



**First Nations
Landcare
Working Group**

Reflections

2023-24



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About the First Nations Landcare Working Group

The First Nations Landcare Working Group is a collective embodiment of ancestral wisdom and modern stewardship, comprising eight dedicated individuals from diverse Indigenous backgrounds spanning across our vast continent. United by a shared commitment to honouring traditional practices while navigating contemporary challenges, each member brings a rich tapestry of skills, knowledge, and deep-rooted connection to Country. This voluntary coalition stands as a beacon of Indigenous leadership, working tirelessly to actualise our shared vision of Landcare: a vision that encompasses the holistic wellbeing of our lands, waters, plants, animals, and skies. Through collaborative action, knowledge exchange, and a profound respect for the wisdom of our ancestors, the First Nations Landcare Working Group endeavours to foster environmental stewardship, elevate cultural resurgence, and promote the flourishing of Country for generations to come.



First Nations Landcare Working Group Meetings

The First Nations Landcare Working Group has established a rhythm of regular gatherings, where the beating heart of our collective endeavour comes to life. These meetings serve as sacred spaces, where members convene to exchange not only knowledge and expertise but also stories that bind us closer to the essence of our shared heritage. Through heartfelt yarns and genuine camaraderie, we've woven a tapestry of understanding and respect, nurturing bonds that transcend geographical distances and cultural boundaries. Amidst this exchange, we've diligently crafted the framework that guides our journey forward, settling the Terms of Reference and meticulously outlining our Strategic Plan. In these gatherings, the pulse of our commitment to Landcare beats strong, driving us ever closer to the realisation of our shared vision.



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Participation at GARMA 2023

The Landcare Australia Panel at the 2023 GARMA Festival, hosted on Yolngu Country, was a dynamic exploration of the profound connections between First Nations people and Landcare initiatives. Hosted by Landcare Australia's chairman, Doug Humann AM, the panel featured a diverse array of voices, including members of Landcare Australia's First Nations Landcare Working Group and a Yolngu panellist.

The theme of "Connection" was the focal point, delving into how the identity of First Nations people intricately intertwines with the vital work of healing the land, water, sea, and people through Landcare practices. Drawing upon centuries-old cultural practices that prioritise harmony and balance with the natural world, the panellists shared personal experiences, stories, and insights, illustrating how their Indigenous heritage has served as a guiding force in their Landcare endeavours.

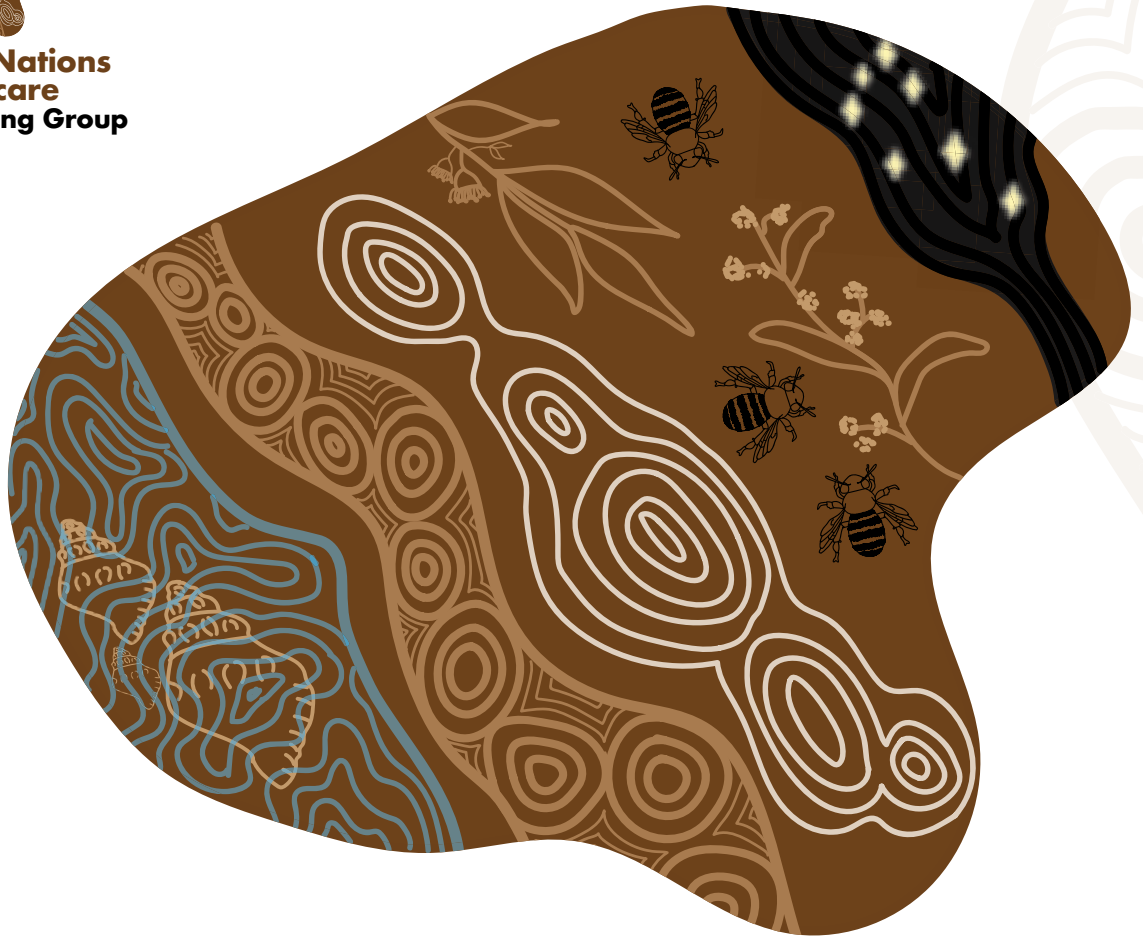
Through heartfelt dialogue and shared wisdom, the panel underscored the fundamental importance of maintaining connections with the land, sea, water, and people to ensure sustainable practices for future generations. Emphasising the essential role of collaboration between Indigenous custodians and non-Indigenous stakeholders, the discussion highlighted the transformative power of partnership in achieving meaningful and lasting environmental outcomes.

