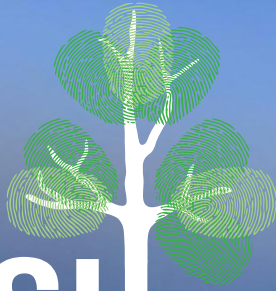


FIRE to FLOURISH



Strength through community-led action

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR YEAR
OF ACTION,
GROWTH
AND **IMPACT.**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of the lands on which we work and live across Australia. This report was created by people living on Bidawel Maap, Boon Wurrung/Bunerong, Brinja-Yuin, Bundjalung, Cammeraygal, Djiringanj, Euahlayi, Gadigal, Gumbaynggirr, Gunaikurnai, Jubullum, Jukembal, Kamilaroi, Kurna, Ngarabal, Ngarigo Monero, Ngoorabul, Peramangk, Tabulam, Walbunja, Wathaurong, Wurundjeri, Yaegl, Yuin and Yukumbal Countries.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. We are committed to collaboration that furthers self-determination and creates a better future for all.

The use of the term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout this report to describe and acknowledge the Aboriginal people, community members and nation groups of the program.

Where reference to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is made, the term 'Indigenous' is used. The term 'Indigenous' evolved through international law to acknowledge a particular relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the territory from which they originate.

Indigenous peoples are actively seeking recognition of their identities, culture and ways of life. As such, in some parts of the Country, it may be more appropriate in publications to use solely the term Aboriginal, or First Nations people.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

This document contains artwork of a deceased Aboriginal artist. In alignment with cultural protocols, policy and Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property, Fire to Flourish has sought permissions and guidance on the continued use of the artwork, and an acknowledgement of the artist is given in written communication only. No audio or visual sharing or verbalisation of the artist will be promoted or endorsed out of cultural respect.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	04
OUR YEAR OF ACTION	20
OUR YEAR OF GROWTH	36
OUR YEAR OF IMPACT	50
WHO WE ARE	68

INTRODUCTION



WELCOME	08
OUR APPROACH	10
PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING	12
NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS	14
2024 AT A GLANCE	15
OUR YEAR IN THE MEDIA	16
LESSONS LEARNED	18

FOREWORD

It's been wonderful to be part of Fire to Flourish's Strategic Advisory Council, and to offer the team guidance as they've navigated a year of action, growth and impact, and planned for enduring legacy beyond the program's current phase.

For many years, and particularly after the 2009 Black Saturday Fires, I've worked with individuals and communities in the immediate aftermath of disasters. People had lost everything, were in total shock, and had little or no agency in their own recovery or future resilience. It saddens me that our disaster management and recovery systems still largely operate as a short-term fix with little input from communities.

I've heard countless times from everyday Australians that they feel under-resourced, unheard and poorly supported over the long-term.

Fire to Flourish has been a breath of fresh air. The program has continued the complex process of shifting the dial to enable communities to lead their own recovery and resilience. This way of working with communities hasn't been done before. Its innovative trials, willingness to work slowly, and its close attention to learning and adapting, is delivering increased resilience and other positive impacts within its partner communities.

Fire to Flourish is showing what the future of community involvement in Australia's disaster management system could look like. It has removed an element of risk and doubt, which paves the way for others to adopt these principles and practices. As the program moves into its final year, co-investment from Government and other partners is now needed so that the model can be scaled, enabling communities across Australia to face the increasing risk and impacts of disasters.



Professor Christine Nixon

Chair, Fire to Flourish Strategic Advisory Council



WELCOME

Welcome to the fourth Annual Report for Fire to Flourish. As we emerge from another summer season of disasters, I reflect on the growing momentum towards community-led disaster resilience.

2024 has been our most impactful year to date, as we've continued walking alongside our partner communities to co-create tailored resilience solutions. We've seen more community members engaged, more community resilience initiatives, more funding disbursed, more research outputs and more media coverage than any previous year.

I was thrilled and honoured that Fire to Flourish was awarded the National Community Award at the 2024 Resilient Australia Awards in Canberra. For me, this prestigious award reflects the sector's appetite to embrace community leadership, partnership and action in Australia's resilience efforts, and its recognition that doing so requires new ways of understanding, valuing, connecting and doing.

A highlight of the year has been seeing our community teams lead the design, promotion, coordination and delivery of participatory grantmaking rounds with such confidence and effectiveness. They delivered eight granting rounds, resulting in 83 diverse community resilience projects identified and led by community members who understand their unique resilience needs. In total, we disbursed \$4.9 million in grant funding.

Our researchers have played a pivotal role this year, working closely with partner communities to support their local action and generate evidence on what's working, why and for whom. Additional project highlights for 2024 include measuring community climate resilience in eight bushfire-affected communities, a study on internal displacement following the 2019/20 fires, and an independent review of Cobargo's community-led recovery fund.

The National Indigenous Disaster Resilience (NIDR) program kicked off its Policy Roundtable series and undertook groundbreaking research, including engagement with Aboriginal residents and Traditional Owners affected by the 2022 floods in NSW and Victoria.

The second NIDR Gathering was a celebration of Indigenous leadership and excellence in emergency management, community recovery, disaster resilience and Caring for Country. I found the experience profound, immersed in a truly Indigenous-led setting at the Lismore Showgrounds and with a range of on-Country experiences. The Gathering created space for truth telling, deep learning and growing collaborations among delegates.

DisasterWISE has also had a huge year, with steady growth of its membership and a range of initiatives to activate the network around its purpose: connect, learn and drive change. Its monthly Online Get-Togethers have been popular and its new learning platform supports members to engage in meaningful and creative ways. DisasterWISE is now on the cusp of launching as an independent entity, an exciting next stage in its evolution in growing a network of people who are building disaster resilience through community-led action.

This year our Annual Report presents the findings of our independent impact assessment (pages 50-67), which used qualitative and quantitative evidence from local people within our partner communities to help us refine strategies, allocate resources and scale up successful initiatives. I am delighted the 2024 assessment found that Fire to Flourish has had a significant positive impact on our partner communities overall. The results highlight that our strongest impact has been in areas of community empowerment and social capital, skill building and leadership development, grant support and project implementation, and Indigenous culture and knowledge integration.

Five years ago, our partner communities were devastated by the 2019/20 bushfires - a catastrophic event that caused unending damage. Against this backdrop, we set out to prove that a new model of support for communities was possible and powerful. As we move into the fifth and final

year of our program, we know that our partner communities are more resilient, more connected and more empowered as a result of Fire to Flourish.

With disaster costs projected to reach \$1.2 trillion over the next 40 years, the urgency of embedding proactive solutions cannot be overstated. So the question becomes: How do we scale the approaches that are proven to work?

As we look ahead to 2025, we have a big year focused on completing our program of delivery in partner communities, as well as consolidating and sharing our co-produced knowledge through research articles and reports, policy guidance and practical tools. And we are committed to

creating the pathways forward for our work to have enduring legacy for our partner communities and the system changes that are needed for all Australian communities to flourish.

Briony Rogers
Chief Executive Officer, Fire to Flourish



OUR APPROACH

Fire to Flourish is a community impact program providing direct support to communities as the first and last responders to disasters. With communities and research as key enablers, our mission is to trial innovations in community-led resilience and influence system changes to support their scaling.

Conceived in the aftermath of the 2019/20 bushfires and led by Monash University, we are partnering with four fire-affected communities, Clarence Valley, Eurobodalla, Tenterfield and East Gippsland, to co-create innovative approaches in community-led disaster recovery and long-term resilience. Our six program principles (below) guide everything we do. Throughout this report, look out for our Principles in Practice, which showcase examples of how we've applied our principles across the program.

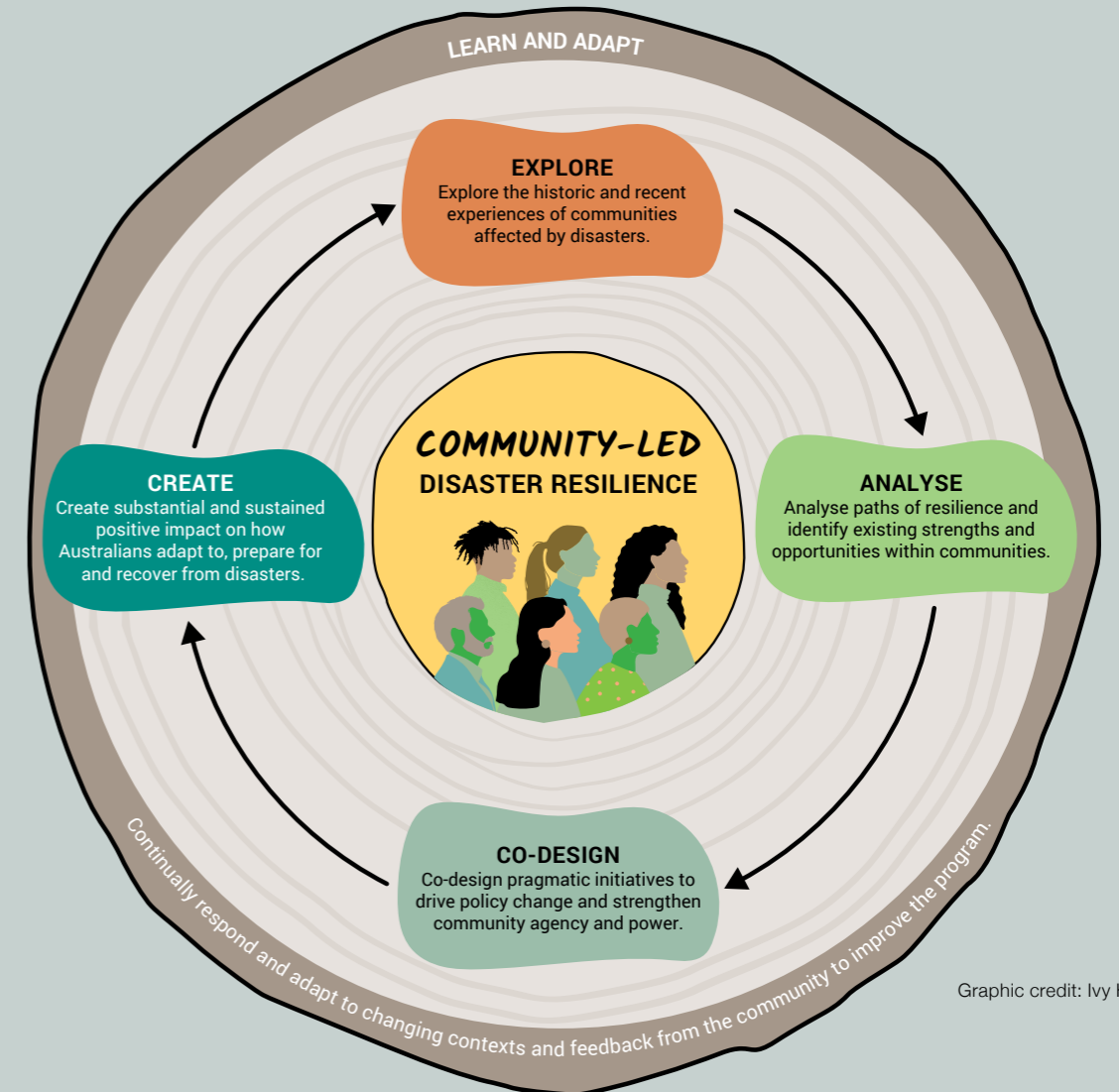


Image credit: Fire to Flourish Tenterfield

<p>BE COMMUNITY-LED</p> 	<p>FOREGROUND ABORIGINAL WISDOM</p> 	<p>ADDRESS INEQUITIES AND ENHANCE INCLUSION</p> 
<p>BE STRENGTHS-BASED AND TRAUMA-INFORMED</p> 	<p>BE HOLISTIC AND IMPACTFUL</p> 	<p>LEARN, ADAPT, EVOLVE</p> 

"I love this process because I totally believe it. Community knows what's best and it just makes sense to have them making the decisions about what they need."

Community Staff Member, Tenterfield



Graphic credit: Ivy Hadjuk

The Fire to Flourish approach is represented in the graphic above. Through our community partnerships, we explore, analyse, co-design and create solutions for strengthening disaster resilience, self-determination and community cohesion. Practices of reflecting, learning and adapting are critical for the program's transformative agenda.

The knowledge we are co-developing with our partner communities is creating the evidence and insights needed to refine our model, demonstrate its benefits and develop practical guidance and resources to support its widespread implementation.

In 2024, we entered Phase 4 of delivery, with focus on implementing, spreading and scaling. It has been a year of action, growth and impact, building momentum for our fifth and final year of the program in its current form.



PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

Participatory grantmaking is central to our approach. It vests decision-making power about community funding in community members with local knowledge and deep understanding of their disaster recovery needs and resilience priorities.

Participatory grantmaking encourages wide community engagement, participation and empowerment, including among groups that have had little access to funding from other sources. It gives the community the power to set project eligibility and selection criteria, and ultimately decide which projects are funded.

Participatory processes are designed from end-to-end, with focus on supporting the long-term uplift in the disaster resilience of communities through shared understanding, strengthened connections and increased agency.

Grant round designs and funding allocation decisions are informed by workshops that bring a group of community members together to develop a shared vision and priorities for disaster resilience.

These processes are tailored across different grant rounds, with each community planning and designing their own journey for strengthening resilience. While some rounds have been broadly framed around disaster resilience, others have been more focused. For example, shaping built environment priorities through placemaking methods, engaging deeply with Caring for Country themes through Indigenous-led co-design, and addressing priorities that emerged from community reflections and lessons following a disaster event.

This year, through our participatory grantmaking processes, we supported eight rounds of funding in our four partner communities, resulting in 83 community projects and \$4.9 million disbursed.



“It’s really good to be part of something where the focus was on us as community members instead of just people standing in the room dictating and giving information that may not be as relevant to us.”

Community Staff Member, Eurobodalla

“It’s been really beautiful to watch the kind of thinking that comes from getting to the root of the problem, through the different participatory activities. It just helps people to think a bit in those different ways.”

