



NCC BUSHFIRE CONFERENCE REPORT

2025

21-23 May 2025 | Sydney

*Can we burn to learn?
Sustaining people, nature
and Country*



**Nature
Conservation
Council** The voice for
nature in NSW



**Bushfire
Program**

CONTENTS

1	Conference summary	2
2	Program	4
2.1	Conference theme.....	4
2.2	Program Format	4
2.3	Speakers	4
2.4	Facilitators	5
2.5	Program Overview.....	5
2.5.1	Day 1.....	5
2.5.2	Day 2.....	6
3	Sponsors	7
4	Promotion.....	7
4.1	Promotional Reach	7
4.2	Sponsorship benefits	8
5	Delegates	8
5.1	Delegates and Locations.....	8
5.2	Organisations Represented	9
6	Delegate Feedback	9
7	Conference Proceedings.....	13
8	Field Day	13
	Appendix 1 Conference Program	14
	Appendix 2 Conference Acknowledgements	19

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present. We aspire to learn from their traditional knowledge to help nature thrive

1 CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Event: Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) 14th Biennial Bushfire Conference: *"Can we burn to learn? Sustaining people, nature and Country"*

Summary brochure: To view a summary brochure of the conference head to the NCC Bushfire Program conference page at https://www.nature.org.au/bushfire_conference_2025

Conference Venue: This was a hybrid event, with eight sessions held over two days, on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 May 2025. The in-person event was held at the Teachers Federation Conference Centre in Surry Hills, and virtually via Zoom.

Program Overview:

NCC's 14th Biennial Bushfire Conference 2025 brought back the successful hybrid virtual and in-person conference format from 2023. NCC Bushfire Conferences are a unique event that bring together a diverse range of organisations and individuals to share knowledge and build connections. This year the conference showcased some of the latest and most successful programs, projects and examples of how different groups and individuals can collaborate to improve sustainable fire management outcomes by promoting in-depth discussions about how existing and future programs can be utilised to better understand how fire may shape the landscape and communities in NSW.

Sponsorship: NCC appreciates the financial commitment and support from all sponsors:

- **Platinum Sponsors:** NSW Rural Fire Service; NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service; and Science and Insights, Department of Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water
- **Gold Sponsor:** GHD; and University of New England
- **Silver Sponsors:** Humane World for Animals
- **Bronze Sponsors:** Bush Heritage Australia

62 speakers addressed the conference over eight sessions including the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), leading fire scientists and ecologists, fire authorities and government department representatives, First Nations communities and fire practitioners, community groups, environmental organisations and local councils.

277 delegates participated in the conference from seven **States and Territories** around Australia, as well as overseas (UK). Delegates represented a diverse range of **over 110 organisations**, including fire services, land management agencies, universities, volunteers, community groups, First Nations groups, students, businesses and private landholders.

Conference recording: Recordings for all eight sessions forming >12hrs of resources were distributed to delegates and a selection of recordings will also be released via NCC channels to the public within 6 months of the live event.

Promotion: The Conference was promoted extensively via a series of direct emails (>1,900 to a key promotional conference list and targeted organisations), NCC networks (200 member groups with >80 000 members), website listings and advertisements (with a reach of >137,3420), and via NCCs Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn (>49,111 followers).

Delegate feedback: Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Survey highlights include:

- **99% of delegates considered the content interesting and relevant**
- **98% of delegates were satisfied with the presentations**

Field Day: 39 people from over 20 organisations, participated in the NCC Bushfire Conference field day at the Royal National Park on the 23rd May 2025.

2 PROGRAM

2.1 Conference theme

NCCs 14th Biennial Bushfire Conference theme was *"Can we burn to learn? Sustaining people, nature and Country"*. The conference explored questions regarding why we choose to burn and, when and how we can best gain wisdom from using fire in different vegetation types to protect what we most care about. The 8 conference sessions covered themes including:

- Can we Burn to Learn?
- Fire Management and Applications
- Monitoring Fauna and Fire
- Restoring Country and Culture
- Lessons from a Changing Climate
- Communities Taking the Lead
- Sustaining People, Nature and Country

The application of fire management methods across landscapes was explored - from the coastal plains to the interior deserts (Mountains to Coast, Rolling Hills to Deserts) and the use of policies and procedural frameworks that reach across all landscapes (Horizons). Lessons from the devastating Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20 were also highlighted with communities and researchers reflecting on the types of changes that may work in future fire seasons. Forward-looking concepts that look beyond our current practices were presented to challenge our thinking about using or not using fire to manage land, ecosystems, species and human societies.

2.2 Program Format

Following our first hybrid virtual / in-person Conference held in 2023, the NCC Bushfire Conference 2025 was delivered as an interactive hybrid event again with both in-person and virtual options. This included complimentary access to the live streaming of all conference sessions for all ticket holders. Delegates were invited to ask questions in-person or virtually via the chat function.