The GARMA Festival provides a unique platform to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Australia's First Nations people while addressing contemporary challenges such as environmental conservation and sustainable land management. Landcare Australia's establishment of the First Nations Landcare Working Group in late 2022 underscored its commitment to supporting Indigenous communities and integrating cultural land and sea management practices into Landcare initiatives. Together, we are forging partnerships that set the benchmark for respectful, effective relationships with First Nations peoples and strengthen our collective commitment to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation.

Through the lens of a Western Queensland First Nations (Iningai) women, I was reminded of what has been taken from us as a people and that is our strong cultural connections and understanding of our lore and how we must govern this lore. We were reminded that we are all part of one nation (which makes up the many First Nations) but have our own discrete communities/clans within that nation. It was a profound moment to be sharing our experiences as First Nations members of the important work that Landcare Australia has done, but more so into the future as it is being led by First Nations voices. I also witness the lack of our First Nations community being present and getting to share knowledge of culture and ceremony, it would be great to see this opportunity open up to all First Nations communities through a National Cultural exchange or sharing and caring for country such as 'National Cultural Custodians Songlines. Suzanne Thompson.



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National Custodians of Country

The First Nations Landcare Working Group's participation in and support for the National Custodians of Country Gathering in Cairns, hosted on Djabugay Country, was not only a testament to our commitment to traditional land management practices and cultural resurgence but also a significant opportunity to support Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation. This gathering provided a platform for us, as First Nations individuals, to share our knowledge and insights with local mob and the broader Landcare community, while also actively collaborating with Firesticks.

Our engagement at the gathering allowed us, as custodians of Country, to deepen our understanding of the importance of cultural burning in land management and biodiversity conservation. By exchanging ideas, experiences, and best practices with fellow custodians and Landcare practitioners, we strengthened our advocacy for the incorporation of Indigenous fire management techniques into broader environmental strategies.

Our support for Firesticks and similar initiatives aligns with our broader vision, ensuring ancient practices are embedded into contemporary action in caring for Country. Through our participation in the gathering, we reaffirmed our commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives within the Landcare movement, ensuring that traditional knowledge and practices are recognised and valued in efforts to care for Country.



Annual Workshop in Adelaide

The inaugural face-to-face gathering of the First Nations Landcare Working Group in November in Adelaide marked a significant milestone in our collective journey. Hosted at Southern Cultural Immersion centre on Kurna Country, this gathering provided a sacred space for our members to come together, share yarns, and reflect on the purpose of our group. As First Nations individuals, we recognise the interconnectedness of all living beings with the land, sea, and water that sustain us. Our time together was dedicated to exploring how we can harness our collective wisdom and experiences to foster collaboration between Indigenous mob and non-Indigenous Landcarers in caring for Country.

