

Jihad Dib

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Youth Justice



David Harris

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing
Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for the Central Coast

Jenny Aitchison

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Dr Michael Holland

Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health
Member for Bega

Media Release

Bolstering traditional practices to ramp up bushfire resilience

Friday, 23 February 2024

****Vision, audio and stills available to download:**

www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/qd4zbiam2day1zdk887k/h?rlkey=c64dkxvqfime2ac1tip37ikzp&e=1&dl=0

A new program to boost the bushfire resilience of critical transport corridors by supporting Aboriginal cultural landscape management has been launched at four sites across regional New South Wales.

The \$4.5 million Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes Project is a land management pilot created in response to recommendations from the NSW Bushfire Inquiry which followed the Black Summer disaster.

The outcome-driven project supports local Aboriginal communities to use traditional land management methods, including cultural burning, to reduce the risk of bushfires impacting key NSW roads.

Pilot sites are located:

- near the Bruxner Highway northwest of Grafton on Bundjalung Country
- near the Oxley and Newell Highways at Coonabarabran on Gomeroi Country
- along the Princes Highway at Bega and Batemans Bay on the South Coast on Yuin Country.

A joint TfNSW and La Trobe University research project will accompany the pilots and explore how traditional and cultural land and water management can be used to build resilience to natural disasters into the transport network.

The Department of Regional NSW Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program will support Aboriginal groups within a culturally safe environment to ensure their business models can deliver landscape management services to landowners and Government once the pilots conclude in mid-2025.

The pilot is part of the NSW Government's \$28 million Network Resilience Program being delivered by TfNSW over four years to improve the State Road network's resilience to bushfires.

More information about the Network Resilience Program is here:

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/programs/regional-and-outer-metropolitan-network-resilience-program>

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Corporation of NSW, NSW Local Land Services, local councils and Local Emergency Management Committees are working on the pilots with TfNSW.

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib said:

“Hazard reduction and mitigation play a key role in managing fire risk, and we know from the Bushfire Inquiry that there are many different approaches we can take to this to prepare as much as possible for bushfires.

“This project will support Aboriginal communities to carry out and expand cultural landscape management, making our road network more resilient and promoting the use of local traditional knowledge to better prepare our landscape for natural disasters.”

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris said:

“Aboriginal people have been caring for Country as custodians and knowledge holders for tens of thousands of years.

“It makes sense for Aboriginal people to manage the landscape at these sites now and into the future.

“Through this initiative, we are Closing the Gap by creating jobs and empowering Aboriginal people and communities to be decision-makers.

“The project will strengthen Aboriginal communities and build knowledge and cultural heritage across the generations.”

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

“Having travelled extensively through Bega during the 2019/20 bushfires, I know the first-hand trauma and devastation they caused.

“It’s a win-win situation that could pave the way for this important work to expand after the pilot. It will contribute to a model of closer working with Aboriginal people to build the framework for future land management partnerships with Transport for NSW, other Government agencies, and private landholders.

“This won’t just help reduce the risk of catastrophic fires impacting our transport links, it will also help the Aboriginal communities strengthen their cultural connection with Country.”

Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health and Member for Bega Dr Michael Holland said:

“The long-term tragedy and trauma that catastrophic fires bring is fresh in the memory of people who live, work and visit the South Coast. Connectivity is key during times of natural disaster, and I welcome any initiative that will help build the resilience of our key road network.

“The great thing about the pilot is that it has the potential to build future business and employment opportunities for local communities, while uplifting our collective ability to care for Country.

“This will help encourage knowledge of the land to be passed on by Elders and benefit local communities as well as everyone who relies on the road network.”

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