There were 8 conference sessions over two days as described below. The full conference program can be viewed in [Appendix 1](#).

"Informative, contextual, personal, room for questions. Presentations from diverse groups of people and knowledge holders."

2.3 Speakers

The conference attracted a high standard of presentations from the following keynotes:

- NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Rob Rogers
- Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock
- Professor Don Driscoll
- Associate Professor Rachael Nolan
- Dr Jack Pascoe
- Dr Rachel Morgain
- Greg Mullins

This conference attracted more abstract submissions than previous years, with 62 presenters over the two days, including the poster session, and over 30 different organisations represented. Presenters came from 4 state departments and agencies (representing 40% of speakers), 9 universities (representing 26%

of speakers), and 11 NGOs or community groups (21%), with the remainder spanning a diverse range including Indigenous groups (8%), businesses (5%) and local councils (3%). All speakers and organisations can be found in the [full program in Appendix 1](#).

“An excellent mixture of scientific research and practical information.”

2.4 Facilitators

The conference was facilitated by members of NCC’s Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC). Facilitators introduced presenters during each session, facilitated questions and answers from both online and in-person delegates, and brought a depth of knowledge to stimulate ideas and draw out the conference themes. Biographies of BFAC members can be viewed here: <https://www.nature.org.au/healthy-ecosystems/bushfire-program/bushfire-advisory-committee/>

2.5 Program Overview

2.5.1 Day 1

The conference was opened by NCC Chairperson Carolyn Loton before each Platinum Sponsor provided an address, outlining some of the many programs that each of the sponsor agencies work on. Presentations exemplified how by working together, organisations involved in fire research and management can ensure bushfire mitigation and suppression operations continue to be ecologically and culturally sustainable activities. The Platinum Sponsor addresses were provided by Commissioner Rob Rogers, NSW Rural Fire Service, Naomi Stephens, A/ Deputy Secretary, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Laura Babian, A/Executive Director, Science & Insights Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Each address set out the current and prospective situation for fire management in NSW, with the 2019-2020 bushfires providing the momentum for an increase in new research and science, which combined with operational learnings are being used to improve adaptation efforts for current and future fire season scenarios.

Two keynote speakers followed, Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock (University of Wollongong) and Professor Don Driscoll (Deakin University). This first session examined the proposition *“Can we burn to learn?”* and posited that proposed increases in the rate of high frequency planned burns need to prioritise carefully designed monitoring and research in order to learn more about the consequences of increased burning. Lessons from research into data gathered following the 2019-20 bushfires suggests that fire managers need to place greater consideration on the long term effects of any increase in the use of planned fire on animal species and conservation outcomes.

Subsequent presentations expanded on new learnings with descriptions of programs and projects undertaken as a result of official Inquiries into the 2019-20 bushfires. These included new developments in the planning of fuel management programs, a new framework for fire planning in NPWS reserves, understanding the impacts on ecosystems and improving response mechanisms to emergencies, as well as the value of utilising cultural burning. The last session of the day introduced projects that explored learnings about the impacts of fire on specific animal species and on wildlife in general and what measures are being taken to provide better information on the interaction of fire and animal species.

Paul De Mar from GHD opened the sponsored Conference Poster Session. A highly anticipated event at NCC Bushfire Conferences, delegates relished the opportunity to chat, discuss the projects they are engaged in, as well as network over drinks and nibbles. The Poster Session and other recesses during the day provide a setting for participating sponsors to speak directly with delegates and discuss the information being displayed at their poster stalls. The posters on display delved into different aspects of the conference theme i.e. better understandings of bushfire risk and community preparedness, applying good science, integrating cultural knowledge and burning, and responding to wildlife and ecological requirements.

The University of New England (UNE) sponsored Conference Dinner was held at the nearby Rydges Sydney Central Hotel. Dr Suzie Cosh from UNE opened the dinner with a presentation on the impact of fire on mental health. The delegates then enjoyed a relaxed evening where they caught up with new and old acquaintances over drinks and a buffet dinner.

“Really thought-provoking, great chance to connect with new people and reconnecting with others.”

2.5.2. Day 2

Keynote presenters on the second day, Dr Jack Pascoe (University of Melbourne), Associate Professor Rachel Nolan (Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment, Western Sydney University) and Dr Rachel Morgain (Melbourne Biodiversity Institute, University of Melbourne) established the three themes for the day i.e. Restoring Country and Culture; Lessons from a Changing Climate; and Communities Taking the Lead. Each provided a setting for the pre and post morning tea sessions. Dr Pascoe outlined projects he is involved with which aim to restore biocultural values across landscapes, Associate Professor Nolan provided research information into the impact of a changing climate over time that can be used to provide information on potential future fire regime scenarios, and Dr Morgain explored socio-ecological approaches to bushfire risks.

