



Nicole MacKee, Melissa Sweet and Cate Carrigan reported on the Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health roundtable, hosted by the Lowitja Institute in partnership with the National Health Leadership Forum and the Climate and Health Alliance, for the **Croakey Conference News Service**.

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Contents

“Listen to us”: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership on climate and health	3
Rising up: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leading for climate justice.....	6
Listen up! Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders are demanding a key role in climate change solutions.....	15
“Wake up, Australia, we have got a country to save”.....	17
Wrapping the tweets from a landmark event, #IndigenousClimateJustice21 ..	21

“Listen to us”: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership on climate and health



*“All around the world, sea levels are rising. And so are First Nations peoples”: Seed Mob.
Photo by Melissa Sweet, on Nyikina Country*

Melissa Sweet writes:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and knowledge must be at the forefront of national responses to the climate crisis, according to presenters at a landmark roundtable meeting.

The roundtable – hosted by the **Lowitja Institute** in partnership with the **National Health Leadership Forum** and the **Climate and Health Alliance** – will bring together key thinkers on climate change and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s health and wellbeing.

A detailed discussion paper prepared for the meeting highlights the wide-ranging impacts of climate change upon the health and wellbeing of communities, from remote and regional areas to urban centres and the Torres Strait Islands.

The paper says Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ perspectives have not featured prominently in Australian discourse on climate change.

Despite “formidable barriers” in current health and environmental policy and legislative frameworks, the paper says there is “an opportunity for redress and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead climate action planning based on their intimate traditional and historical knowledges of Country”.

The discussion paper, prepared by researchers from the Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL) Network and the Centre for Research Excellence in Strengthening Systems for Indigenous Health Care Equity (CRE-STRIDE), highlights many examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in climate change advocacy, adaptation, and mitigation.

Restore justice, protect rights

It says climate change has many impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that it compounds historical injustices and disrupts cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

Critically, the paper says it is “clear that to restore justice and protect the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, a national framework needs to integrate their meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of planning and implementation” on climate and health action.

The paper’s wide ranging recommendations and findings will be discussed at the roundtable to inform a report to be released by the Lowitja Institute at a side meeting to COP26 in Glasgow.

Questions to be considered at the roundtable include:

- What can co-governance arrangements look like in climate and health policy that would provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people equitable control over leading change to improve sustainability and wellbeing?
- How can we systematically integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into climate adaptation and mitigation planning?
- How can principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty be embedded in climate mitigation and adaptation planning? Should there be a national set of indicators to monitor progress on climate action and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health?

Dr Janine Mohamed, a Nurungga Kurna woman and CEO of the Lowitja Institute, told Croakey the report arising from the meeting will provide a collective standpoint for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector, with recommendations that she hopes will be widely useful for services and organisations.

In speaking notes prepared for the roundtable meeting, Mohamed cites the Seed Mob’s declaration that: “All around the world, sea levels are rising. And so are First Nations peoples.”

“We are rising up because – like Indigenous peoples across the globe – we are uniquely equipped to drive solutions to deal with the climate crisis, using experiential, traditional and cultural knowledges,” Mohamed says.

“We know our role and responsibility as custodians, to not rule over Mother Earth, but to take care of it, to nurture. We nurture Country and Country takes care of us.”

The roundtable will also hear from Maori public health physician and scholar **Dr Rhys Jones**, Hayley McQuire, National Coordinator of the **National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition**, and Amelia Telford, National Director of **Seed Mob**.

Drawing upon strengths

The lead author of the discussion paper, **Dr Veronica Matthews**, who is from the Quandamooka community at Minjerribah and is head of the CRE-STRIDE, has expertise in environmental toxicology, ecology and health systems research.

Speaking from Bundjalung Country at Lismore in northern NSW, Matthews told Croakey that she was often struck by how mainstream media and narratives focused on the risks of climate change to Pacific Islands without acknowledging the impacts already occurring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“It’s incredible how people don’t think first of Torres Strait Islander communities having their Country washed away and also communities in central Australia experiencing prolonged heatwaves,” she said.

Matthews said she looked forward to the roundtable discussions “drawing upon the incredible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom in this space”.

“There’s a reason that Aboriginal people are the oldest surviving culture on this planet,” she said.

“It’s because we’ve been very tuned into the environment and we’ve understood how human interactions do change ecological systems but we’ve maintained balance, and our responsibility to look after Country.

“We have adapted to climate change before; we have such a large and valuable knowledge system that hasn’t been utilised as much as what it could be for climate change planning.”

Matthews said all Australians would benefit from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership on climate action, and stressed the importance of co-governance arrangements for land and water management, and intersectoral collaboration.

She said it seems a never ending call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for governments and others to listen to us.

“We’re doing it again now with climate change. Because it will impact on all Australians now and future generations, there has never been a more pressing time to start listening.”

Rising up: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leading for climate justice



Norman Jupurrurla Frank by an important ancestral waterhole, Gurna. Photo courtesy of Mr Jupurrurla

Introduction by Croakey: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are on the frontlines of the climate emergency, with record temperatures, drought, and loss of biodiversity compounding social and health inequities caused by more than 200 years of colonisation.

It was reported recently that a group of five young Australians, including Wiradjuri teenager, Ethan Lyons, have lodged three human rights complaints with the United Nations over the Morrison Government's inaction in climate change. And Torres Strait Islander communities, fearful that their islands will be wiped out by sea level incursion and storm damage, have also filed a class action arguing that the Australian Government must cut greenhouse gas emissions by 74 percent.

At a COP26 side event, titled '**Transforming Australia from laggard to leader**', the Lowitja Institute will release a report arising from the roundtable, 'Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health'.