During the gathering, facilitated by Landcare Australia staff, we delved into crafting our Terms of Reference and shaping our 2024-26 Strategic Plan. These foundational documents not only define our purpose and objectives but also serve as guiding lights as we navigate the path ahead. Through open dialogue and collaboration, we shared valuable insights and perspectives, enriching our understanding of the diverse landscapes and communities we represent.

The gathering also provided wonderful learning and sharing opportunities, fostering deeper engagement and connection among our members. As we sat together, exchanging stories and knowledge passed down through generations, we were reminded of the strength and resilience of our cultures and traditions. This experience reinforced our commitment to working together, across cultural divides, to care for the land, sea, and water that sustain us all.



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Australian Land Conservation Alliance Conference

Our representation at the Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) event in October, hosted on Ngunnawal Country, was a collaborative effort, with several members of the First Nations Landcare Working Group in attendance. Together, we contributed to the vibrant discussions and knowledge sharing sessions that unfolded throughout the event. One particularly noteworthy session, facilitated by Barry Hunter, provided a valuable platform for exploring the intersection of traditional Indigenous land management practices with contemporary conservation efforts, particularly within the context of private landholders.

During this session, attendees engaged in insightful discussions, delving into the ways Indigenous-led initiatives can inform government policies and

investment strategies. The dialogue emphasised the importance of Indigenous perspectives in shaping effective environmental policies and highlighted opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration in land stewardship.

Beyond this session, our collective presence at the ALCA event allowed us to showcase the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples to conservation efforts. Through networking and sharing experiences, we fostered partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including private landholders, and demonstrated the value of incorporating Indigenous wisdom into conservation practices. This collaborative approach holds promise for innovative solutions that honour both traditional knowledge and contemporary conservation goals.

NAIDOC Week

During NAIDOC Week, Nat created a powerful video celebrating the wisdom and significance of Elders in our community. This heartfelt tribute highlighted the invaluable role of Elders as custodians of knowledge and culture, emphasising the importance of honouring and respecting their guidance. Through storytelling and personal reflections, the video served as a poignant reminder of the profound connection between past and present, and the timeless wisdom that our Elders carry. As custodians of tradition and guardians of wisdom, our Elders embody the essence of resilience and strength, inspiring us to cherish and uphold their legacy for generations to come.





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Branding for the First Nations Landcare Working Group

The process of designing the branding for our First Nations Landcare Working Group has been a collaborative and inspiring journey, marked by creativity and unity. Dhani and Nat, two talented members of our group, joined forces during a meeting in Canberra to kickstart the design process. Drawing upon their collective vision and expertise, ideas flowed effortlessly, resulting in a series of images that beautifully captured the essence of our group's purpose and identity.

These initial designs were shared with the wider group, sparking further collaboration and refinement. Together, we worked to ensure that the branding authentically represented the diversity and richness of First Nations cultures across Australia. Each element - from the vibrant colours to the symbolic imagery of land, sea, water, sky, and people - was carefully chosen to reflect our deep connection to Country and our shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

Having the opportunity to contribute to the creation of our group's branding has been a profound honour for all involved. It is a testament to the strength of our collective voice and the importance of Indigenous representation within the Landcare movement. As we proudly unveil our branding to the world, we do so with a sense of pride and gratitude, knowing that it symbolises not only who we are but also the values and aspirations that unite us as custodians of Country.

Personal Reflections

Being invited to join the Landcare Australia First Nations Landcare Working Group has been a journey of growth, learning, and meaningful connection. I have had the privilege of not only sharing my own knowledge and experiences but also learning from the wisdom of fellow members and engaging with the Landcare Australia Board and Executive.

As we stand at the beginning of this journey, I am filled with a sense of purpose and commitment to the work ahead. Together, we are dedicated to fostering greater understanding, breaking down barriers, and ensuring that all Australians, regardless of background, are empowered to care for the land. It is a journey that will require courage, collaboration, and resilience, but one that holds immense promise for positive change.

Being part of the First Nations Landcare Working Group is more than just a role; it is a responsibility and an honour. It is a chance to contribute to something greater than ourselves, to amplify Indigenous voices within the Landcare movement, and to work towards a future where cultural and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. As we embark on this journey together, I am filled with hope and determination, knowing that our collective efforts will pave the way for a more inclusive and sustainable Australia.



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