The first morning session highlighted cultural burning and its value in building relationships and trust between First Nations people and western fire scientists. Throughout the conference, on several occasions the importance of protecting Indigenous Culture and Intellectual Property (ICIP) was raised when burns and programs incorporate cultural knowledge. This session emphasised this point and highlighted cross cultural projects that show collaboration between peoples and positive ecological outcomes on the ground. The session after morning tea considered the relationship between changing climates and their impacts on fire regimes throughout time, and in particular disturbances to vegetation communities with a focus on rainforests in deep time.

After lunch, presentations informed delegates about projects that have drawn people together to heal, learn and address risks in bushfire preparation, bushfire response, recovery and resilience, with the aim of obtaining better outcomes for people and the environment. Again, cultural connection is often a driver, however, all projects exhibited a high level of community driven protection approaches that focused not only on community benefits but also on good ecological outcomes.

The Conference Panel “Sustaining people, nature and Country” was introduced with a presentation by Greg Mullins (Founder, Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, former Commissioner Fire & Rescue NSW) who provided an outline of the fires in Los Angeles and identified key factors that drove those fires and other recent major fires across the world. The question asked was whether similar widespread destruction could happen in Australian cities and what should be done to prepare for their occurrence.

Five panel presenters were asked their views on addressing such a scenario in Australia. Dr Rachel Morgain stressed the need to move from current centralised systems towards the development of a greater role for local communities and traditional custodians in decision-making processes; Vikki Parsley championed a culturally led approach to fire management that acknowledged and safeguarded Indigenous knowledge, leading to more equitable outcomes; Dr Simon Heemstra pointed out that response capabilities have substantially improved over time, but climate change impacts will continue to severely stretch the capacity to protect communities; Emeritus Prof. Ross Bradstock pointed out that finding agreed conceptual “sweet spots” of intervention could allow for different approaches to fire management according to specific site factors such a landscape, climate, biogeography etc; and Dr Phil Zylstra reasoned that understanding the built-in mechanisms that have naturally limited fire in the landscape over time

would enable communities to better respond to bushfires by working with, rather than against those processes.

“All topics [were] very relevant and emphasised the interconnectedness of fire as a hazard, management tool, ecological driver, and cultural obligation and knowledge.”

3 SPONSORS

NCC appreciates the financial support extended by our generous 2025 Bushfire Conference sponsors:

Platinum Sponsors

- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
- Science and Insights Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Gold Sponsors

- GHD
- University of New England

Silver Sponsors

- Humane World for Animals
- Fire & Rescue NSW

Bronze Sponsor

- Bush Heritage Australia

4 PROMOTION

4.1 Promotional Reach

This year’s conference was promoted across NCCs expansive network and with external, targeted platforms and contacts. Most effective as indicated through delegate survey feedback were a series of targeted emails sent to relevant organisations and individuals linked with NCC’s widespread networks. Paid advertisements, social media marketing, and website listings were also used. Promotional methods included:

- Emails sent to over 1550 people from numerous organisations listed on a key promotional conference email list (7 total email campaigns promoting ticket sales);
- Targeted promotional emails and flyers sent to 350 organisations and government agencies with an interest in bushfire management, fire ecology, biodiversity conservation and environmental management;
- Promotion in 6 separate NCC monthly member newsletters plus 3 targeted e-blasts, distributed to ~200 member groups with a combined membership of over 80,000 members;
- Social media posts reaching >49,000 followers including the NCC Facebook page, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- The conference’s first dynamically-optimised Facebook paid advertising campaign, reaching a targeted audience of 3,800.

- Promotion through external membership-based groups or interested organisations via their internal channels.
- Advertisements on the Environmental Jobs Network (newsletter and social media reach of 100,000+), NRMJobs (email bulletin feature plus website reach of 32,000+), and Ecological Society of Australia, ESA (3,500 subscriber reach across ESA newsletter plus website).

4.2 Sponsorship benefits

All sponsors received multiple promotional benefits for their organisation in the lead up to the event, during the conference, and in post-conference communications. During the event, **Platinum sponsors** received exclusive promotion via a prominent display of their banner on stage, a leading speaker placement at the conference opening and their organisational logo displayed on screen. Their logo was also provided on all promotional materials.

Platinum Sponsors received:

- Brand recognition on pre and post-event promotional materials
- Elevated placement of corporate brand in lecture hall on both days as a stand-alone banner, on screen during breaks and during the daily welcome at the opening and closing of each conference day
- Opportunity to include a speaker on a relevant topic/poster
- The opportunity to hold a stall during both days of the live event

Gold Sponsors received:

- Organisational branding of the conference dinner or poster session, including placing of a banner during the session
- The opportunity to provide an opening address at sponsored session
- The opportunity to hold a stall during both days of the live event.