Community Staff Member, East Gippsland

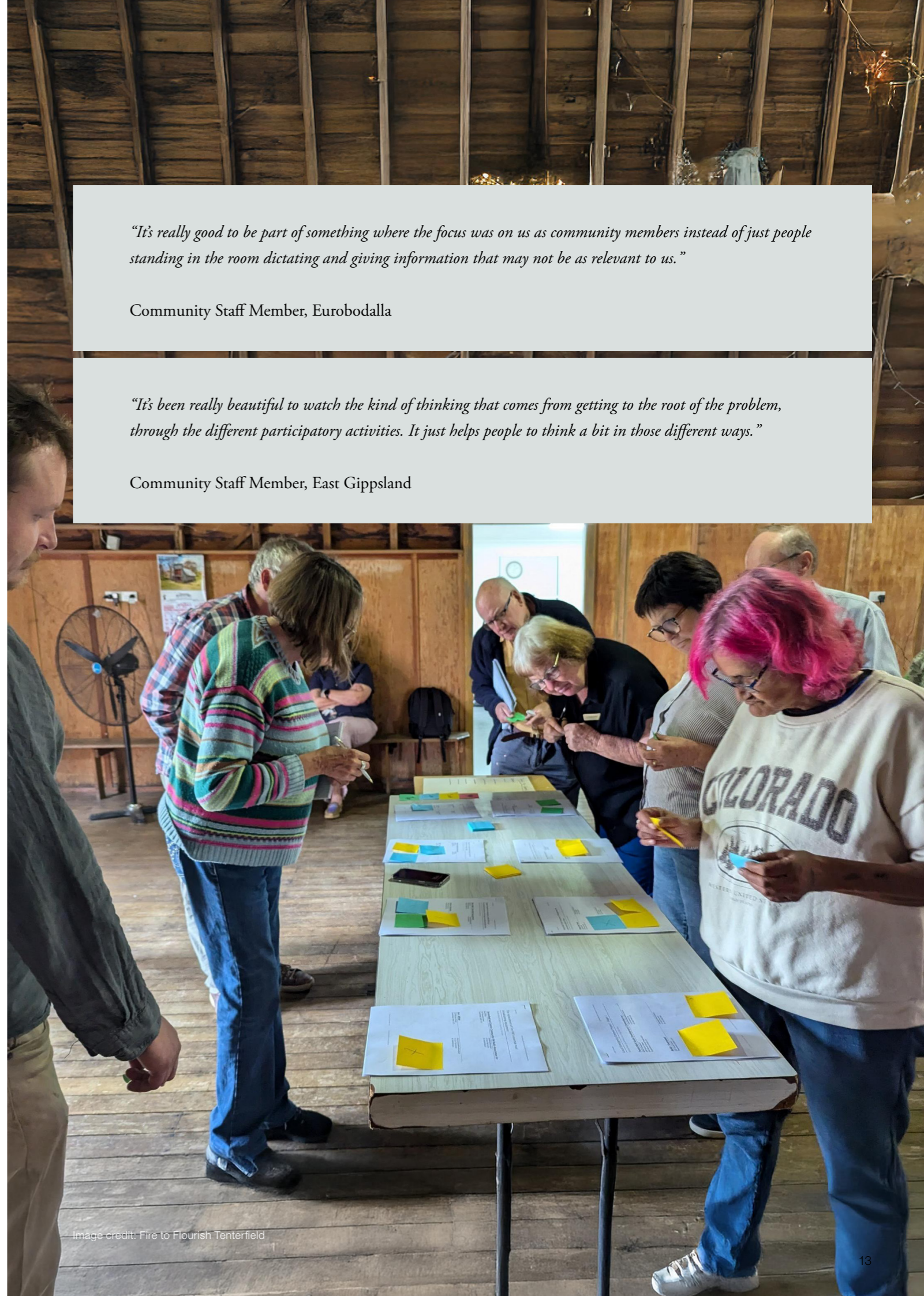


Image credit: Fire to Flourish Tenterfield

NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

In November, Fire to Flourish was awarded the National Community Award at the 2024 Resilient Australia Awards in Canberra.

Now in its 25th year, the prestigious Resilient Australia Awards celebrate and promote initiatives that build community resilience to disasters and emergencies around Australia. The awards are managed by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience and sponsored by the Commonwealth Government.

CEO Briony Rogers was joined by Fire to Flourish community leaders to accept the award in at Old Parliament House in Canberra, including Cara MacLeod from Fire to Flourish Clarence Valley, Kizzy Nye and Joe Brierley from Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla, and Sara Matthews from Fire to Flourish East Gippsland.

Winning the Award is recognition of the power of collaboration and dedication of our team, partner communities, funding and delivery partners, Strategic Advisory Council members and wider network of friends and supporters.

Having won the NSW Resilient Australia Community Award in September, Fire to Flourish was a finalist for the National Community Award, alongside Tasmania Fire Service, Women’s Health Loddon Valley (highly commended), GIVIT and Australian Red Cross (joint category winner for its First Nations Recovery Group).

There were many inspiring projects showcased at the award ceremony, and we were thrilled to see Indigenous leadership recognised and celebrated in many of the categories.

“Winning this award is testament to the growing support of our research-backed model for community-led disaster resilience. Fire to Flourish is proud to be contributing to the collective movement to build a more resilient Australia, community by community, and this win feels like another step in the right direction. This award is recognition of a model which enables communities themselves to determine their own disaster resilience. The work and lessons of the Fire to Flourish program demonstrate a tangible pathway forward for advancing community-led disaster resilience. This work fills a gap in Australia’s current disaster management sector and we see real opportunity to share this work with other communities across Australia.”

Briony Rogers, CEO, Fire to Flourish



2024 AT A GLANCE

COMMUNITY GRANTS

69
PROCESS PARTICIPANTS



35%
PROJECTS LED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE/GROUPS

80
COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS RECEIVED FUNDING

8
FUNDING ROUNDS

200+
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



83
RESILIENCE PROJECTS SUPPORTED

\$4.9M
FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT

11
KNOWLEDGE OUTPUTS



55+
PUBLIC EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

16
RESEARCH PROJECTS

29
PROGRAM PARTNERS



9
PHD STUDENTS

OUR YEAR IN THE MEDIA



146M
TOTAL REACH



568
TOTAL MENTIONS

125
ONLINE

184
SOCIAL MEDIA

8
PRINT

246
RADIO

4
TV

Fire to Flourish enjoyed significant local and national media attention in 2024, shining a light on our innovative ways of working, program achievements, community impact and research findings. And, crucially, bringing the case for community-led disaster resilience to a wide audience.

**FIRE TO FLOURISH:
STRENGTHENING DISASTER
RESILIENCE THROUGH
COMMUNITY-LED ACTION**

CLARENCE VALLEY INDEPENDENT

**DISASTER RESILIENCE
GATHERING BEGINS IN
FLOOD-HIT TOWN**

DAILY MAIL

**COMMUNITY-LED DISASTER
RESILIENCE MODEL
BENEFITING THOSE THAT
NEED IT MOST**

PHYS.ORG

**“WE’RE ABOUT CHANGING
THE SYSTEM” - INDIGENOUS
LEADERS TO ATTEND
ON-COUNTRY CONFERENCE
ON DISASTER RESILIENCE**

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

**PROJECTS TO ENHANCE
COMMUNITIES**

KOORI MAIL

**AWARD WINNERS HELPING
TO BUILD COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS
AND EMERGENCIES**

NSW GOVERNMENT

**LISMORE HOSTS NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS DISASTER
RESILIENCE TALKS ON
CULTURALLY SAFE DISASTER
RESPONSE**

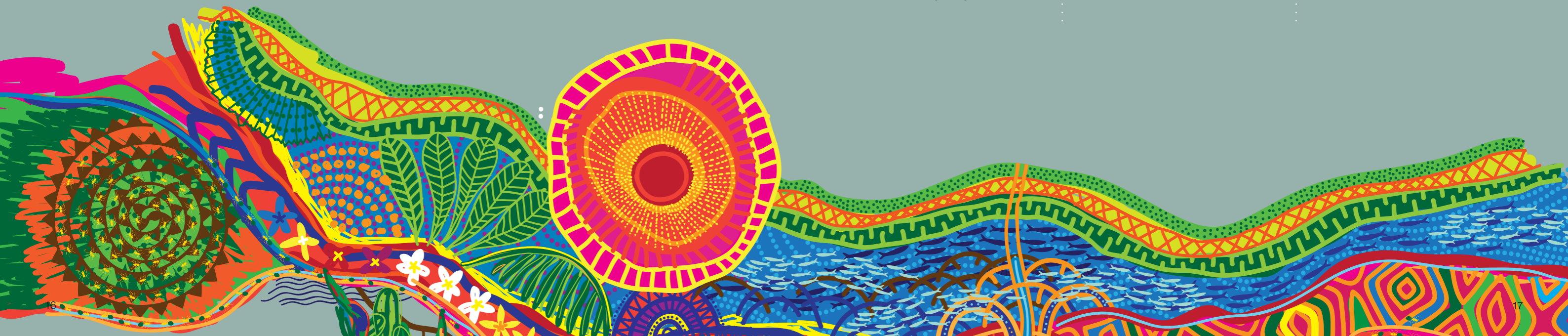
ABC NEWS

**FLOURISHING POST-BUSHFIRE
COMMUNITY**

BAY POST & MORUYA EXAMINER

**FIRE TO FLOURISH
EUROBODALLA GRANTS TO
BUILD PEOPLE’S DISASTER
RESILIENCE**

BATEMANS BAY POST



LESSONS LEARNED

Achieving lasting, transformative change requires new perspectives, bold ideas and collective effort. It's essential that we learn together as boundaries are pushed and innovative solutions embraced to create the systems that are needed to enable community-led disaster resilience.

The longer we work with our partner communities, the more we learn. We remain committed to an approach of openness—constantly seeking to understand what works and what doesn't. Our lessons this year reflect the program's focus on deepening our impact.

COMMUNITIES ARE NATURAL SYSTEMS THINKERS

Communities understand that everything is interconnected. Disaster resilience projects prioritised for grant funding span social, economic, wellbeing, cultural, infrastructural and environmental themes. Through facilitated discussions, people have readily unpacked the root causes of problems and brought focus to the capacities and solutions that are foundational for resilience.

TAILORED CAPABILITY BUILDING SETS COMMUNITIES UP FOR SUCCESS

Communities are ready, willing and able to take on their share of responsibility for disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery. Doing this work effectively and safely requires diverse knowledge and skills, including disaster resilience and trauma-informed practice, cultural awareness, group facilitation, grant literacy, communications, and project budgeting and management. Communities have valued tailored training and support in these essential capabilities.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE BEFORE DISASTER EVENTS IS INVALUABLE

Effective community governance relies on strong relationships, skilled leadership, transparent decision-making and clear communication. Communities that come together regularly in non-disaster times are better able to respond collectively when a crisis occurs, leading to better informed decisions, a more coordinated recovery and, ultimately, greater long-term resilience.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP BENEFITS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Indigenous communities hold deep local knowledge and strong connections to Country, culture and community, which serve as rich sources of strength and resilience. Empowering Indigenous leadership has been critical for self-determination, and has provided opportunities for non-Indigenous people to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing. Practices like cultural burning and other forms of knowledge-sharing, contribute to practical reconciliation and strengthen the entire community's resilience.

STRUCTURE AND TRANSPARENCY PROTECTS COMMUNITY

Community-led decision-making empowers those most affected to shape their futures, but it requires robust governance to succeed. In our participatory grantmaking, clear structures and transparent processes have been vital when communities design grant rounds, invite applications and allocate funding. These safeguards reduce conflicts, uphold accountability and build trust, fostering equitable and effective outcomes.

FUNDING IS A CRITICAL TOOL FOR MOBILISING COMMUNITY ACTION

While funding is not the only enabler of community resilience, without ready access to resources, communities often struggle to mobilise around projects or initiatives. Funding has played a crucial role in energising action, fostering a sense of agency, and bringing people together to drive change. When funding is accessible, it empowers communities to take ownership and turn ideas into tangible outcomes.

COMMUNITIES LEVERAGE RESOURCES WITH SEED FUNDING

Securing that first investment in a community project can be the most challenging step. Once initial funding was in place, many communities used it as a springboard to attract additional resources, for example from local businesses and partnerships with local councils. With the momentum generated by seed funding, projects can scale, extend their reach, and create more sustainable, long-term benefits for their communities.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES ARE ESSENTIAL

Collaborative processes that are inclusive and well-facilitated empower communities to share knowledge, build connections and make decisions. This helps strengthen social capital, fostering a sense of ownership and collective action. Community members have reflected that the skills, relationships and confidence gained through these processes have been just as valuable as grant funding in building resilience and driving lasting change.

COMMUNITIES ARE EAGER TO PARTNER

Communities value partnerships with local councils, emergency services, universities and NGOs to amplify their disaster resilience efforts. However, successful partnerships have been difficult when there are differing priorities, communication challenges, histories of conflict and power imbalances. When based on trust, mutual respect and shared responsibilities, partnerships help leverage diverse expertise and resources for more effective, sustainable outcomes.

WHILE EVERY COMMUNITY IS UNIQUE, THERE ARE PATTERNS

Communities are uniquely shaped by their histories, cultures and local conditions. Yet there are common experiences, needs and priorities that have emerged across our partner communities. These patterns can guide models of support and investment that are scalable and adaptable, without taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Tailoring actions for resilience to local contexts remains essential, but shared lessons can drive more effective, widespread impact.



OUR YEAR OF ACTION



OVERVIEW OF 2024	22
OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES	24
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECTS SPOTLIGHT	34



Image credit: Jordan Nye

OVERVIEW OF 2024



JAN

NIDR Retreat
Yuin Nation Birriga Bunaan in Eurobodalla



MAR

Eurobodalla's First Nations Leadership in
Disaster Resilience Gathering
Presented at Disaster Ready Together Summit



FEB

Research Workshop



APR

NIDR SA Policy Roundtable
NIDR Community of Practice launch
Tenterfield Bushfire Learning Review



MAY

Our Process, Lessons and Impact webinar



JUN

Clarence Valley Placemaking and
Co-design Round 3 projects granted
Grant Writing Toolkit published



AUG

NIDR Qld Policy Roundtable
Independent Review of the Cobargo Community
Bushfire Recovery Fund published
Jubullum Cultural Burn Engagement Day



OCT

Research and community presentations at
ADRC/AFAC Conference, Sydney
NIDR Gathering 2024 on Bundjalung Country (NSW)
Eurobodalla 'Our Country in Healing Hands' projects granted
On-Country Week: Walbunja Country (NSW)



SEP

DisasterWISE Book Club launch



JUL

Eurobodalla at Mogo NAIDOC Big Day Out 2024



DEC

Tenterfield Jubullum/Tabulam and Bushfire
Learning Review projects granted



NOV

Clarence Valley Co-design Round 4 projects granted
East Gippsland Resilience Planning projects granted
Won National Community Award at Resilient Australia Awards

OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES

We work in deep partnership with four communities affected by the 2019/20 bushfires. These places are rich in natural beauty, diverse landscapes, Indigenous culture and have a strong sense of community. They are populated with local people who are knowledgeable and passionate about their regions.

Each partner community has a local Fire to Flourish staff team, comprising community members who work together across the wider Local Government Area to engage the community in discussions about resilience priorities, facilitate decision making about grant funding allocation and support the implementation of community-led projects.

We support each community to explore, analyse, co-design and create new community-led solutions that strengthen disaster resilience on their own terms.

“The thing that makes the difference with Fire to Flourish is that it’s a mechanism, it’s like a mushroom that grows through the soil and connects all community. That’s the whole point.”

Community Staff Member,
Clarence Valley

- 

CLARENCE VALLEY
Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl land
- 

EUROBODALLA
Walbunja, Brinja-Yuin and Djiringanj land
- 

TENTERFIELD
Kamilaroi and Bundjalung land
- 

EAST GIPPSLAND
Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel land



CLARENCE VALLEY

- 
2 funding rounds

- \$1.1M distributed in grants

- 24 community projects funded
 

- 20% of funded projects led by Aboriginal people or organisations

- 
61 events

- 
21 community co-designers engaged

- 6 community capability-building activities

IN THEIR WORDS

At the beginning of the year, Fire to Flourish Clarence Valley farewelled Roxanne Smith, who led with energy, wisdom and compassion. We welcomed Kath Kermode and John Skinner as Community Facilitators. Our relationships, processes and understanding of community priorities have been further enriched by their experience, passion and commitment.

