

POLICY FUTURES

A Reform Agenda



How Self-Determination is Returning White Smoke to Country

Cultural fire is a critical land management tool and a profound expression of ongoing connection to place for Aboriginal people. Empowering Traditional Owners to manage Country through traditional knowledge is a practical exercise in self-determination that will help safeguard Australia from a repeat of the 2019/20 catastrophic bushfires. It is also an opportunity for government to create meaningful relationships with and jobs for Traditional Owners.

Scott Falconer
2017 Churchill Fellow, Victoria

Key Policy Recommendations

1

Partnerships managing Country Self-determination should be a driving principle of collaborative initiatives returning cultural burning to Country. Agencies must explicitly acknowledge and respect that Traditional Owners want to lead this process, at their pace, with sustained resourcing from governments and their agencies. The legal rights and connection of Aboriginal people to Country must be recognised, and formal partnership agreements established between government agencies and representative Aboriginal parties to create equitable and accountable relationships.

2

Policies and regulations. Establish both state and national Indigenous Policy and Partnerships groups to bring together representatives from fire and emergency management agencies to work with Traditional Owners and agencies.

3

Funding for developing cultural fire. Commitment to empowering Traditional Owners as leaders in the management of their Country must include providing sustained and appropriate resources directly to Traditional Owner groups.

4

Support knowledge exchange and networking. Create a national Indigenous-led network of Indigenous fire practitioners supported with funding from land and fire management agencies. This group would bring together both volunteer and paid practitioners engaged in collaborative land and bushfire management initiatives with Traditional Owners. The ideal location for this network would be within the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council structure.

Mr Scott Falconer
Department of
Environment, Land, Water and Planning
T +61 419 468 563
E scott.falconer@delwp.vic.gov.au



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