Silver Sponsors received:

- The opportunity to hold a stall during both days of the live event.

All Sponsors received:

- Complimentary registrations
- Acknowledgement at the opening and closing of the conference
- Acknowledgement on NCC's conference and ticket web pages
- Branding included in the digital delegate bags, welcome packs and abstract booklet distributed to all delegates
- Special thank you in NCC's E-Newsletter reaching over 200 members groups and the NCC Fire and Restoration E-News
- Special acknowledgement in widely distributed post-conference materials including recordings and an article on the Fire and Restoration Resource Hub. Articles available here: <https://fireandrestoration.org.au/ncc-bushfire-conference-2025/>

5 DELEGATES

5.1 Delegates and Locations

A total of 277 delegates attended this year's event across the two conference days, with a further 23 NCC staff participating. 53 delegates purchased online tickets (19% of delegates) and 224 attended in-person (81% of delegates) at the Teachers Federation Conference centre in Surry Hills, Sydney. Of these, 79

attended the conference networking dinner (35% of in-person delegates) held at the Rydges Hotel on the Wednesday night. 39 attended the associated field day on the Friday (reduced from 49 registrants due to inclement weather). Many were return delegates with 86 people (31%) having previously attended a NCC Bushfire Conference, and some attended for the first-time with 'hearing the latest research' being the most common comment given for attending their first Bushfire Conference. Delegates were also able to share their contact details on a networking list, with over 157 delegates opting to do so (57%).

The conference attracted delegates from across Australia, and even internationally with delegates flying in from the UK. Most Australian state and Territory jurisdictions were represented, with the majority of responding participants indicating that they worked primarily in NSW (50%) and across Australia (14%), with some from Victoria (2%), and the remainder from ACT, SA, QLD, WA, TAS and overseas (combined 4%, 30% no data).

5.2 Organisations Represented

Over 110 different organisations were represented including government funded land management organisations, universities, Indigenous groups, local councils, and businesses (Table 1). As in 2023, the highest proportion of delegates were from community groups and NGO's, representing 27% of delegates, followed by state land management organisations (20%).

Table 1: Organisation Types represented by Delegates over the past six bushfire conferences. *Note that 2023 was the first hybrid event, and 2021 was a 100% virtual event.

Delegate type	2013	2015	2017	2021*	2023	2025
State Land Management Organisations (includes Department Planning, Industry and Environment, NPWS, Crown Lands, LLS, government departments from other states, etc.)	20%	24%	16%	25%	16%	20%
Community Groups and NGOs	29%	21%	20%	25%	26%	27%
Local Councils	16%	16%	29%	13%	15%	16%
Aboriginal representatives (e.g. Aboriginal Land Councils/Corporations/IPAs)	4%	10%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Universities	9%	10%	14%	11%	14%	9%
State Fire Fighting Agencies (includes: NSW RFS, Vic CFA, SA CFS)	11%	8%	8%	15%	11%	13%
Business/Consultants	5%	6%	7%	4%	13%	7%
Individuals and other	6%	5%	2%	4%	1%	4%

6 DELEGATE FEEDBACK

NCC received an abundance of positive verbal and written feedback from both conference and field day participants. Feedback from delegates was collected primarily from forms provided to people at the venue at the conclusion of the final conference session, and an electronic link to the form was provided for the virtual audience. A total of 91 delegates responded, with the majority (64%) received from participants who attended in person.

Frequently repeated key words used by delegates to sum up their conference experience were:

networking, learning, community, Indigenous, opportunities, people

Overall, participants provided extremely positive feedback on the conference and were pleased with the content and satisfied with the presentations.

Content: 99% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the conference content was informative and met their expectations (Figure 1).

Satisfaction with presentations: 98% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the speakers and their presentations (Figure 1).

