R., & Pascoe, S. (2010b). The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission final report: Volume I. Parliament of Victoria. http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports/Final-Report/Volume-1/Print-Friendly-Version.html

Teague, B., McLeod, R., & Pascoe, S. (2010c). The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission final report: Volume II. Parliament of Victoria. http://royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports/Final-Report/Volume-2.html

Thomassin, A., Neale, T., & Weir, J. K. (2019). The natural hazard sector’s engagement with Indigenous peoples: A critical review of CANZUS countries. Geographical Research, 57(2), 164–177. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12314

Tran, T., Weir, J. K., Strelein, L. M., & Stacey, C. (2014). Indigenous governance and climate change adaptation. In Applied Studies in Climate Adaptation (pp. 307–315). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118845028.ch34

Weir, J. K., Sutton, S., & Catt, G. (2020). The Theory/Practice of Disaster Justice: Learning from Indigenous Peoples’ Fire Management. In A. Lukasiewicz & C. Baldwin (Eds.), Natural Hazards and Disaster Justice: Challenges for Australia and Its Neighbours (pp. 299–317). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-0466-2

Williamson, B. (2020). Decolonisation, Healing and Trauma. In D. Smith & aa aa (Eds.), Xxx. some press.

Williamson, B., Weir, J., & Cavanagh, V. (2020, January 10). Strength from perpetual grief: How Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis. The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/strength-from-perpetual-grief-how-aboriginal-people-experience-the-bushfire-crisis-129448

CONTACT US

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Research School of Social Sciences
ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

Copland Building #24
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia

T +61 2 6125 0587
W caepr.cass.anu.edu.au

ANU CRICOS Provider Number: 00120C