



Wingecarribee
SHIRE COUNCIL

Cultural Burning in Bushland Reserves



Acknowledgement

Wingecarribee Shire Council acknowledges the Gundungurra and Dharawal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of Australia



We're with you

Catalyst for the Project

2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires and...

Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry (2020). There were 76 recommendations including Recommendations 25 and 26

“That Government adopt the principle that cultural burning is one component of a broader practice of traditional Aboriginal land management and is an important cultural practice, not simply another technique of hazard reduction burning”.

“That, in order to increase the respectful, collaborative and effective use of Aboriginal land management practices in planning and preparing for bush fire, Government commit to pursuing greater application of Aboriginal land management, including cultural burning.....”



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Strategic Context

Environment and Climate Change Strategy (2024)

Principle: Care and Respect for Country

Country is living, constantly changing, and evolving. Many ecosystems exist across different realms of Country including both living and non-living elements. Integration and empowerment of Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values is vital for understanding, respecting and caring for Country

Priority One: Landscapes Catchments and Nature

Focus Area One: Landscape and Cultural Values

Commitment 1.1 Support, encourage and provide programs that embed indigenous cultural knowledge and practices in natural resource management and environmental research.



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Strategic Context

WSC Environment and Climate Change Strategy (2024)

Priority One: Landscapes Catchments and Nature

Focus Area Two: **Bushland and Biodiversity**

Commitments:

3.1 Protect and conserve our bushland reserves in alignment with our Plans of Management

3.3 Provide opportunities for our community to learn and participate in initiatives that support our local environment.



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Getting started

- Co-design of project
- Detailed project planning and scoping
- Grant application – Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund
- Grant success and commitment of significant in-kind support (Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council - ILALC, WSC, NSW RFS, Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Inc - GAHAI)
- Project steering committee – providing governance and direction (ILALC, WSC, NSW RFS, GAHAI)
- Project phases:
 - Phase 1 – Strategy development
 - Phase 2 – Communications, education, awareness, engagement
 - Phase 3 – Capacity building
 - Phase 4 – Implementation of burns on Country



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Governance

- The project was co-designed and developed with Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council (ILALC), Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Incorporated (GAHAI), other members of the Local Aboriginal community and Wingecarribee Shire Council (WSC)
- The project commenced in early 2022 with the Pilot Cultural Burn occurring in August 2023
- Wingecarribee Shire Council set up a project steering committee, meeting every couple of months, to guide the implementation of the project. The steering committee include staff from ILALC, Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Incorporated (GAHAI), NSW RFS and WSC staff.



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What has been achieved?

A draft Aboriginal Cultural Burning Strategy for Wingecarribee Bushland Reserves and draft communications plan prepared.

Three burns planned for and completed at Gibbergunyah Reserve, near Mittagong:

- Gun09 (26-27 August 2023) (6ha)
- Gun06 (partial) (13 April 2024) (5ha)
- Gun08 (14 April 2024) (8ha)



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Gibbergunyah Reserve Cultural Burn



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What is there still to do?

Community engagement

- Aboriginal community workshop to develop the draft cultural burning strategy and communication plan
- Community tour of burn sites at Gibbergunyah Reserve in late Winter/Spring
- Interpretive Marker/Sign design and installation at the first burn site
- Web site, media and other communications

A minimum of two cultural burns to be planned for 2024/2025 FY

- Gibbergunyah Reserve
- Greater Mount Alexandra Reserve



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Reflections

- Aboriginal/First Nations stakeholder engagement and co-design of project plan
- Aboriginal/First Nations cultural aspects guide all actions and decisions
- Planning, preparation and manageable steps
- Be prepared for interruptions to the flow of the project
 - extreme weather/natural disasters
 - staff/stakeholder changes and capacity
- Bring all stakeholders along on the journey
- Relationships take priority over tasks
- Record the story of the journey
- Build pre- and post-burn biodiversity monitoring into your program



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Australian Government



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ILLAWARRA
LOCAL ABORIGINAL
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Questions