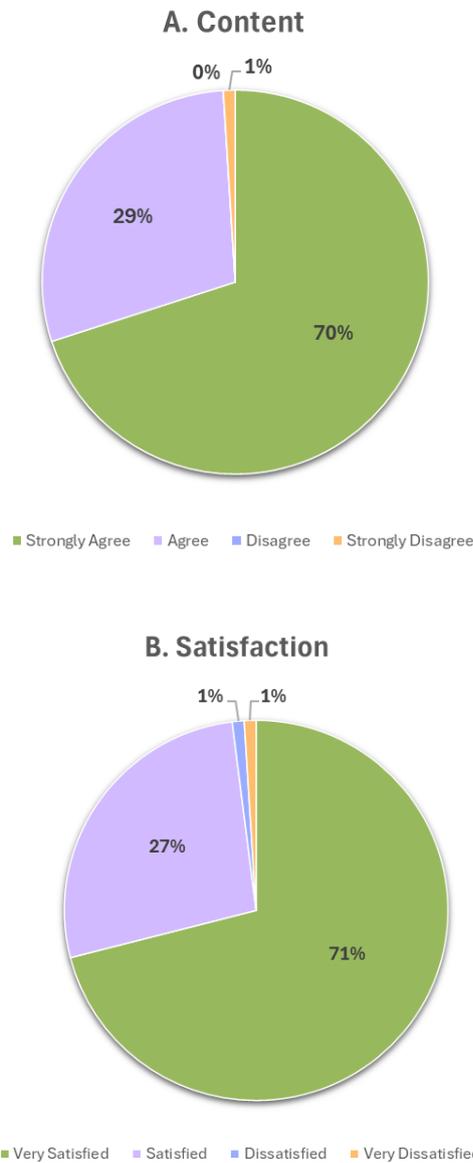


Figure 1. Participant responses to the questions A) The conference content was informative and met my expectations B) How satisfied the participant was with the presentations.

“Shared learning opportunities in a positive environment for better outcomes for people and planet”

What people found most valuable about the conference:

- Networking and building connections with new and existing colleagues.
- Learning about the latest science and technologies; on ground projects; policies; success stories; experiences and tangible actions.

- Accessing a wide variety of perspectives in one event, with many delegates grateful for an opportunity to hear from such a wide variety of speakers, from practical to theoretical, government and private sector, and science balanced with community and cultural themes.
- Case studies showcasing how communities used their resources to protect their land.
- Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.

“I thought it was excellent – I really enjoyed meeting researchers and practitioners from a wide range of fields and groups.”

Presentation topics and themes people found most useful/relevant for their work - Delegates enjoyed the breadth of topics and provided positive feedback on all sessions. The following topics were highlighted as most useful and relevant:

- Cultural burning combined with community-led initiatives
- First Nation people’s perspectives
- Merging the latest science with practical fire management practices
- Building resilience and disaster preparedness
- Flora and fauna response to fire
- Professor Phil Zylstra, Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock and Professor Don Driscoll’s presentations were frequently noted specifically as favourites

“The Indigenous knowledge sharing was very valuable and essential for creating the change that is needed.”

“Cultural burning, ecological recovery studies, community resilience, collaboration - so vital, promotion of Indigenous knowledge.”

Program format - Overall, participants found the program to be:

- “Just right”, “format was great”, “balance excellent”, “provided a good balance, allowed for discussion and enough time for breaks in between”
- Some concerns included that they “would have liked more time for questions”, “Not enough question time”, “Great but wish we had more time”,
- Respondents highlighted speed talks as a positive aspect of the program format, “really enjoyed the speed talks (more of this!)”, “Speed talks are a challenge to present but a good opportunity to see/learn about more projects”
- There was also a call for an opportunity to “consider running some break-out rooms”, “group sessions to capture more input”,
- The Day 2 panel was well-received, with only concern that it was not long enough

“I thought the format was dynamic. Keeping presentation on the shorter side worked well. So did not making such a big deal about invited presentations vs. other types of presentations - which I thought included ECRs and people outside of the university sector more than what I've seen at other ecology-themed conferences.”

“I thought it was an excellent conference. And a great way to promote the good work that NCC are doing. I quite liked how so many team/board members were involved in running the event,

and how genuine everyone from NCC was about bringing people together to make positive change. Well done!”

Live illustration – The 14th Biennial Conference featured the pilot of a live illustrator, during Day 2 Session 7 Panel led by Greg Mullins. Overall feedback to the illustrator was mostly positive and included views that:

- The illustration was a welcome and innovative addition to conference proceedings.
- The illustrator’s talent was impressive and this activity could have been extended to other sessions.
- Having the illustration showcased on the large screen made it valuable.
- A few delegates noted the illustration was slightly distracting and the value was questionable.

Suggestions for improvement and concerns primarily included:

- Many respondents requested allotting more time for questions, whether by having fewer presentations, reducing break times, or allowing for breakout sessions to continue discussions.
- While networking was prioritised as a top benefit of the conference, there were suggestions to enable a wider diversity of connection through a ‘dating style’ networking app to connect different delegates in person. One self-described NGO delegate indicated feeling left out from networking by not knowing many other delegates. Other delegates suggested incorporating more interactive activities into the conference, as well as bringing in a SIM table demonstration.
- Several delegates expressed a desire for additional conference outputs, including a media release summarising the research presented, a follow up on the key outcomes of the conference, and breakouts at the conference to deliver end-of-conference solutions. One delegate suggested using Slido in the future to better capture questions from both in-person and virtual attendees and vote together on those to prioritise for answering.
- Many delegates submitted suggestions to have various topics or preferences for speakers from specific types of organisations e.g., more presentations on the built environment, on operational implementation of research findings and the influence of institutional and legal requirements (as well as talks from those “on the ground” from NPWS and RFS who carry out the actual burns), climate change and protecting flora and fauna accordingly, how to educate others on fire management, wildlife adaptation to fire, and a range of concerns about the tone and content of the Welcome to Country.