The team has built strong bonds with Co-designers, Project Leads and people delivering projects across the Clarence Valley, joining community events and workshops, and facilitating granting rounds for Placemaking and projects focused in the lower Clarence Valley, on Yaegl Country, and north west of Grafton, on Western Bundjalung Country. This brought opportunities to meet at local spaces and community halls, so we can better understand local strengths, challenges and priorities for place-based solutions.

We have been inspired by the incredible effort, skills and knowledge of participants who have co-designed governance and decision-making processes in response to specific local priorities for Placemaking and Resilience Planning funding rounds, and project leads who came together in quarterly learning circles to share their experiences.

A highlight from this year was the significant Placemaking projects that have been completed or are ongoing in the Orara Valley, Blinks, Nymboida and Woombah, with collaboration and support from Monash Art Design and Architecture. These communities are improving their infrastructure, natural and social connections, feasibility studies and masterplans for larger projects.

While we facilitate ongoing community disaster resilience project support, the program is measuring the impact of programs, events and projects completed.

In January, Fire to Flourish researchers and local community connectors conducted the Climate Resilience Measurement for Community survey to measure the disaster resilience to bushfires and floods in communities along the Clarence River, from Iluka to Ashby. The results will be shared in community forums next year.

Other significant activities included visits from the Paul Ramsay Foundation and Fire to Flourish executives, presenting our work at conferences, and being there in person to accept the Resilient Australia Award - each of these activities provided strategic opportunities to connect broadly and share what we've learned, demonstrating the empowerment that comes from community voices being recognised and celebrated.

As we develop the Caring for Country and Youth funding round, we are embodying the guiding principle of foregrounding Aboriginal wisdom - through strong community engagement to develop a research agreement and determine priorities for communities on Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl Countries.

Fire to Flourish Clarence Valley team



[Watch updates from the Fire to Flourish Clarence Valley team and community](#)



PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

BE HOLISTIC AND IMPACTFUL

To contribute collaboratively and with evidence to improving people's lives and influencing changes in system conditions that hold problems in place.

When we analyse our community's strengths, challenges and priorities through the multiple domains of community resilience, we take a broad view and expand the scope of what might be possible now and in the future. We hold a holistic view of what 'community' means, striving to include diverse people with a range of lived experiences, knowledge and skills. We have impact by taking a holistic approach to community processes and projects.

EUROBODALLA



IN THEIR WORDS

It's been an incredibly productive and inspiring year for our team at Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla.

Our success in strengthening the disaster resilience of our communities is thanks to the strong local networks and relationships that have been developed. Our team is led by Kizzy Nye, Community Program Lead, Barb Rix, Community Project Specialist and Joe Brierley, Community Facilitator - Engagement & Support, with support from nine Community Project Mentors.

Between three grant rounds – an open-call community round, the Our Country in Healing Hands resilience round and the Next Generation: Youth Funding round, we've funded a total of 25 community-led projects for resilience.

These incredible results means that we are actively supporting 25 projects and 2000 community members. Each of these widely varying projects, which are all accessible to diverse communities, are an incredible testament to the ongoing commitment we see in community members to support one another. We have been privileged to support amazing grassroots concepts as they grow and develop into real tangible outcomes.



All images supplied by Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla



We hosted a wonderful First Nations Leadership in Disaster Resilience Gathering in March – a successful two-day workshop of foregrounding Aboriginal wisdom through tangible practices and knowledge exchange. This Gathering was instrumental in guiding the scoping and proposals for Our Country in Healing Hands round, along with ensuring First Nations input is considered throughout our Community Program.

We led the publication of Fire to Flourish's Grant Writing Toolkit, which is building grant literacy, not just in our communities but across Australia – a significant need for grassroots resilience initiatives. Fire to Flourish's Grant Other highlights were seeing 80% of our funding allocated to those who have not accessed grant funding before, including young people delivering successful projects, and our Community Forums, which saw over 100 people working together to strengthen grant literacy and self-determination.

We especially want to thank our Community Project Mentors, whose commitment and passion has extended our reach throughout the Shire. Their advocacy for better practices has boosted community knowledge embedded in Eurobodalla community-led disaster resilience.

We are proud to be able to support our communities to strengthen their disaster resilience through these community-led initiatives, knowledge and skills-building efforts. Communities in Eurobodalla are more supported to take the lead in times of need, while also allowing space for our community to have the conversations needed to feel empowered to influence future community resilience.

Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla team



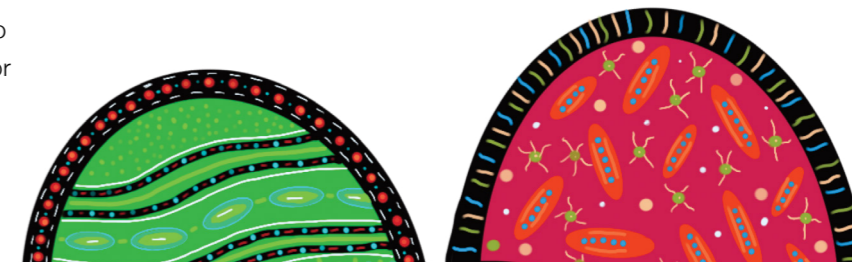
PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

LEARN, ADAPT, EVOLVE

To respond to changing contexts, continually improve the program's design and delivery, and collectively advance knowledge and practices.

We honour the Learn, Adapt, Evolve principle throughout our program, including acknowledging and supporting our funded project leads to work with community in their delivery. We know that if things go exactly to plan, we are not effectively supporting community. Projects should be open to change and evolve, meeting the needs of the target group. This contributes to the substantial success of our program.

[Watch updates from the Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla team and community](#)



TENTERFIELD



 **2** funding rounds

\$800K distributed in grants

19 community projects funded 

47% of funded projects led by Aboriginal people or organisations

 **20** events

 **22** community co-designers engaged

24 community capability-building activities



IN THEIR WORDS

This year was huge for Fire to Flourish Tenterfield, focused mostly on building stronger relationships and alliances, and expanding our program of disaster resilience into new communities so that more people can access tailored support.

We welcomed Gina Carpenter and Beatrice Torrens as Community Facilitators, joining Helen Duroux (Community Lead) and Matt Sing (Indigenous Facilitator). Through 19 workshops, we also engaged regularly with many inspiring and motivated Community Co-Designers to help roll out different rounds of community funding - including our Post-bushfire Learning Review round and the Tabulam-Jubullum round. These two rounds have allowed us to allocate \$800,000 in funding to projects that are now meaningfully supporting the needs of our local communities.

Thanks to the program's flexibility to respond to the community after the bushfires in late-2023, we were able to launch a funding round of \$200,000 to address and support the community priorities that were identified in a post-Bushfire Learning Review. With a panel of dedicated local leaders from various groups coming together to decide the grant recipients, we have fostered an environment in which local organisations are not only willing to work together but excited to be collaborating with people with different points of view.

Bringing opportunities for local funding and collaboration into Tabulam and Jubullum communities, and seeing them accept our support, was also significant. The engagement process had its challenges, but we're now seeing local decision-making from Elders and leaders, and funded projects that will meaningfully help locals. We are listening, understanding and responding to future resilience needs of those communities, based on the shared stories of the people living there.

We are building strong relationships and trust with community members and Elders, gathering local insights and fostering open communication with respect, humility and a willingness to integrate community values. This is boosting local capacity and empowering community members - all guided by Aboriginal practices and wisdom to create new innovative approaches that truly care for Country and community.

A key highlight this year was watching how organisations in Tenterfield and surrounding areas have been able and more willing to collaborate together. If Tenterfield was to be impacted by a fire in the near future, the community is better equipped now than it was, and are able to more easily work together to help each other through a disaster.

As a team, we are proud of the impact this program has had on our community and the work that we have done this year to help communities and local organisations collaborate together.

Fire to Flourish Tenterfield team



All images supplied by Fire to Flourish Tenterfield

Watch updates from the Fire to Flourish Tenterfield team



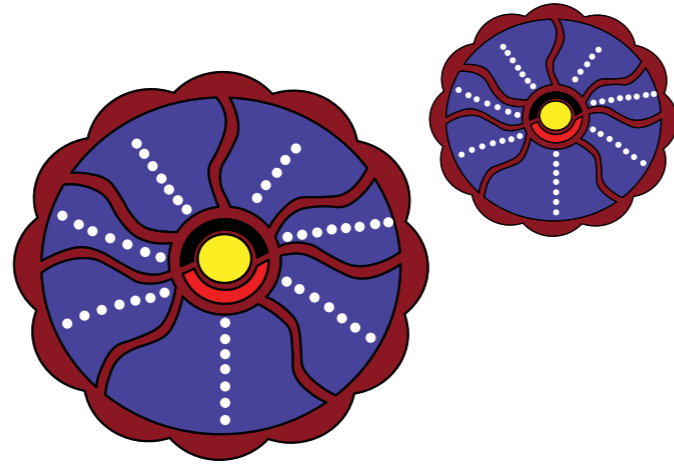
PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

ADDRESS INEQUITIES AND ENHANCE INCLUSION

To strengthen the participation, capabilities and outcomes for people who are often underrepresented or marginalised.

Our practices address inequities and enhance inclusion in many ways. Our co-design process is adapted to meet specific professional and personal needs of Community Co-designers, ensuring everyone's story is included and heard. Our journey of influencing change in our communities means we are strengthening capabilities while embracing local Elders' wisdom.

EAST GIPPSLAND



IN THEIR WORDS

East Gippsland is a stunning wilderness with many dispersed and diverse communities in the far southeast of Victoria. The area is home to Aboriginal people and Traditional Custodians living on Bidwell, Yuin, Gunaikurnai and Monero (Ngarigo) land. The Fire to Flourish footprint includes the ten communities of Bemm River, Cabbage Tree Creek, Club Terrace, Combienbar, Buldah, Noorinbee, Cann River, Tamboon, Gipsy Point and Genoa.

The Fire to Flourish East Gippsland team consists of Sara Matthews, Community Lead, and Eva Grunden and Bonnie Nebauer, Community Facilitators. Robyn Sturgess was also with the team until September as a Community Connector.

This year, it was exciting to see the community eager to participate in the Resilience Planning to Granting co-design process, with 12 wonderful Community Planners stepping up to engage with their communities, to ground truth existing ideas and aspirations, and seek feedback and input into their vision for resilience. This process consolidated a collaborative and clear set of resilience priorities, which then became the criteria for the participatory funding round. Social capital was an important resilience theme as one of many thoughtful priorities: Building and nurturing a strong community that is safe, kind, connected, curious, caring and inclusive.

We are aware that this work can be triggering, so as part of our trauma-informed approach we partnered with the Royal Flying Doctors Service to provide support throughout the process. We also invited Dr Rob Gordon to visit and support the Community Planners and communities with valuable insight into navigating the long journey of recovery. We were warmed to receive feedback from the Community Planners that they found the process to be supportive of their healing and recovery after the challenges of the 2019/20 bushfires, and that they are eager to maintain the legacy of connection across the communities of Far East Gippsland.

1 funding round

\$1.2M distributed in grants

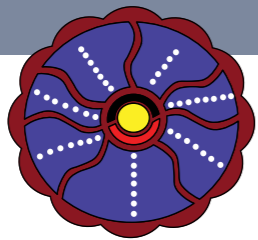
15 community projects funded

11% of funded projects led by Aboriginal people or organisations

13 events

12 community planners engaged

3 community capability-building activities



“The session with Rob Gordon was really helpful. I loved the analogy of imagining that we have a space suit to put on - it has everything we need to contain ourselves and keeps us safe, especially when we might need to protect ourselves if a community member becomes upset. People are still vulnerable, it’s not personal, but it is a tricky situation to be in where you are part of a team deciding on who gets the funding in our communities” - Community Planner

In September, we opened our Resilience Planning to Granting participatory grant round, receiving 18 wonderful project applications. We appreciate our partnership with Gippsland Community Foundation in supporting our granting process.

We are excited to work with the Community Planners as ongoing mentors who support these exciting projects as they progress in 2025. We also look forward to seeing the projects generate conversations, healing and resilience. It is a privilege to do this work alongside the rich tapestry that is our communities.

Fire to Flourish East Gippsland team



PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

BE STRENGTHS-BASED AND TRAUMA-INFORMED

To respect people’s lived experiences, recognise and build on community strengths, and support collective healing.

As a team, we have incorporated trauma-informed training, ideas and approaches into our practice. We carefully plan our Resilience Planning to Granting processes to ensure they are as safe as possible, and have learnt from Community Planners that extra support - which we provided through psychological first aid from RFDS and guidance about participatory granting from Rob Gordon - is always necessary.

Watch updates from the Fire to Flourish East Gippsland team and community



All images supplied by Fire to Flourish East Gippsland



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECTS SPOTLIGHT

CLARENCE VALLEY SPOTLIGHT: REGENERATE, LEARN, GROW

RESILIENCE DOMAIN: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Before regenerative farming practices were introduced on Chaffin Creek Farm, community members often struggled with food security due to damaged Country, reduced biodiversity, supply issues and a lack of locally grown food. With the help of a series of regenerative farming workshops funded by Fire to Flourish Clarence Valley, Gina Lopez and Robbie Hill have turned Chaffin Creek Farm into a thriving community space, helping ensure that locals have the knowledge, supplies and support needed for food security.

The workshops, covering topics such as biodynamics and syntropic agroforestry, are improving knowledge and connections within the community, enhancing soil health, fostering nutritious food growth, and supporting landscape recovery and resilience.



Image credit: Gina Lopez

Image credit: J&S Design / Good Vibes Entertainment



EUROBODALLA SPOTLIGHT: ROCK ON FOR CLIMATE ACTION

RESILIENCE DOMAIN: SOCIAL CAPITAL

Climate action depends on community connection and empowerment of community members through collective organisation. Rock on for Climate Action was a Fire to Flourish-funded event held at Smokey Dan's in Tomakin in May 2024, organised by local musician Sam Fletcher, to bring people together around shared goals for climate change.

The event showcased local music, including performances from a First Nations group, four bands, public speakers on climate change, a panel discussion, raffle and creative displays by local community groups. This successful event strengthened community disaster resilience by providing a networking opportunity for local climate group 250 Eurobodalla, while also creating a feeling of community spirit and bonding.

Below is a spotlight on one Fire to Flourish-funded community resilience project from each of our partner communities in 2024 - each responding to a different resilience domain.

The six domains of resilience are social, economic, cultural, health, built and natural environment.

As a program we understand that resilience emerges from a community when there is strength across all domains. We take a holistic view of resilience and our processes encourage grant applicants to consider how their project could strengthen multiple resilience domains.

[View all Fire to Flourish funded projects](#)



TENTERFIELD SPOTLIGHT: CLEAN UP JUBULLUM

RESILIENCE DOMAIN: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

This project aims to reduce waste and clean up yards around the Jubullum Village. With the local village having limited access to waste facilities, the community, especially the Elders, find it difficult to appropriately dispose of waste. Gungyah Ngallingnee Aboriginal Corporation has rented skip bins and, in conjunction with other local organisations, will be hosting community working bees to assist every household to clean up rubbish in the yard and on community land around the village. Gungyah Ngallingnee Aboriginal Corporation will also be investigating if scrap steel, cans, bottles or car batteries can be collected and sold to build sustainability and extend the program.