Sample of additional quotes from participants:

- *“There are a lot of fraught conflicts of opinion in the fire space - you handled this pretty well, creating a respectful place for conversation.”*
- *“I thought it was an excellent conference. And a great way to promote the good work that NCC are doing. I quite liked how so many team/board members were involved in running the event, and how genuine everyone from NCC was about bringing people together to make positive change. Well done!”*
- *“I’ve rarely attended a conference attended by those with such diverse roles and experience in fire management. It was great to see strong representation from Indigenous experts, management agencies, NGOs, universities and more.”*
- *“Such a great conference – so much so, that I filled a complete notepad with my scribbles.”*

General feedback

Delegates frequently commented on how smoothly run the conference execution was, expressing gratitude to NCC and the Bushfire Program for organising the event, including positive feedback on the conference and dinner catering. Participants’ final comments were positive and thankful.

7 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The two days of presentations were live-streamed and recorded. The recordings were edited to enable online sharing, including sponsor branding, and were released as a unique resource to all delegates after the conference along with a PDF of presenter slides. Each session is available separately, with timestamps and a detailed program breakdown for easy access to specific presentations. Recordings will also eventually be released to the public.

8 FIELD DAY

NCC's Bushfire Program presented a field day on Friday 23rd May at The Royal National Park to 39 delegates from more than 20 organisations to continue exploring the theme *Can we burn to learn?*

Delegates heard from representatives from the La Perouse LALC (Uncle Peter McKenzie), Sutherland Shire Environmental Centre (Dr Ross Jeffree), NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (David Croft), Friends of the Royal (Ralph Cartwright), National Parks Association (Gary Shoer), NSW Rural Fire Service (Sean Cavanagh), and NSW DCEW, Science and Insights Division, Applied Bushfire Science Program (Andrew Denham). After some wet weather cleared, participants headed outside for a walk and discussion through an Asset Protection Zone adjoining Jibbon Head behind Bundeena, led by NCC Bushfire Advisory Committee members Bob Conroy and Dr Grahame Douglas. Further information about the field trip can be read here <https://fireandrestoration.org.au/bushfire-conference-field-day-all-things-royal/>

FINAL NOTE

The 14th Biennial NCC Bushfire Conference sparked dynamic discussions on the current state and future of fire management in NSW. We heard from inspiring individuals, organisations, and groups tackling these challenges head-on. As we endeavour to adapt to a changing climate, fire management remains one of our most urgent issues. Strengthening community collaboration, valuing First Nations knowledge and sharing the results of our learning is more crucial than ever to build resilience for both people and landscapes. NCC looks forward to continuing this vital conversation at the 15th Bushfire Conference in 2027.

APPENDIX 1 CONFERENCE PROGRAM



Conference Program

Day 1, Wednesday 21st May 2025

Session 1: Opening Addresses | 9:00am - 10:20am

Caroline Loton	Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)	Welcome by Chairperson
Uncle Allan Murray	Metro Local Aboriginal Land Council	Welcome to Country
Bob Conroy	NCC Bushfire Program	Bushfire Program Introduction
Commissioner Rob Rogers	NSW Rural Fire Service	Address by Commissioner
Naomi Stephens	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)	Platinum Sponsor Address Enhancing Fire Management in NSW National Parks through an Adaptive Multi-Faceted Approach
Laura Babian	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)	Platinum Sponsor Address The role of science and research in NSW Government to improve management of Country under changing fire regimes

Morning Tea | 10:20 am - 11:00 am

Session 2: Can we burn to learn? | 11:00 am - 12:40 am

Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock	University of Wollongong	Keynote Environmental outcomes of strategic fire management: known knowns and unknowns and the case to 'burn in order to learn'.
Professor Don Driscoll	Deakin University	Keynote New insights from The Australian Megafire Synthesis
Dr Phil Zylstra	Curtin University, Australian National University	Can We Learn?
Dr Simon Heemstra	NSW Rural Fire Service	Platinum Sponsor Address Challenges in Designing and Implementing a Strategic Fuel Management Program in NSW

Lunch | 12:40 pm - 1:40 pm

2025 NCC Bushfire Conference | Can we burn to learn? Sustaining people, nature and Country

5





Session 3: Fire Management and Applications | 1:40 pm - 2:55 pm

Associate Professor Rachael Nolan + Dr Mel Taylor	Western Sydney University; DCCEW	A collaborative natural hazards research program for NSW
Kellie Langford + Patrick Schell	NSW NPWS	A New Approach to NPWS Reserve Bushfire Planning
Vikki Parsley + Alistair Hartley	Bush Heritage Australia	Culturally led burning - learning from the past to sustain people, nature and country into the future
Associate Professor Luke Kelly	The University of Melbourne	Co-design offers a way to develop fire science and practice that is tailored to suit the needs of species and ecosystems

Afternoon Tea | 2:55 pm - 3:25 pm

Session 4: Monitoring Fauna and Fire | 3:25 pm - 4:50pm

Dr Rosie Steinberg	DCCEW	Better late than never: Lessons learned over three years of Threatened Species Hazard Reduction List update efforts
Pete Knock	NCC	The Large Forest Owls Project: What have we learnt from being burnt? Six years of eavesdropping on the owls and gliders of the North Coast forests.
Margot Law	DCCEW	// Speed Talk // Tracked koala behaviour during a prescribed burn on the Woronora Plateau.
Dr Andrew Claridge	NSW Department of Primary Industries	// Speed Talk // Monitoring forest-dwelling mammals before and after a major bushfire reveals innate resilience and provides guidance for future management interventions.
Dr Sally Miller + Kirrily Gould	DCCEW; LLS	// Speed Talk // Mitigating bushfire risk to koalas by managing a highly flammable invasive weed: an account of building community and inter-agency collaboration
Rheanon Nichols	Humane World for Animals	// Speed Talk // Burning with purpose: Integrating wildlife into fire management practices
Paul der Mar	GHD	Poster Sponsor Address
Dr Suzie Cosh	UNE	Conference Sponsor Address (at dinner)

GHD Sponsored Poster Session | 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm
UNE Sponsored Conference Dinner | 6:45 pm - 9:30 pm





Poster Session, Wednesday 21st of May

Poster Session 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm		
Dr James Barker	DCCEEW	A collaborative approach to applying fire intervals
Gabrielle Brennan	Macquarie University	Cross-cultural monitoring of the 'more-than-human' responses to a Dharug trial cultural burn in an urban National Park, Sydney
Olivia Burge	DCCEEW	Fire regime components influence the amount of coarse woody debris available as habitat for fauna
Sonja Elwood	NSW Wildlife Council	Emergency Response for Wildlife - 5 years on - where are we now?
Olivia Eglin	Mid Coast 2 Tops Landcare Connection	Targeting the practical and knowledge gaps of private landholders in fire ecology
Jace Emberg	DCCEEW	Bridging Soil Science and Cultural Knowledge: Applied bushfire science and cultural burning for a resilient future
Mick George	GHD	The relationship between environmental water, vegetation response, fuel hazard and bushfire risk
Dr Saskia Grootemaat	NSW NPWS	Wildlife response during emergencies
Kellie Langford + Jill Macintyre	NSW NPWS	Assets of Intergenerational Significance: A practical mechanism to ensure environmental values are protected from bushfires
Gregor Manson	Independent Bushfire Group	Living with Fire? or Not!
Emily Simpson	University of Sydney	Ongoing impacts of the 2019/20 bushfire season on fauna in the Blue Mountains World Heritage area
Dr Jane Williamson	DCCEEW	Fire regime and other determinants of tree-hollow occurrence in dry sclerophyll forests of southeastern Australia
Healthy Ecosystems Team	Nature Conservation Council of NSW	Highlights of NCC's on-ground Healthy Ecosystems



Day 2, Thursday 22nd May 2025

Session 5: Restoring Country and Culture | 9:00 am - 10:40 am

Rob Pallin	Hotspots Fire Project	Hotspots Fire Project 20th Birthday
Dr Jack Pascoe	University of Melbourne	Keynote Restoring Biocultural Landscapes in Maar Meereeng
Dr Elle Bowd, Dean Freeman, Braithan Bell + Bradley Bell	Australian National University; Local Land Services Riverina; Ngunnawal community	Supporting the re-emergence of cultural burning in Box Gum Grassy Woodlands.
Richard Geddes	Jagun Alliance Aboriginal Corporation	Bringing back cultural fire to country in the Northern Rivers region
Andrew Denham + Graham Moore	DCCEEW	The transfer of knowledge across two worlds: The Applied Bushfire Science Program - Dignams Creek project

Morning Tea | 10:40 am - 11:10 am

Session 6: Lessons from a Changing Climate | 11:10am - 12:45 am

Associate Professor Rachael Nolan	Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment, Western Sydney University	Keynote Changing fire regimes are impacting forest carbon stocks
Dr Scott Mooney	UNSW	Twentieth Century change in the fire regimes of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area as recorded in the accumulation and Raman character of charcoal in Temperate Highland Peat Swamp
Mark Schuster	Ku-ring-gai Council	Fire in the Sandstone: Deep Time Learnings on Fire Regimes
Dr Robert Kooyman	Macquarie University, Missouri Botanical Garden	Deep-time history and contemporary Australian rainforest ecology: the fiery debate
Dr Ross Peacock	NSW NPWS	When the NSW rainforests burned in 2019/20, impacts and post fire monitoring outcomes