Image credit: Fire to Flourish Tenterfield



EAST GIPPSLAND SPOTLIGHT: CANN COMMUNITY CAFE

RESILIENCE DOMAIN: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Living in remote areas such as Cann River reduces the opportunities for training and growth for young and older community members. Fire to Flourish funding will establish a community-owned training cafe at Cann River Community Centre, where everyone will be offered equal opportunities to thrive, and where funds will be distributed back into the community. This will support employment opportunities, training, financial support for town needs and funding for existing programs, such as arts and crafts, playgroup and a youth group, as well as social gathering opportunities. This Cann River project supports the needs of surrounding communities by building a stronger, sustainable, accessible and safe environment where everyone is welcomed.

OUR YEAR OF GROWTH



OUR EMERGING MODEL	38
OUR GROWING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE	40
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DISASTER RESILIENCE PROGRAM	44
DISASTERWISE COMMUNITIES NETWORK	48



OUR EMERGING MODEL

“I think [community governance] is what makes our program so incredibly unique. A lot of funding bodies only attend programs that they fund if they’re formally invited.

But because we’re community members, everyday community members, we can attend each project. Because we’re not just a funding agency. We live here too.”

Community Staff Member,
Eurobodalla

“The community get to have their say and really tell us what they want. With other community-led things in the past, where maybe an organisation got together and put in a grant, they really only targeted tiny little sections of community.

No other program has tried to spread itself as much throughout community as this one. I think that’s probably the biggest win.”

Community Staff Member,
Tenterfield

Disaster recovery and resilience support for communities is often criticised as siloed, fragmented, and misaligned with specific place-based needs. Systems are not designed to enable communities to take on their share of responsibility in reducing disaster impacts and communities are typically under-resourced.

Against this backdrop, Fire to Flourish feels privileged that we can be innovative in how we support our partner communities in their disaster resilience efforts, enabled by the generosity and flexibility of our cornerstone partners.

By listening to community priorities and co-designing our responses, we are creating a holistic model of support that brings community capabilities and networks together with facilitated scaffolding and external resources.

While every community is unique, there are four common pillars that have offered valuable support for our partner communities seeking to lead self-determined action for disaster resilience.

Bringing these pillars together in one integrated model not only delivers prevention and preparedness outcomes more effectively than traditional community grant schemes, it also strengthens social capital and long-term capability for wider social, economic and environmental benefits.



Image credit: Fire to Flourish Tenterfield

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CAPABILITIES

Investing in local people to strengthen community capabilities and cohesion

- Employing local community resilience facilitators
- Convening activities that bring people together
- Providing tailored training and development opportunities
- Facilitating community peer learning networks

PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Embedding participatory governance arrangements within communities

- Facilitating processes for shared understanding, envisioning, prioritising and decision making
- Formalising community voices in disaster governance
- Supporting communities to collaborate with emergency services
- Enabling community-based data and knowledge management

FOUNDATIONS of SUPPORT

COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED FUNDING

Resourcing communities with direct funding to mobilise local action

- Mobilising legal entities that can receive and distribute financial capital within communities
- Making non-competitive grant funding available for community-led allocation
- Streamlining grantmaking processes and embedding flexibility in grant conditions
- Providing rapid access to low-strings-attached disaster relief funding

READY ACCESS TO EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Linking communities with tailored external advice, support and services

- Curating evidence-backed guidance, methods and tools
- Offering independent facilitation, technical advice and brokering support
- Making research, monitoring, evaluation and learning services accessible
- Connecting local experiences with systems change efforts

OUR GROWING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

By connecting community lived experience with research expertise, Fire to Flourish is building an evidence base that directly supports community-led action and influences change in disaster management systems to achieve better outcomes for local communities.

Our research brings together diverse disciplinary perspectives across community resilience, disaster risk reduction, social capital and cohesion, public and rural health, Indigenous knowledge, placemaking, economics and digital civics. Our PhD cohort is developing new knowledge through their deep dives on topics that reinforce our research agenda.

Projects are generating new evidence about community lived experiences and systemic issues, as well as supporting experimentation with new community-led practices.

And they are informing the development of practical guidance and tools for use by communities, policymakers and practitioners as they drive the sector's transition towards a disaster management model focused on community empowerment and self-determination.

We continue to collect evidence and gain insight from our iterative trials of participatory processes focused on resilience planning, placemaking, community governance and grantmaking. We are synthesising this knowledge into a range of practical resources which we look forward to making available over the next year.

Fire to Flourish researchers have been showcasing their work in diverse forums. We are delighted that our research is being recognised nationally and internationally, through diverse conference presentations and publication in peer-reviewed journals.

PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

BE COMMUNITY-LED

To ensure the community shapes, drives and owns the program and their voices are foregrounded in its design and delivery.

Our research is shaped by community-defined priorities and supports community-led action through local data and participatory processes. We are committed to reciprocity: our research is grounded in strong relationships, meaningful engagement and co-design practices that centre local voices and knowledge. We strive to make our research outputs widely accessible.

COMPLETED RESEARCH

2024 delivered more Fire to Flourish research outputs than any previous year, adding to our growing body of knowledge and supporting change towards a reimagined disaster resilience model.

Lessons Learned in the Activation of Fire to Flourish

This report summarises the reflections and lessons learned from the first three years of Fire to Flourish, outlining what it's taken to establish and activate a program of this kind. The authors reviewed experiences across program establishment, community relationship development, co-design of local implementation, and preparation for scaling and systems change, and synthesised them into five lessons to help guide working in deep partnership in community:

1. Invest in a 'Year Zero'
2. Lasting change needs long-term funding
3. Move at the pace of trust
4. Community customisation is key
5. Resourcing for community self determination

Community Resilience Snapshots

We measured the resilience of eight communities in NSW and Victoria using our adaptation of the Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC) tool that introduced wildfire indicators. This Australia-first approach involves community in the data collection and analysis, and can measure holistic resilience at a scale that has meaning for community-led action. Our resilience assessments revealed stronger community response capabilities but weaker long-term planning, high awareness but limited implementation, and stronger specific hazard responses than general resilience. These findings provide valuable guidance for communities and the disaster resilience sector to strengthen disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

Tenterfield Bushfire Learning Review

In response to significant bushfires in Tenterfield, NSW, in 2023, the community invited Fire to Flourish to undertake a post-event learning review. We gathered community experiences of what worked and what needed improvement before, during, and after the fires. The process identified five key community priorities: collaborative disaster planning, community care, environmental protection, economic resilience, and improved impact data collection. \$200,000 in Fire to Flourish grant funding was allocated to support community-led projects addressing these priorities.

Internally Displaced People: 2019/20 Bushfires

The Commonwealth Government funded our project on Internally Displaced People (IDPs) through its Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant Program. Led by the Monash University Disaster Resilience Initiative, the project explored the lived experiences of internally displaced people and recovery practitioners from Australia's 2019/20 bushfires. Initial consultation with national and state peak bodies exposed a critical gap: IDPs are largely missing in the disaster recovery system. Project findings will be publicly shared in 2025.

Review of the Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund

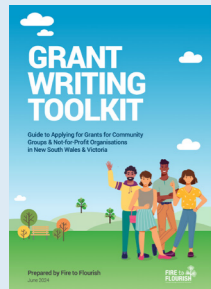
Fire to Flourish was invited to undertake an independent review of the Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund (CCBRF). The CCBRF is an exemplar of community-led disaster recovery. It was established in January 2020 following the devastating 2019/20 bushfires and managed \$800,000 in donations, supporting 54 community projects through equitable, inclusive processes. The project demonstrated how communities can effectively self-organise and lead their own recovery. CCBRF's experience offers valuable lessons about building community disaster resilience through inclusive leadership, transparent processes, trauma-informed approaches, and strong communication channels.

Understanding the Resilience of Lifelines for Rural and Regional Australia

This project was delivered in partnership with RMIT University, La Trobe University, the Australian Research Centre and Natural Hazards Research Australia. It aimed to develop a research agenda and conceptual framework for improving the resilience of Australia's critical infrastructure and essential services systems. The project centres on the idea of lifelines, an emerging concept that helps to facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue, research and action. This research has identified an urgent need to bring community voice into the design and management of critical infrastructure. The research agenda will advocate for systems that meet community needs via decentralisation, increasing redundancies and innovative funding models.

OUR GROWING TOOLKIT

We are committed to capturing our co-developed knowledge and making it accessible through practical resources that provide guidance to communities, governments and the disaster sector. Here are four tools developed and applied in 2024.



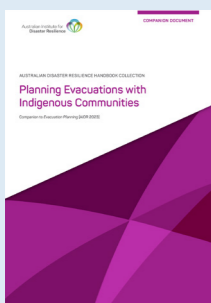
GRANT WRITING TOOLKIT

Grants play a vital role in mobilising local groups in disaster recovery and resilience efforts but it can be difficult to navigate application processes to access grant funding. After recognising that members of their community often needed support with grant literacy, Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla created an easy-to-use guide: the “Fire to Flourish Grant Writing Toolkit: Guide to Applying for Grants for Community Groups & Not-for-Profit Organisations in NSW and Victoria”.



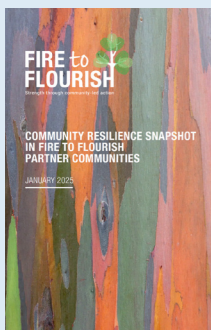
FACTSHEET ON WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND COMMUNITIES

Our factsheet “Things to Consider: Working with Indigenous Peoples and Communities” helps to guide collaboration with Indigenous communities. Developed by Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla and NIDR, it provides a series of accessible “do’s and don’ts” to strengthen the design, delivery and assessment of initiatives targeting Indigenous specific outcomes to make sure they promote self-determination, respect cultural protocols and have the best chance of success.



PLANNING EVACUATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HANDBOOK

Developed by NIDR as part of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience’s Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection, this handbook aims to facilitate culturally safe and effective evacuations for Indigenous communities at risk from natural hazards. It offers essential guidance for engaging in evacuation planning and implementation processes involving discrete Indigenous communities, as well as areas with significant Indigenous populations in remote, rural, regional, and urban settings.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE MEASUREMENT FOR COMMUNITIES (CRMC)

Fire to Flourish has adapted and applied the Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC) approach, a tool that has been used in diverse communities around the world. We designed a new bushfire layer, which was added to its existing flood and heatwave indicators. The web-based tool and accompanying mobile app are used to assess community disaster resilience in ways that have local meaning and generate data and insights to inform community-led action for resilience building. The CRMC tool is available free to those working in not-for-profit contexts. Find out more at <https://zcralliance.org/crmc/>.

[Visit our Knowledge Centre for more practical resources -](#)



A NEW CONVERSATION

Fire to Flourish team members presented our work at more than 55 events across Australia and internationally. This is an important way for us to share our experiences and insights widely. Below is a small taste.

7-8 March, Disaster Ready Together Summit, Lismore

CEO Briony Rogers chaired a panel discussion with Community Leads Helen Duroux (Tenterfield) and Pamela Denise (Clarence Valley), sharing experiences and insights gained from our early trials of participatory resilience planning and grantmaking processes.

NIDR Lead, Dr Bhiemie Williamson, gave a keynote address sharing his personal and professional story, as well as research findings from interviews he conducted with Indigenous community members affected by the 2022 floods.

15-19 April, 7th International Fire Behaviour and Fuel Conference, Canberra

Dr Zoë D’Arcy presented on our Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities research, sharing the methodology and early insights from its application in Australian communities.

14-16 May, Natural Hazards Research Forum, Adelaide

Dr Adriana Keating delivered closing remarks for a panel discussion on infrastructure planning and resilient built environments. Dr Bhiemie Williamson and Nell Reidy presented the outlook for NIDR’s Foundations in Indigenous Disaster Resilience project.

Fire to Flourish co-hosted a Breakfast Party on Envisioning Change with Margaret Moreton, Executive Director of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. 50 guests were invited to reimagine the future for community-led disaster resilience.

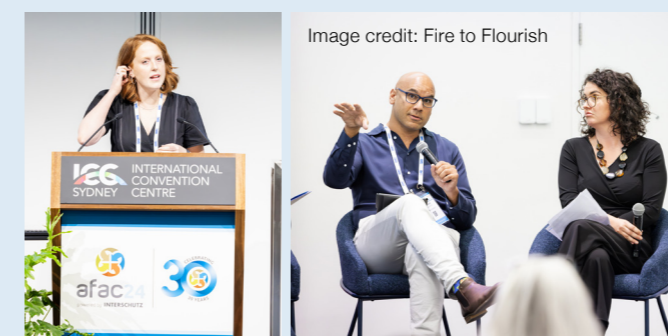


Image credit: Fire to Flourish

17-19 June, International Sustainability Transitions Conference, Oslo

Associate Professor Annette Bos presented on the program’s approach to evaluation and learning, with particular insights on Fire to Flourish’s focus on influencing transformative change through transdisciplinary impact research.

3-5 September, Australian Disaster Resilience Conference, Sydney



Fire to Flourish was the official Knowledge Stream Sponsor for ADRC2024 and was visible around Resilient Lane, with exhibition spaces for NIDR and DisasterWISE alongside the main Fire to Flourish stand. Our team was involved in three panels and three presentations across the conference.

A highlight was our panel discussion on innovative community funding models, involving CEO Briony Rogers, Program Director Lindsey Goodman and Clarence Valley Lead Cara Macleod, as well as John Walters from the Cobargo Community Development Corporation, and Sam Henderson from the Northern Rivers Community Foundation.

22 October, Community Colleges Association, Sydney

CEO Briony Rogers presented a keynote address, sharing insights about the Fire to Flourish model and exploring the role of community colleges in strengthening community capabilities and social capital for disaster resilience.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DISASTER RESILIENCE PROGRAM

The National Indigenous Disaster Resilience (NIDR) program is a flagship systems change initiative of Fire to Flourish, catalysed and incubated to strengthen policies and practices for Indigenous disaster resilience. NIDR has quickly become established as a leading national research program dedicated to investigating and quantifying the true impacts that major disaster events have on Indigenous peoples.

EXPERIENCES OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE 2022 VICTORIA FLOODS

This year, NIDR has engaged with communities in central and north-west Victoria to record experiences of Aboriginal residents and Traditional Owners of the 2022 floods. This work seeks to understand whether, and in what ways, Indigenous experiences differed from non-Indigenous members of flood-affected communities. It forms part of a larger project led by Dr Erica Kuligowski (RMIT) and funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia: "Community experiences of the 2022 floods in Victoria and South Australia".

We interviewed 27 Aboriginal people across three communities along the Murray and Goulburn Rivers about their experiences of the 2022 floods. Those interviewed shared their concerns for cultural heritage, explaining the damage to important sites not only from the flooding, but also from flood preparedness and response activities. Traditional Owners also explained that while floods can be hazardous, they can also be regenerative and good for Country.



Image credit: NIDR

NIDR POLICY ROUNDTABLES

NIDR is delivering a Policy Roundtable on Indigenous disaster resilience in each state and territory, bringing together key Indigenous organisations, community leaders, emergency management and disaster resilience agencies.

Their purpose is to share information on disaster arrangements, hear about Indigenous peoples experiences of disasters, identify priority reform areas and identify points of collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous disaster resilience stakeholders. 2024's Policy Roundtables were held in South Australia and Queensland.

"The Policy Roundtable is a unique opportunity for Aboriginal communities, organisations, and leaders to come together with emergency services and talk about the experiences of communities and identify Aboriginal priorities in emergency management and disaster resilience."

Dr Bhiamie Williamson,
NIDR Program Lead



Image credit: Gabrielle Connole Photography



Image credit: Gabrielle Connole Photography



Image credit: Gabrielle Connole Photography



NIDR GATHERING 2024

The unique 2024 NIDR Gathering took place on Bundjalung Country in Lismore from 24-26 September, hosting over 280 representatives from across Australia and abroad to celebrate Indigenous leadership and excellence in emergency management, community recovery, disaster resilience and Caring for Country.

Delegates from disaster resilience and emergency management sectors, government, researchers, non-government organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Indigenous ranger groups, Native Title groups, and other land and water management organisations came together to build awareness, share knowledge, connect, and support an Indigenous-led conversation on disaster resilience. Across three days, delegates joined keynote addresses, panel discussions, workshops and participated in on-Country activities.

This was the largest gathering of Indigenous peoples and organisations who have played a key role in responding to major hazard events, and provided a valuable opportunity for delegates to hear from communities who have been affected by disasters in the recent past. It was important that NIDR brought this national event to Lismore, a community still in a state of repair, two and a half years after the catastrophic flooding events.

NIDR is committed to bringing future national forums to regional areas affected by recent hazards to provide delegates with the opportunity to see the impact of these events, and the leadership displayed by communities as they recover.



PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

FOREGROUND ABORIGINAL WISDOM

To respect the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, learn from their ways of knowing and being, and foster strong collaborations and partnerships.

NIDR partners with Indigenous communities across Australia in working towards its vision of strong, safe and sustainable Indigenous communities. Through these partnerships, NIDR foregrounds Indigenous wisdom by focusing on Indigenous knowledge and leadership in disaster resilience and recovery, and by conducting research that challenges dominant discourses that focus on vulnerabilities.



Image credit: Gabrielle Connole Photography

DISASTERWISE COMMUNITIES NETWORK

This year has seen DisasterWISE transform into a hive of connection and activity as the movement gains momentum. Here's a snapshot of highlights from 2024.

The DisasterWISE vision, developed by the network's co-designers, is to grow a movement of people who are building disaster resilience through community-led action.

2024 has been a momentous year for the DisasterWISE Communities Network, launching a new learning platform, book club and Story for Purpose initiative, presenting at industry events and bringing together over 500 people at its popular Online Get-Togethers.



Image credits: All images supplied by DisasterWISE

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

The contribution of community volunteers continues to be vital toward further developing the learning network and the activities. This includes bringing skills, experience, connections and resources to remain community-led, while providing a place for people to come together and understand diverse perspectives through many lived and learned experiences.

Heartfelt thanks to Ronnie Ayliffe, Sabrina Davis, Scott Lamshed, Alison Stone and Peter Williams for your ongoing commitment toward the development of the DisasterWISE Communities Network.

ONLINE GET-TOGETHERS

DisasterWISE hosted 12 monthly Online Get-Together's in 2024, bringing together over 520 registrants to share lived experience of building disaster resilience through community-led action. Topics ranged from strengthening community infrastructure and disaster scenarios to community-led recovery and Indigenous disaster resilience. We were delighted to have a number of knowledgeable guests, including Senator Tony Sheldon, Emma Bacon (Sweltering Cities), Sumarlinah WInoto (Nillumbik Shire Council) and Lisal O'Brien (Arthurs Creek CFA). The Get-Togethers are a way for DisasterWISE to encourage connection and learning through story sharing.

LEARNING NETWORK PLATFORM

DisasterWISE has recently moved to a new interactive learning platform, reflecting its commitment to creating an inclusive space for community-led dialogue in the disaster ecosystem. Members can explore the interactive spaces, resource library, discussion forum and monthly blogs.

CHANGEFEST 2024

In March, the DisasterWISE team attended ChangeFest, where over 500 community changemakers and collaborators came together to exchange ideas for place-based change. DisasterWISE's Network Convenor, Kate Fawcett, co-presented a session on reimagining disaster response, drawing on her experiences of place-based action.

AFAC CONFERENCE 2024

The team had conversations with over 300 delegates at the busy DisasterWISE stand, took the opportunity to launch its Story for Purpose initiative and shared a zine to spread awareness of DisasterWISE's purpose.



DISASTERWISE BOOK CLUB

Members are invited to come together every two months to reflect on books, short readings, films, podcasts and other resources all relating to diverse experiences of climate induced and human made disasters.

STORY FOR PURPOSE

This project aims to amplify community voices through the power of story. By telling 'our stories, our way', the storytellers transform community resilience by sharing learnings and critical knowledge to best support and enable others.



2025 will be an exciting time as we prepare to launch as an independent entity (DisasterWISE Ltd). This sets the pathway for DisasterWISE to continue acting as stewards for its expanding network beyond the program life of Fire to Flourish, and will enable new collaborations and funding partners to support its continued growth and impact.



Join DisasterWISE Communities Network or get in touch
connect@disasterwise.com.au



IMPACT



This section is a report on our impact throughout 2024, independently assessed and created by our impact partner, Elevate Impact.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS	52
UNDERSTANDING FIRE TO FLOURISH'S IMPACT	54
STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN CLARENCE VALLEY	60
STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN EUROBODALLA	62
STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN TENTERFIELD	64
STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN EAST GIPPSLAND	66



MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Fire to Flourish is dedicated to making a tangible difference in the communities it serves, with a strong emphasis on evaluating the impact of its work and its influence on individuals and communities.

The 2024 Fire to Flourish impact assessment provided a comprehensive opportunity to gain deeper insights into these outcomes. Conducted independently by Elevate Impact, the evaluation process upheld impartiality and credibility, reinforcing the trust integral to the program's work.

This year, Fire to Flourish focused its assessment on three of its six impact domains—social capital, Indigenous culture, and the natural environment. The other three domains—economic wellbeing, health and wellbeing, and the built environment—continue to be studied through a multitude of assessment projects and will be revisited in the comprehensive 2025 Impact Report.

Impact ratings were determined through a rigorous methodology combining quantitative and qualitative data. The online survey collected responses to questions across the three focus domains, with participants rating the program's impact on a scale of 1 to 10. These ratings were categorised into five levels: no impact, minor impact, positive impact, significant impact, and transformative impact. The survey results, based on a sample of 116 respondents from a population of 305, achieved a margin of error of approximately ±5.45% at a 95% confidence level. This quantitative data was enriched by over 15 hours of in-depth interviews, providing nuanced perspectives and ensuring a holistic and robust analysis of the program's effects.

More than 5,000 data points were collected, offering insights into diverse perspectives from program communities. Together, these elements provide a robust foundation for assessing the impact of Fire to Flourish across the selected domains.

Rigorous impact measurement is not merely an administrative task; it is essential to learning, adaptation, and growth. Understanding what works well and identifying areas for

improvement enables refined strategies that enhance community resilience. This process is critically important—not only for the continuous development of Fire to Flourish but also for empowering communities as they navigate disaster recovery and preparedness.

Insights from this year's evaluation highlight the importance of community-driven approaches tailored to the unique needs of each region. Findings demonstrate how fostering trust, collaboration, and cultural inclusion strengthens community resilience and prepares communities to face future challenges. The evaluation also underscores the significance of integrating traditional knowledge, environmental stewardship, and innovative practices into disaster resilience efforts.

These findings will shape the future direction of Fire to Flourish, ensuring continued support for communities as they lead their own recovery and preparedness initiatives. By remaining accountable, transparent, and focused on meaningful outcomes, Fire to Flourish ensures its efforts align with the priorities of the communities it serves. Through robust impact measurement, the program not only increases its own effectiveness but also contributes to a more resilient and connected future for all involved.



Image credit: Fire to Flourish

Survey Question: Respondents rate the impact of a program on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = No impact, 5 = Positive impact, and 10 = Transformative impact.

Categorising Responses: Responses are classified into five categories:

8.00 – 9.99 = Transformative Impact

6.00 - 7.99 = Significant Impact

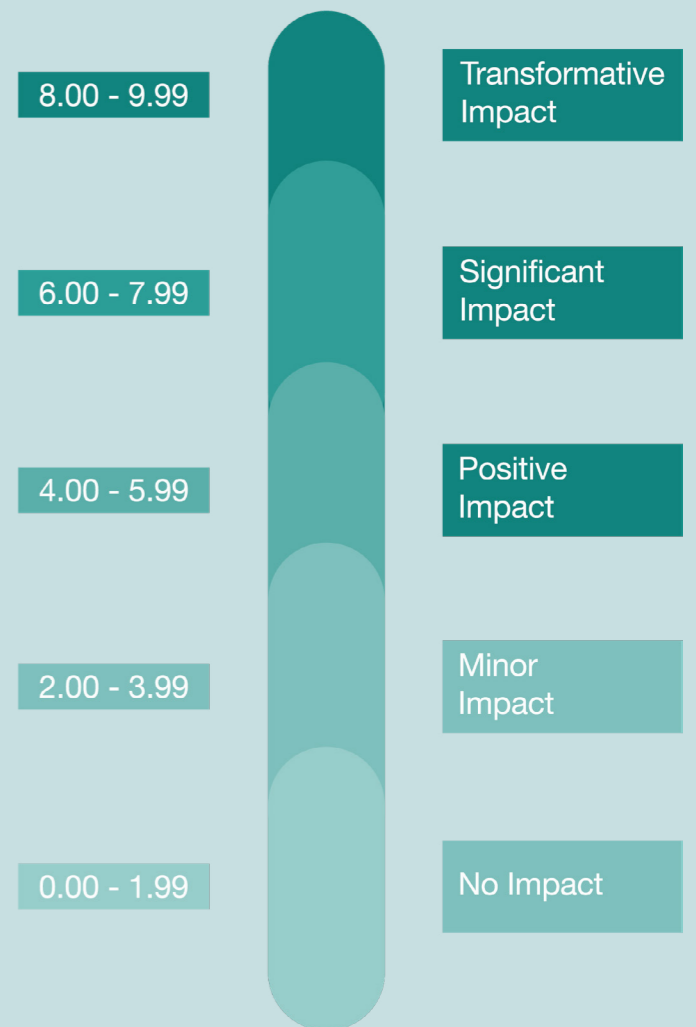
4.00 – 5.99 = Positive Impact

2.00 – 3.99 = Minor Impact

0.00 – 1.99 = No Impact

Individual Question Percentages: Calculate the percentage of responses in each category. For example, if 135 out of 250 responses are rated 8 – 9.99, the percentage for Transformative Impact is: $(135/250) \times 100 = 54\%$.

Overall Scores: Mean of each individual weighted scores of all questions or domains.



UNDERSTANDING FIRE TO FLOURISH'S IMPACT

The 2024 Fire to Flourish impact assessment provided valuable insights into the program's transformative effects on participating communities. The assessment questions examined critical areas, including the accessibility of funding, the formation of relationships, and the promotion of Indigenous knowledge. The results highlight Fire to Flourish's significant impact and areas of continued strength.

Overall, these results underscore Fire to Flourish's transformative role in supporting community-driven initiatives and fostering resilience, with strong ratings reflecting the program's success in empowering communities and building enduring connections.

1. QUESTION:

The projects funded by Fire to Flourish have positively impacted my community.

- **Impact Rating:** Transformative Impact (8.2)
- **What this tells us:** Communities widely recognised the positive influence of funded projects, highlighting their alignment with local priorities and their role in driving tangible, meaningful outcomes.

2. QUESTION:

The funding made available by Fire to Flourish has been more easily accessible than other funding sources.

- **Impact Rating:** Transformative Impact (8.0)
- **What this tells us:** The streamlined funding process was praised for reducing barriers, enabling communities to access vital resources and implement projects effectively.

3. QUESTION:

New relationships have been formed through Fire to Flourish activities.

- **Impact Rating:** Transformative Impact (8.2)
- **What this tells us:** Fire to Flourish played a pivotal role in fostering social connections, strengthening community cohesion, and creating networks that enhance resilience.

4. QUESTION:

Fire to Flourish has helped to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to share stories and experiences.

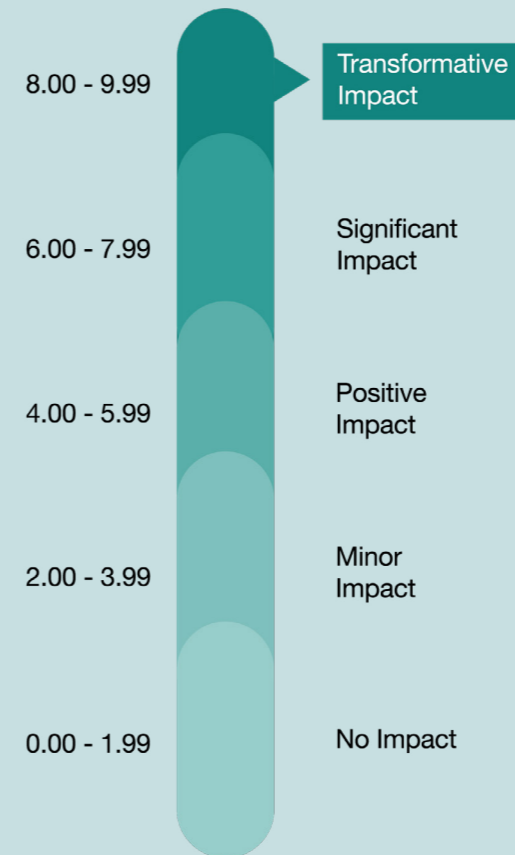
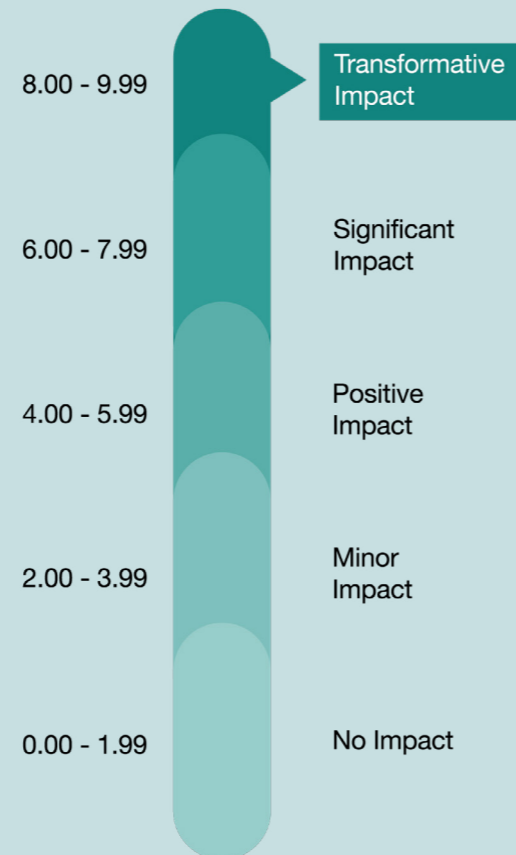
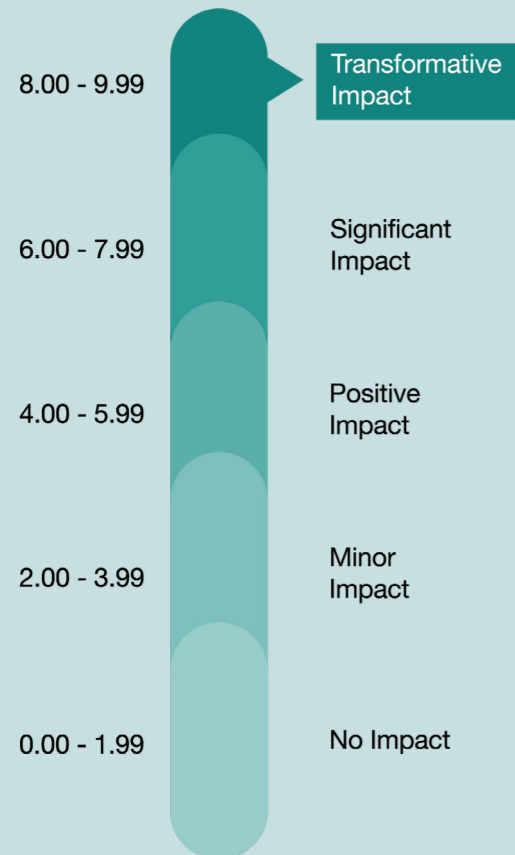
- **Impact Rating:** Significant Impact (7.7)
- **What this tells us:** The program facilitated spaces for Indigenous voices, promoting cultural understanding and integrating traditional knowledge into community efforts.