Lunch | 12:45 pm - 1:35 pm

Session 7: Communities Taking the Lead | 1:35 pm - 3:30 pm

Dr Rachel Morgain	Melbourne Biodiversity Institute, University of Melbourne	Keynote Fostering socio-ecological approaches to addressing systemic risks in bushfire emergency response, recovery and resilience
Dr Jana-Axinja Paschen + Matt Sing	Fire to Flourish, Monash University	Cultural fire as a connector for community learning
Waminda Parker + Jennifer Wines	NatureFix; Murrumbidgee Local Health District	Looking Toward Healing Horizons: Nature as the Story of Recovery
North Sullivan	Upper Yango Landholders Association inc.	The Power of Community



Session 7: Communities Taking the Lead | 1:35 pm - 3:30 pm

Dr Jo Anne Rey	Macquarie University	Burning Love! Healing Country, Healing Hearts Along the Durumbura Dhurabang (Lane Cove River)
Allen Hyde	Mt Irvine Progress Association	Learning from Fire: A Community-Led Approach to Preparedness and Resilience

Afternoon Tea | 3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Session 8: Sustaining People, Nature and Country | 4:00 pm - 5:10 pm

Greg Mullins	Emergency Leaders for Climate Action	Keynote Los Angeles and wholesale destruction: could it happen here?
---------------------	--------------------------------------	--

Panel Session - with live illustrator *Law Keilar*

Panel Facilitator	Greg Mullins	Emergency Leaders for Climate Action
Panellist	Emeritus Professor Ross Bradstock	University of Wollongong
Panellist	Dr Simon Heemstra	NSW Rural Fire Service
Panellist	Dr Rachel Morgain	Melbourne Biodiversity Institute, University of Melbourne
Panellist	Dr Phil Zylstra	Curtin University, Australian National University
Panellist	Vikki Parsley	Bush Heritage Australia
Jacqui Mumford	Nature Conservation Council of NSW	Conference Close



APPENDIX 2 CONFERENCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NCC's 14th biennial Bushfire Conference 2025 was made possible due to the generous contributions of all our sponsors. In addition, the conference would not have lit up without the enthusiasm, energy, hard work, and ideas of all the people involved, especially all of the delegates who joined us over three exciting days.

The 14th biennial NCC Bushfire Conference has been developed from the ingenuity, knowledge, and learning from a dedicated team of volunteers and staff spanning more than 20 years and 13 outstanding preceding conferences.

Much effort goes into the planning, preparation, and delivery of events like this, and a deep appreciation for enabling this year's NCC Bushfire Conference 2025 goes to the following people at NCC particularly:

NCC Bushfire Advisory Committee Members (BFAC): Bob Conroy (Chair), Dr Grahame Douglas, Jane Gye, Dr Simon Heemstra, Dr Judy Lambert, Ross McDonnell, Kate McShea, Steve Meredith, Jim Morrison, Greg Mullins, Julie Taylor-Mills, Don White and Rob Pallin (retired).

NCC Bushfire Program Conference Team: Lucy Tremain (Conference Coordinator), Dr Evelyn Chia (Conference Coordinator), Julia Edgar (Conference Project Officer), Campbell Goff (Virtual lead and Conference support), Greg Banks (Conference support), Lynette Preston (Event Delivery).

NCC Staff: Jacqui Mumford, Kate McShea, Kevin Taylor, Pete Knock, Neale Watson, Belinda Kenny, Chris McMillan, Jacquelyn Johnson, Amelia Mertha, Angela Leech, Alana Sinclair, Katie Silverman, Fiona Zhou, Niamh Murray, Sam Johnson, Steve Ryan

NCC Board: Carolyn Loton

Volunteers: Elsa Nativelle and Romain Yborra



Photos: Conference organisers Julia Edgar, Campbell Goff, Lucy Tremain, Lynette Preston presented with flowers at the Conference Day 2 closing, by NCC CEO Jacqui Mumford; BFAC Member Greg Mullins presenting a conference Keynote on Day 2.



Photos: BFAC Member Julie Taylor Mills and BFAC Member and Chair Bob Conroy at Day 1 of the Conference; BFAC Member and Chair Bob Conroy and BFAC Member Grahame Douglas presenting at the Conference Field Day

You can learn more about the NCC Bushfire Program, including past conferences, here:

https://www.nature.org.au/bushfire_program