The projects funded by Fire to Flourish have positively impacted my community.

The funding made available by Fire to Flourish has been more easily accessible than other funding

New relationships have been formed through Fire to Flourish activities.

Fire to Flourish has helped to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to share stories and experiences.



SOCIAL CAPITAL IMPACT

The 2024 Fire to Flourish impact assessment demonstrates the program’s significant role in fostering social capital and strengthening community resilience. The findings highlight how Fire to Flourish empowers individuals, builds networks, and promotes collaboration across diverse groups, delivering lasting benefits to communities. Key social impact highlights include:

Strengthening Community

Connections: Fire to Flourish enhanced trust, collaboration, and relationships within communities. Participants reported stronger networks and a greater sense of belonging, laying the foundation for future resilience.

Empowering Leadership and Skills

Development: Participants gained critical skills in project management, communication, and collaboration, equipping them to lead initiatives and actively contribute to disaster preparedness.

Building Social Cohesion:

The program fostered a shared sense of purpose and mutual support, with communities reporting increased unity and strengthened collective decision-making processes.

Facilitating New Partnerships:

Fire to Flourish connected local organisations, businesses, and residents, supporting the formation of cross-sector partnerships to address shared challenges effectively.

Engaging Marginalised Groups:

Inclusive spaces bridged gaps for marginalised groups, fostering intergenerational connections. Youth engagement initiatives, for example, united younger and older generations, enhancing understanding and collaboration.

Through the fostering of trust, empowering leadership, and creating inclusive partnerships, Fire to Flourish is helping to strengthen the social fabric of communities, ensuring they are better prepared to face future challenges together.

Social Capital overall impact rating: **SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

- No Impact
- Minor Impact
- Positive Impact
- Significant Impact
- Transformative Impact

INDIGENOUS CULTURE IMPACT

The 2024 Fire to Flourish impact assessment illustrates the program’s dedication to embedding Indigenous culture at the heart of community resilience efforts. By fostering cross-cultural understanding, empowering Indigenous voices, and celebrating traditional knowledge systems, Fire to Flourish has made a lasting impact. Key highlights include:

Promoting Cultural Awareness and

Respect: The program has created spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members engage in meaningful dialogue, deepening respect and mutual understanding.

Integrating Traditional Knowledge:

Fire to Flourish has successfully incorporated Indigenous ecological practices, such as cultural burning and sustainable land management, into broader resilience strategies, enriching community approaches to disaster preparedness.

Empowering Indigenous Leadership:

Indigenous leaders have played pivotal roles in sharing knowledge and guiding community initiatives. Their contributions have ensured that resilience efforts are both inclusive and culturally informed.

Strengthening Intergenerational

Connections: Initiatives such as youth-led projects and knowledge-sharing events between Elders and younger generations have enriched cultural understanding and reinforced the importance of preserving traditional wisdom.

Facilitating Cross-Cultural Learning:

Fire to Flourish has fostered two-way learning, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants share stories and experiences, breaking down misconceptions and promoting collaboration.

By supporting Indigenous practices like cultural burning to be embedded into resilience strategies, Fire to Flourish continues to demonstrate the critical role traditional knowledge plays in land care and disaster preparedness. This integration has not only enhanced ecological outcomes but also fostered a deeper spiritual connection to Country, uniting communities in shared stewardship.

Indigenous Culture overall impact rating: **SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

- No Impact
- Minor Impact
- Positive Impact
- Significant Impact
- Transformative Impact

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IMPACT

The 2024 Fire to Flourish impact assessment reveals varied outcomes in supporting environmental resilience, reflecting the different priorities of participating communities. While some communities have focused more critically on social capital or other domains, Fire to Flourish has made meaningful contributions to improving environmental health and disaster preparedness where prioritised. Key highlights include:

Promoting Environmental Stewardship: The program has cultivated a shared responsibility for the natural environment, encouraging communities to actively care for their surroundings and take collective action.

Supporting Practical Initiatives: Fire to Flourish has enabled community-led projects such as tree planting, water conservation, habitat restoration, and fire trail maintenance, contributing to improved environmental conditions and bushfire preparedness.

Encouraging Long-Term Commitment: The program has inspired communities to adopt sustainable practices and prioritise environmental regeneration as part of broader resilience strategies.

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge: In communities where this was prioritised, the program has supported projects to incorporate traditional practices like cultural burning, fostering biodiversity, reducing bushfire risks, and strengthening the connection to Country.

Addressing Community-Specific Priorities: The program's environmental impact has been most evident in communities that identified the natural environment as a critical focus. Other communities, while benefitting from environmental efforts, have prioritised domains like social capital, tailoring their approaches to local needs.

Community-led projects supported by Fire to Flourish, such as fire trail maintenance and habitat restoration, have strengthened environmental resilience. These initiatives not only mitigate disaster risks but also enhance community cohesion by bringing diverse groups together to work on shared goals. This dual impact underscores the program's role in fostering environmental and social resilience.

Natural Environment overall impact rating: **SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

No Impact

Minor Impact

Positive Impact

Significant Impact

Transformative Impact



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN CLARENCE VALLEY

In 2024, Fire to Flourish continued to support the Clarence Valley community, delivering significant outcomes that reflect the region's priorities and strengths. Situated on Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr, and Yaegl Country, the Clarence Valley has faced unique challenges in recent years. Fire to Flourish's initiatives in this region have been pivotal in strengthening social capital, integrating Indigenous culture, and fostering environmental stewardship.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Clarence Valley experienced notable progress in enhancing community connections and collaboration. Residents credited Fire to Flourish with bringing people together across diverse backgrounds, fostering a shared sense of purpose. One community member shared, *"Fire to Flourish has helped us build networks we didn't know we needed. The relationships we've formed are now the backbone of our community's resilience."*

Leadership and skills development have also been significant outcomes in Clarence Valley. Through training and project support, individuals have gained confidence and the capacity to lead initiatives.

A local participant noted, *"I never thought I could take on a leadership role, but Fire to Flourish gave me the tools and encouragement to step up. It's made a real difference in how we approach challenges as a community."*



INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

The program has deepened understanding and respect for Indigenous culture in Clarence Valley. Initiatives have highlighted the importance of traditional ecological practices, such as cultural burning, in disaster preparedness and land care. Fire to Flourish facilitated opportunities for two-way learning, enabling Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents to share knowledge and build mutual respect.

A youth program that connected Elders with younger generations was particularly impactful. Elders shared stories and ecological wisdom, strengthening intergenerational bonds. One community member reflected, *"Watching our young people learn from Elders has been incredibly moving. It's not just knowledge being shared; it's a connection to our land and culture that will shape our future."*

FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

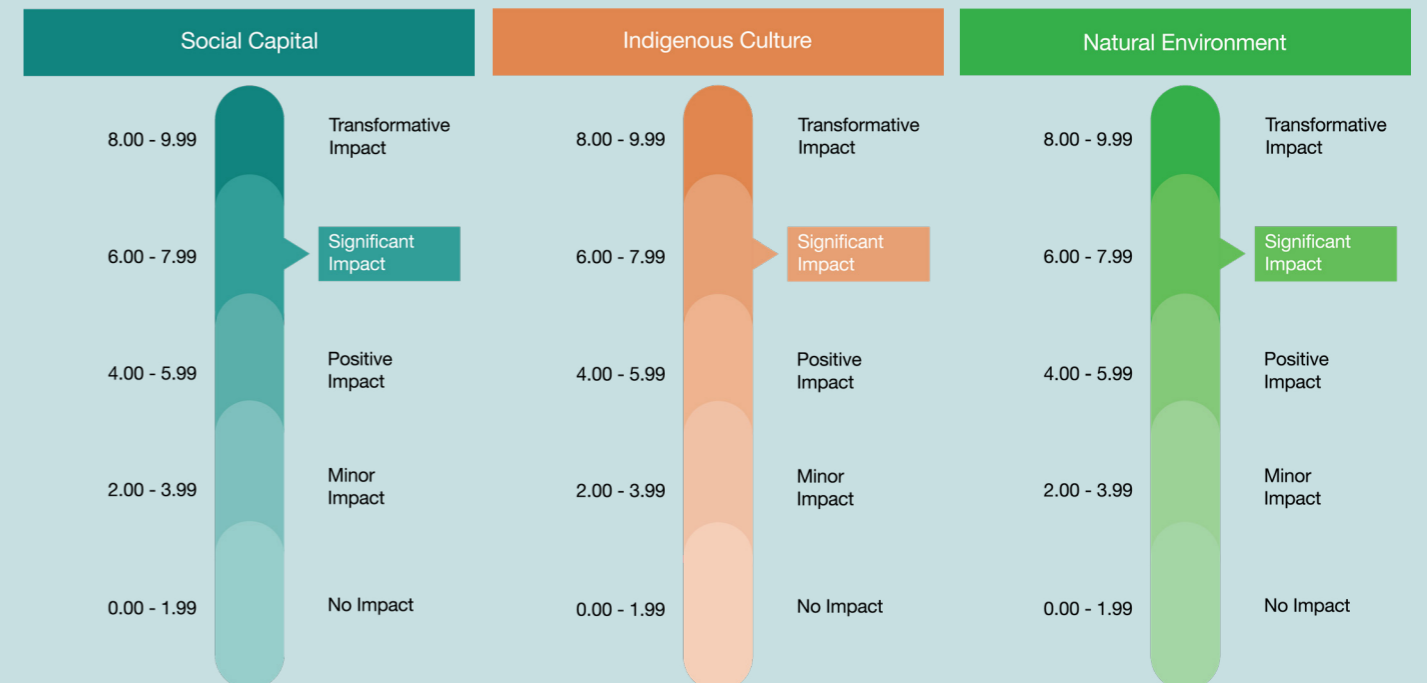
Environmental initiatives were a focus for Clarence Valley, with projects targeting bushfire preparedness and habitat restoration. Community-led efforts, such as fire trail maintenance and tree planting, have not only improved environmental health but also strengthened community collaboration. Participants noted that these projects brought people together, fostering a collective responsibility for the region's natural surroundings.

One of the standout outcomes has been the integration of sustainable practices into everyday community life. *"We're not just talking about resilience anymore—we're living it,"* said a local participant. *"Fire to Flourish has shown us how to take practical steps that make a real difference."*

LOOKING AHEAD

As the program evolves, Clarence Valley continues to demonstrate the power of community-driven initiatives. Fire to Flourish's impact in 2024 has strengthened connections, celebrated culture, and advanced environmental resilience in the region. The community is now better prepared to face future challenges, with a renewed sense of unity and purpose.

Through its tailored approach, Fire to Flourish has not only supported Clarence Valley's recovery but also laid the groundwork for a more resilient and connected future.



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN EUROBODALLA

In 2024, Fire to Flourish continued to make a meaningful impact in Eurobodalla, located on Walbanga and Djiringanj Country. This region, shaped by its natural beauty and the resilience of its people, has faced significant challenges in recent years, including bushfires and environmental recovery efforts. Fire to Flourish’s initiatives in Eurobodalla have focused on strengthening social capital, celebrating Indigenous culture, and enhancing environmental resilience, tailored to the community’s unique priorities.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Eurobodalla’s residents have seen a marked improvement in social connections and community collaboration through Fire to Flourish’s initiatives. The program created opportunities for people to come together, fostering trust and shared purpose. A participant remarked, *“Fire to Flourish has brought new energy to our community. The connections we’ve made have strengthened our ability to work together and support one another.”*

Leadership development has also been a cornerstone of the program’s impact in Eurobodalla. Residents gained valuable skills in project management, communication, and disaster preparedness, empowering them to take ownership of community-driven initiatives. One community member shared, *“The training we received has been life-changing. It’s given us the confidence to lead projects and make a real difference in our community.”*



Image credit: Fire to Flourish Eurobodalla

CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Fire to Flourish has played a pivotal role in fostering respect and understanding of Indigenous culture in Eurobodalla. The program has created spaces for Indigenous voices to be heard and traditional ecological knowledge to be shared, particularly in the areas of cultural burning and land care.

A standout initiative in 2024 was the facilitation of intergenerational knowledge-sharing events, where Elders worked with younger generations to pass on stories and practices. One participant noted, *“The connection between our Elders and youth has been incredible. It’s about preserving our culture and ensuring it continues to shape our community’s future.”*

ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

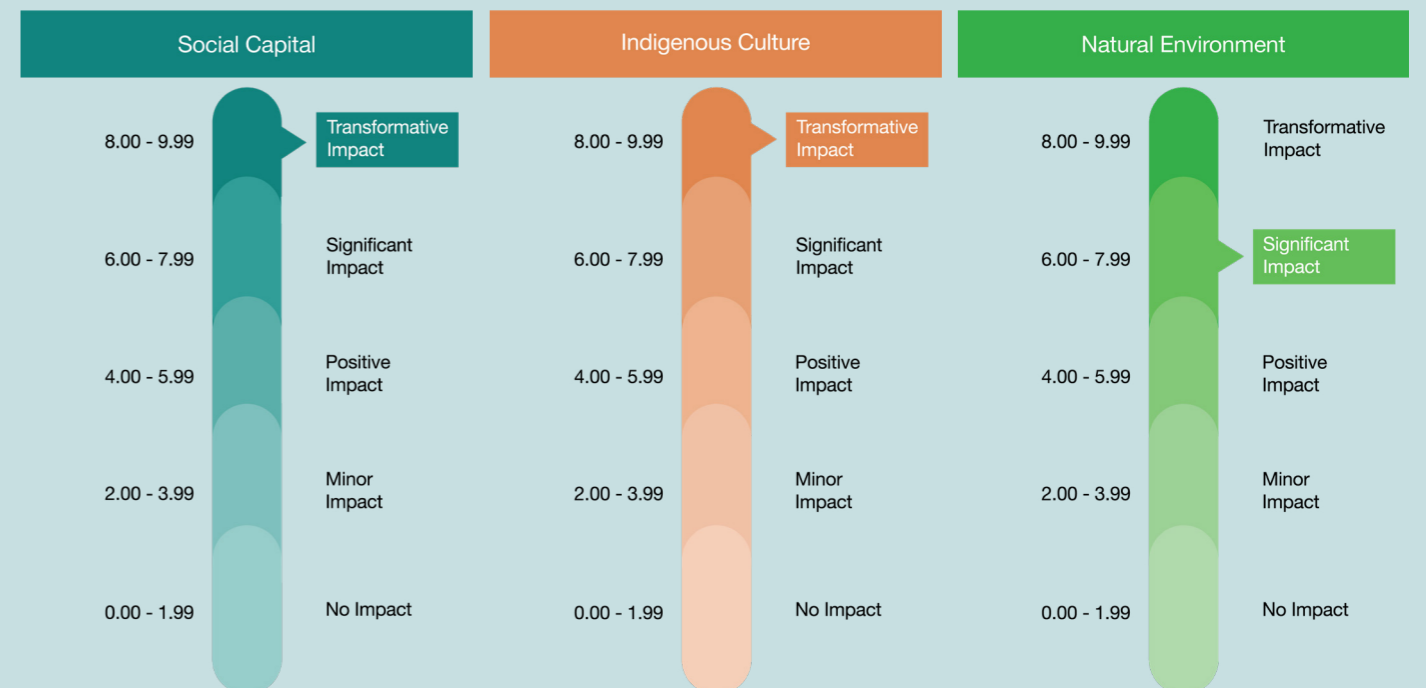
Eurobodalla’s commitment to environmental stewardship has been supported by Fire to Flourish’s focus on community-led initiatives. Projects such as bushfire preparedness, habitat restoration, and tree planting have strengthened environmental health and promoted long-term sustainability.

The program has also fostered a collective responsibility for the natural environment. A local resident highlighted this shift, saying, *“We’ve developed a stronger connection to our land and a deeper understanding of what it means to care for it. Fire to Flourish has inspired us to take action and stay committed.”*

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2024, Fire to Flourish’s impact in Eurobodalla demonstrated the power of community-driven efforts to build resilience and foster lasting change. The program’s focus on strengthening social ties, celebrating Indigenous culture, and enhancing environmental stewardship has positioned the community to face future challenges with confidence and collaboration.

As Fire to Flourish continues to evolve, Eurobodalla stands as a model of what can be achieved through tailored, inclusive, and sustainable approaches. The community’s progress this year is a testament to the strength of its people and their commitment to a brighter future.



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN TENTERFIELD

In 2024, Fire to Flourish continued its work in Tenterfield, located on Kamilaroi and Bundjalung Country. This rural community, known for its strong spirit and deep ties to the land, has faced significant challenges, including recurring bushfires and drought. Fire to Flourish’s initiatives in Tenterfield have focused on strengthening social capital, fostering cultural inclusion, and supporting environmental resilience, tailored to the community’s distinct needs and priorities.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Tenterfield has made significant strides in enhancing social cohesion and collaboration through Fire to Flourish. The program has brought community members together, building networks of support and fostering a shared sense of purpose. One participant reflected, *“Fire to Flourish has helped us connect in ways we hadn’t before. The relationships we’ve built are now the foundation of our community’s resilience.”*

Leadership development has been another key success, with the program equipping residents with the skills and confidence to lead initiatives. A local community member noted, *“Fire to Flourish gave me the tools and belief to take charge of projects that matter to us. It’s been empowering to see what we can achieve together.”*



Image credit: Fire to Flourish, Tenterfield

FOSTERING CULTURAL INCLUSION

In Tenterfield, Fire to Flourish has worked to celebrate and integrate Indigenous culture into resilience efforts. The program has supported initiatives that highlight the importance of traditional knowledge, such as cultural burning and land care practices. These efforts have fostered greater understanding and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents.

A notable highlight was the facilitation of cultural exchanges that brought together Elders and community members to share stories and wisdom. One participant shared, *“These conversations have been transformative. They’ve helped bridge divides and create a deeper respect for our shared history and the land we all call home.”*

ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

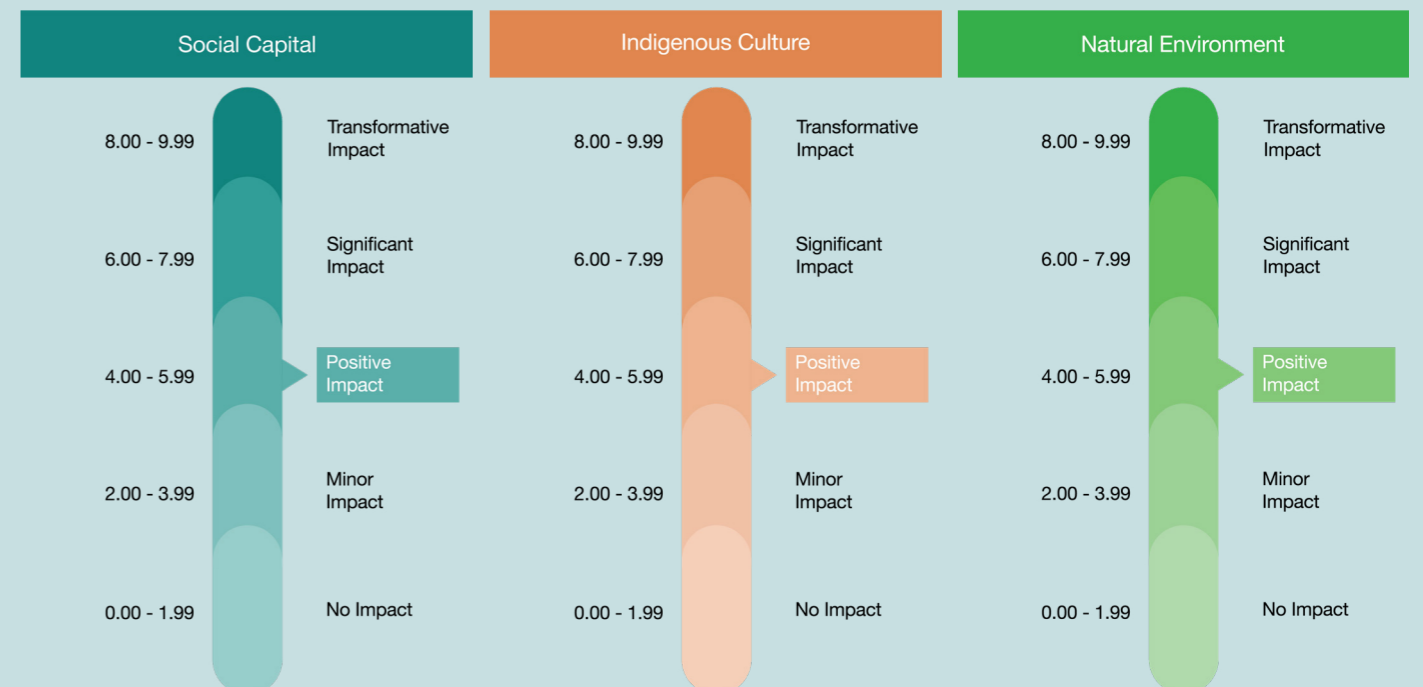
Environmental initiatives in Tenterfield have focused on bushfire preparedness, sustainable land management, and habitat restoration. Projects supported by Fire to Flourish, such as fire trail maintenance and tree planting, have improved environmental resilience while bringing the community together to address shared challenges.

The program’s emphasis on long-term sustainability has inspired a collective sense of responsibility for the natural environment. A local resident remarked, *“We’ve learned how to care for our land in ways that not only protect it now but ensure it thrives for future generations. Fire to Flourish has shown us what’s possible when we work together.”*

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2024, Fire to Flourish’s tailored approach in Tenterfield has strengthened social ties, celebrated cultural heritage, and enhanced environmental stewardship. The program has empowered the community to take ownership of its resilience journey, equipping residents with the skills and connections needed to navigate future challenges.

As Fire to Flourish continues to evolve, Tenterfield stands as a shining example of the impact of community-driven initiatives. The progress achieved this year is a testament to the strength of its people and their commitment to building a sustainable and connected future.



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN EAST GIPPSLAND

In 2024, Fire to Flourish continued to work alongside the East Gippsland community, delivering transformative outcomes in a region rich in cultural and environmental significance. Located on Gunaikurnai, Monero, and Bidawel Country, East Gippsland has faced immense challenges in recent years, including devastating bushfires. Fire to Flourish’s support has focused on strengthening social capital, integrating Indigenous knowledge, and fostering environmental stewardship.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CAPITAL

East Gippsland residents have experienced profound benefits in building social connections and collaboration. Through Fire to Flourish, individuals have formed networks that have strengthened community resilience. A participant shared, *“Fire to Flourish brought people together who may never have crossed paths otherwise. The connections we’ve built are changing how we tackle challenges as a community.”*

The program has also empowered individuals with leadership and project management skills, enabling them to take proactive roles in community-driven initiatives. A local resident reflected, *“I’ve learned how to lead projects and bring people together in ways I never thought possible. Fire to Flourish gave me the confidence to step up and make a difference.”*



Image credit: Fire to Flourish East Gippsland

INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

East Gippsland has embraced opportunities to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into resilience strategies. Cultural burning practices and traditional ecological methods have been integrated into disaster preparedness and environmental regeneration projects, fostering a deeper connection to Country.

The program also supported two-way learning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, creating spaces for mutual understanding and respect. One participant noted, *“It’s been incredible to see our community come together to learn from each other. The integration of Indigenous knowledge has changed how we think about land care and resilience.”*

FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

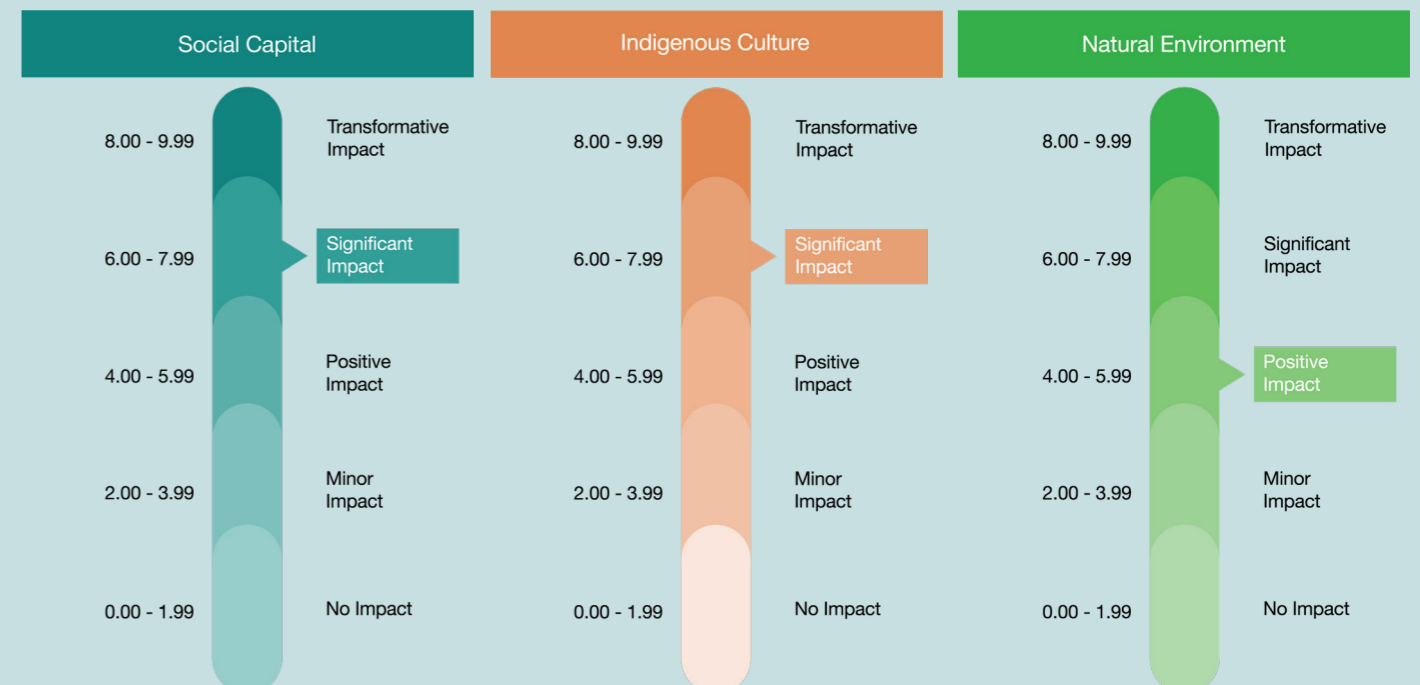
Environmental initiatives in East Gippsland have focused on habitat restoration, bushfire preparedness, and sustainable land management. Community-led projects such as tree planting, fire trail maintenance, and weed management have improved environmental health while strengthening collaboration across the community.

Participants highlighted the dual benefit of these initiatives: improving resilience while bringing people together. *“These projects are more than just environmental work—they’re about building a stronger, more connected community,”* said one resident.

LOOKING AHEAD

East Gippsland’s progress in 2024 underscores the power of community-driven initiatives. Through Fire to Flourish, the region has strengthened social ties, celebrated culture, and advanced environmental resilience. The program has equipped the community with the skills and connections needed to face future challenges with confidence.

As Fire to Flourish continues to evolve, East Gippsland stands as a testament to what can be achieved through collaboration, cultural inclusion, and environmental stewardship. With a solid foundation in place, the community is well-positioned to thrive in the years ahead.



WHO WE ARE



STRATEGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL	70
EXECUTIVE	71
COMMUNITY	72
BACKBONE SUPPORT	76
RESEARCH	78
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DISASTER RESILIENCE	86
DISASTERWISE COMMUNITIES NETWORK	87
PARTNERS	88
FEATURED ARTISTS	92



Image credit: Maiara Da Rocha Skarheim

STRATEGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL



Prof Christine Nixon
Chair



Robert Glasser
Independent



Claire Beattie
Independent



Kate Cowden
East Gippsland



Lucy Stackpool-Moore
Clarence Valley



Sharon Tierney
Tenterfield



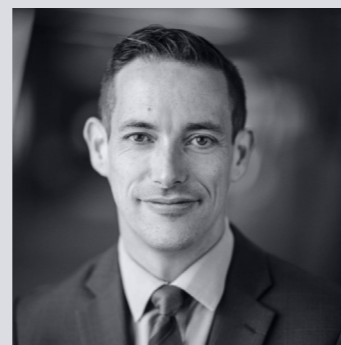
Alison Worthington
Eurobodalla



Jessica Bulger
Independent



Laura Cochrane
Independent



Ashley Keleher
Monash University

EXECUTIVE



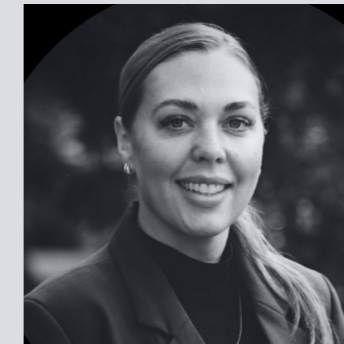
Prof Briony Rogers
CEO and Director - Research



Dr Lara Werbeloff
Director - Strategy, Engagement
and Development



Lindsey Goodman
Director - Program



Sarah Smith
Director - Community



Dr Brett Davis
Director - Knowledge Synthesis
and Communications

COMMUNITY: CLARENCE VALLEY



Cara MacLeod
Community Lead



Pamela Denise
Community Facilitator



Kath Kermode
Community Facilitator



John Skinner
Community Facilitator



Chick Edwards
Community Facilitator

COMMUNITY: TENTERFIELD



Helen Duroux
Community Lead / Indigenous
Engagement Specialist



Matthew Sing
Community Facilitator / Indigenous
Community Project Specialist



Gina Carpenter
Community Facilitator



Beatrice Torrens
Community Facilitator



Anthea Williams
Community Facilitator

COMMUNITY: EUROBODALLA



Kizzy Nye
Community Program Lead



Barb Rix
Community Project Specialist



Joe Brierley
Community Facilitator



Alice Ansara
Community Facilitator



Steph Chiu
Community Facilitator

COMMUNITY: EAST GIPPSLAND



Sara Matthews
Community Lead



Eva Grunden
Community Facilitator



Bonnie Nebauer
Community Facilitator

BACKBONE SUPPORT



Eve Bentley
Senior Program Manager -
Delivery



Kat Dias
Executive Assistant



Alexa Godfrey
Project Administration
Officer



Laelie Greenwood
Project Coordinator,
National Impact



Mellissa Kavenagh
Senior Program Manager -
Research



Brittney O'Neill
Project Coordinator,
National Impact

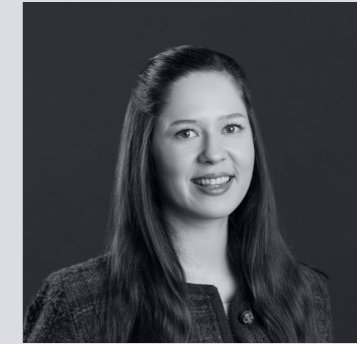


Bethany Patch
Communications Officer

BACKBONE SUPPORT



Matthew Ross
Communications Manager



Claire Sauvage
Project Coordinator,
Local Impact



Aayushi Shah
Project Coordinator,
Local Impact



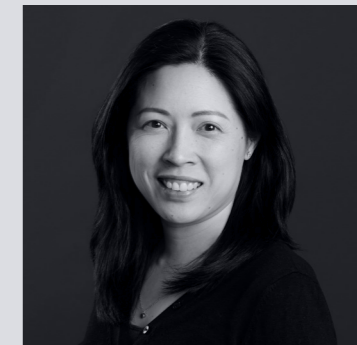
Ashleigh Shannon
On-Country Support Officer



Roxanne Smith
Senior Program Manager



Rebecca Walker
Senior Development
Specialist

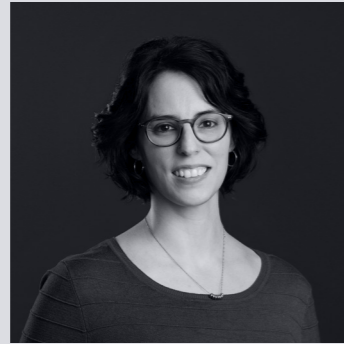


Mae Wee
Executive Assistant

RESEARCH: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



Prof Briony Rogers
Research Lead



Dr Adriana Keating
Research Fellow



Dr Jana-Axinja Paschen
Research Fellow



Dr Zoë D'Arcy
Research Fellow



Elise Park
Research Assistant



Scott Campbell-Smith
Senior Research Officer



A/Prof Jonathan Abrahams
MUDRI Director



Dr Suzanne Cross
Research Fellow

Tricia Hazeleger
Research Assistant

RESEARCH: PLACEMAKING



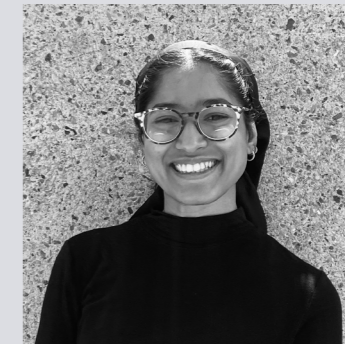
Prof Mel Dodd
Research Lead



Nikhila Madabhushi
Research Fellow



Robert Lees
Research Officer



Athiqah Umami Salma
Research Officer

RESEARCH: CONNECTIONS AND LEARNING



A/Prof Annette Bos
Research Lead



Prof Rebecca Wickes
Research Lead



Dr Inara Walden
Research Fellow



Dr Gretel Evans
Research Fellow



Dr Zoë D'Arcy
Research Fellow

RESEARCH: HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Prof Jane Fisher
Research Lead



Dr Revathi Nuggehalli-Krishna
Research Fellow



A/Prof Julie Willems
Research Fellow



Dr Karan Varshney
Research Officer



Dr Thach Tran
Research Fellow

RESEARCH: ECONOMICS



Prof David Johnston
Research Lead



Dr Sundar Ponnusamy
Research Fellow

RESEARCH: COMMUNITY COHESION



A/Prof Helen Forbes-Mewet
Research Lead



Dr Ashley Humphrey
Research Fellow

RESEARCH: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE



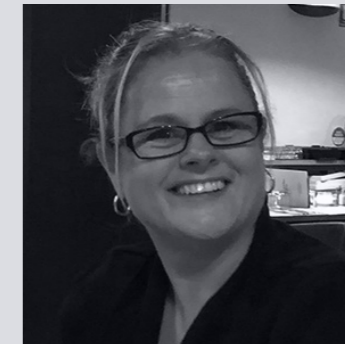
Emeritus Prof Frank Archer
Research Lead



Dr Caroline Spencer
Research Fellow



Dr Revathi Nugehalli Krishna
Research Fellow



Dr Suzanne Cross
Research Fellow

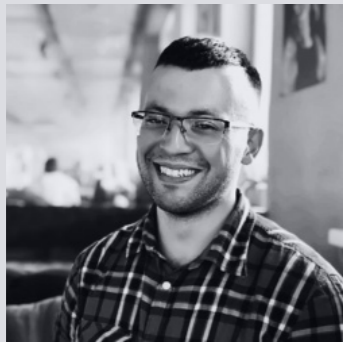
RESEARCH: GRANTING TOOLS AND DATA MANAGEMENT



Prof Patrick Olivier
Co-Lead, Granting Tools



Dr Delvin Varghese
Co-Lead, Granting Tools



Dr Dinislam Abdulgalimov
Data Management Officer



Pranav Kulkarni
Data Management Officer



Kadek Satriadi
Research Fellow

Ananya Alagh
Research Fellow

RESEARCH: PHD COHORT



Paul Cull
Home and Community



Belinda Davis
Transformative Bushfire Education



Ivana Gillard
Change Agents and Transformation



Euan Hind
Community Flood Resilience



Michael Johnson
Disaster Policy and Practice



Belinda Lloyd
Disasters and Social Inequities



Gabrielle Moir
Community Resilience Practice



Elise Park
Transformative Disaster Governance



Lihini de Silva
Disaster Economics

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DISASTER RESILIENCE



Dr Bhamie Eckford-Williamson
Program Lead



Lucy Connole
Senior Program Coordinator

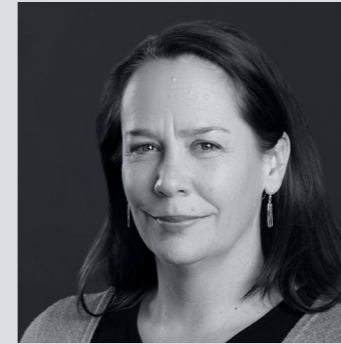


Nell Reidy
Research Fellow



Dr Emma McNicol
Research Fellow

DISASTERWISE COMMUNITIES NETWORK



Kate Fawcett
Network Convenor



Steve Cameron
Network Convenor



Monika Correa
Project Officer

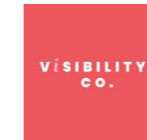


Sabrina Davis
Communications Specialist

CORNERSTONE AND FUNDING PARTNERS



STRATEGIC DELIVERY PARTNERS



GRANTING AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS



PROJECT DELIVERY PARTNERS

NIDR Gathering



Breakfast Party: Envisioning Change for Community Resilience



Community experiences of the 2022 floods in Victoria and South Australia project



Review of Cobargo Community Bushfire Recovery Fund project



Planning Evacuations with Indigenous Communities Handbook



Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities project



Understanding the resilience of lifelines for regional and remote communities project



Internally Displaced Peoples project



FEATURED ARTISTS

We are thrilled to showcase the beautiful designs for each of the Fire to Flourish communities. We commissioned artists in each region to create a design that represented their community. These artworks have been woven throughout this Annual Report. We've included each artwork in full on the following pages.

WE ARE 27 CREATIVE

Most of the graphics that appear throughout this Annual Report are the work of We Are 27 Creative, an Indigenous art, design and communications agency. The full artwork is called Heart of Country, and the artwork story is below.

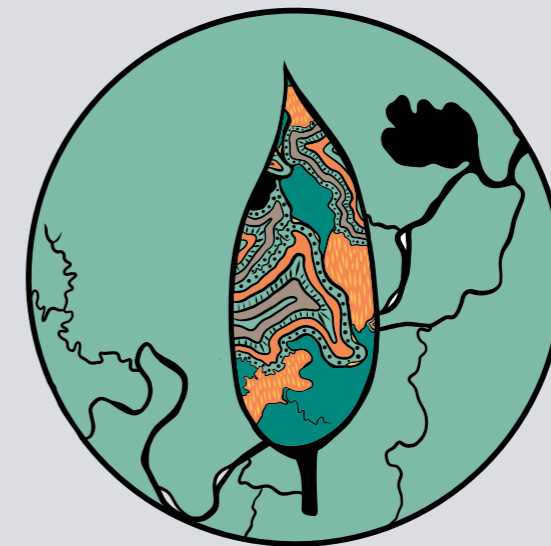
We are the heartbeat connected to this place. We belong to this Country. Shaping, shifting, changing, moving, flowing — Seasons guide our way. Meandering across the landscape words are nourishment. Seed cracks, flowers bloom, charcoal black. Knowledge is gained, we are healed, this land is alive in Celebration. Country is renewed.

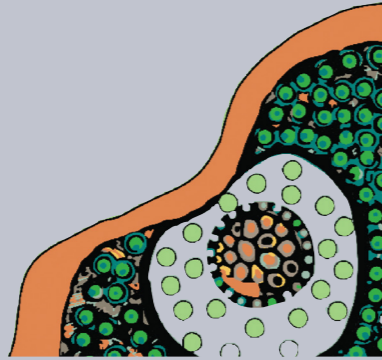


FRANCES BELLE PARKER

Frances Belle Parker is a proud Yaegl woman, painter, drawer, printmaker and installation artist from Maclean. An accomplished artist, Frances completed a BFA through UNSW, and a BVA (Honours) and Masters of Indigenous Studies (Wellbeing) both through Southern Cross University. Frances is deeply inspired by her Mother's land (Yaegl land) and the island in the Clarence River that her Mother grew up on, Ulgundahi Island.

"I have chosen a gum leaf shape, however when upright it can also represent a flame. Inside the leaf is an aerial mapping of the Clarence River; the river is one that connects all people of the Clarence Valley. The dots represent people and the stripes represent the resilience embedded into us as people. The yellow dashes represent the bushfires which have caused havoc in the region, the green represents the replenishing and the new growth of nature."





KIM HEALEY

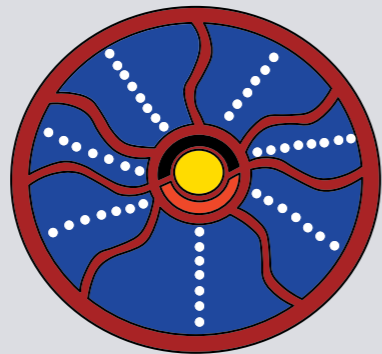
Deeply connected to her culture and country, Kim Healey has forged a reputation for her storytelling through a unique array of artistic mediums. Working and creating out of her small studio cottage on the coastlines of the Clarence Valley, Kim continues to attract and engage a diverse audience, using a contemporary palate, modern design, deeply embedded with her heritage through the Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung people.



BRONWEN SMITH

Bronwen Smith is the proud Walbunja owner and talented artist behind Gwiyaala Arts. From a young age, Bronwen had a passion for art and expressed herself through drawing. The name of Bronwen’s business, Gwiyaala meaning stingray, was influenced by the coastal inspiration for her paintings. Her art is not only an expression of the coastal landscape she loves, but is also used to share stories and connection. Bronwen’s saying is “let me paint your story”.

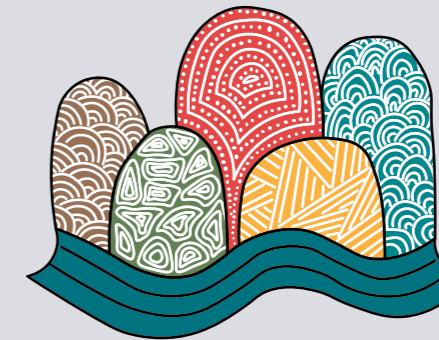
“This piece represents the South coast mountains and waters. The patterns in the mountains represent different plants, foods and dance. We celebrate coming together in culture.”



PAULA WANDIN

Wurundjeri artist Paula Wandin celebrated the bold colours of her region in this design connecting clan and Country.

“This piece is representative of the 5 clans of our region coming together under our flag and connecting to Mother Earth. The blue represents water, the giver of life. The five clans are Bratwoloong, Brayakooloong, Brabuwooloong, Tatungooloong and Krowathunkooloong.”



KARLA MCGRADY

Karla McGrady is a Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi woman born in Tenterfield, now residing in Brisbane. She was encouraged to commence her profession as a self-taught artist with the influence of an artistic family and her cultural connections to art as a part of everyday life for Aboriginal people. Karla’s art is a mix of styles and ideas that have developed over the years.

“This piece depicts the landscape in the Tenterfield region, the granite mountains and boulders, freshwater creeks and significant places that hold stories and memories for Aboriginal people in the area.”

FIRE to FLOURISH

Strength through community-led action



Fire to Flourish is a pioneering five year program, working in partnership with communities affected by the 2019/20 Australian bushfire season to trial innovations in community-led disaster resilience.

Pathways for scaling the insights, models and tools developed through the program are being created through partnerships with government, philanthropic, not-for-profit and private sector organisations.

Fire to Flourish is led by Monash University and supported by cornerstone philanthropic partners, the Paul Ramsay Foundation and Metal Manufactures Pty Ltd. Additional philanthropic support is provided by the Lowy Foundation.

For more information, go to: firetoflourish.monash



MONASH
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

paulramsay
FOUNDATION
PARTNERSHIPS FOR POTENTIAL



THE
AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL
INNOVATION