Nicole MacKee writes:

Norman Jupurrurla Frank's house in Tennant Creek was the first Aboriginal Government house in the Northern Territory to have solar panels installed. But that's where the program stalled; the panels have never delivered the promised cheap, reliable power that is essential in a town that increasingly experiences searing heat.

"I am still waiting for power to be connected, and Power and Water are refusing to connect it up," said Mr Jupurrurla, a Warumungu Traditional Owner of the land in and around Tennant Creek. "We are waiting for them to flick one switch on, and it has taken almost three months."

Affordable, secure energy supply is a critical issue in Tennant Creek, where residents are seeing an increasing number of days above 40 degrees Celsius, and the inside temperature of some homes can soar as high as 60 degrees Celsius.

Reliable energy supply takes on added importance for many in the community who require reliable power to undergo kidney dialysis, including Mr Jupurrurla, who requires dialysis three times a week.

The town's pre-paid system is expensive and unreliable with frequent power outages.

"For a renal patient like me, and there are a lot of renal patients around, we need to keep [heart and diabetes medication] in the fridge, and if we have no power and nothing works, there is no cool place to put things in," Mr Jupurrurla said.

And the heat is only going to get worse. Mr Jupurrurla reflected on recent heatwaves that had dried out local waterholes and killed off ancient shade trees.

"The seasons don't really match with our climate in our Country how it used to be," he said in an upcoming CroakeyVoices podcast.

"As I walk my Country and look at my Country dying and very poor, I feel sad. It doesn't just impact the Country, it impacts us Mob spiritually too you know. My people are very powerfully connected to the land."

It's a similar story in Mparntwe/Alice Springs where Vanessa Napaltjarri Davis, a Warlpiri/Northern Arrente woman, is a Senior Aboriginal Researcher with the Tangentyere Council. She said increasing temperatures, ongoing drought, and shifts in seasonality have impacted her community's ability to source bush medicines and bush tucker.

"Climate change has really had quite a significant impact on the way we collect bush medicines and bush tucker and do bush hunting," Davis said, adding that local people were often forced to buy food and takeaway.

"We rely on those bush tuckers for a healthy way of living."

These powerful personal stories from Central Australia were shared during a landmark roundtable to explore the issues raised in the 'Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Discussion Paper'.



Vanessa Napaltjarri Davis

The paper was prepared for the Lowitja Institute and the National Health Leadership Forum by the Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL) Network and the Centre for Research Excellence in Strengthening Systems for Indigenous Health Care Equity (CRE-STRIDE).

Ms Pat Anderson, Alywarre woman and chair of the Lowitja Institute, acknowledged that the stakes in responding to climate change were high.

“The task of tackling climate change feels, quite frankly, overwhelming,” she said.

“It is a huge challenge, especially for young people. We are talking about the survival of the planet and the safeguarding of the future. How are we going to do that for not only for all of us living on this continent, but for humanity?”

“That’s the stakes.”

Dr Janine Mohamed, Lowitja Institute CEO, said for at least 65,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have developed a unique connection and equilibrium with the lands, seas, and environment.

“But colonisation severely disrupted and devastated these connections and our custodianship of our lands,” she said.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not only rising up because of the disproportionate toll of climate change that we are experiencing; compounding on the long known and existing gaps that already exist.

“We are rising up because — like Indigenous peoples across the globe — we are uniquely equipped to drive solutions to deal with the climate crisis, using experiential, traditional and cultural knowledges.”



Dr Janine Mohamed

Key findings

The discussion paper’s key findings are:

- Impacts from climate change will vary considerably across Australia, and will include increases in average temperatures and heatwaves, rising sea levels, cyclones, flooding and drought.
- There are many varied direct and indirect climate change impacts on the morbidity and mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Health services will struggle to operate in extreme weather, and will face increasing demand and a reduced workforce.
- Climate change presents an opportunity for redress and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead climate action planning based on their intimate traditional and historical knowledges of Country.

Presenting the findings, Dr Veronica Matthews, from the Quandamooka community in Queensland and lead investigator of CRE-STRIDE and the HEAL Network, said previous greenhouse gas emissions had already locked in average global temperature increases of up to 1.5 degrees by 2030.

“This impact will vary across Australia,” said Matthews, a co-author of the discussion paper. “There will be a rise in average temperature across all regions, an increase in the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, especially in northern parts and in inland areas. We will see continuing increases in sea levels, the intensity of cyclones will increase, [while] in southern parts we will see lower rainfall and increased likelihood of drought and extreme fire weather.”

It’s what we do now, though, that will determine the impacts of climate change in the longer term, Matthews said.

“If we don’t act to reduce emissions, the outcome is really unthinkable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations across Northern and Central Australia,” she said, pointing to the report’s findings that Darwin could experience between 52 days (low emissions, eg, working toward net zero by 2050) and 265 days per year over 35 degrees Celsius (high emissions, eg, no reduction policy) dependent on our climate ambitions.

“The urgency is here,” Matthews said. “If we wish to limit global warming by 1.5 degrees, we need to take action now.”

Amba-Rose Atkinson, a proud Gumbaynggirr woman and discussion paper co-author, outlined the many direct and indirect health impacts of climate change.

Atkinson said extreme heat would exacerbate chronic diseases, accidents, and increase adverse pregnancy outcomes, while sea level rises would lead to a loss of land, homes, food and water, and impact cultural sites.

Drought, she said, would also impact food and water security, and more frequent extreme weather events brought increased risks of death, injury, water contamination and loss of food resources.

Indirectly, an increasingly hostile and erratic climate, would impact food security, increase the risk of infectious diseases and the resultant health impacts were likely to be exacerbated by poor housing design and energy poverty.

Atkinson also highlighted the impact of climate change on social and emotional wellbeing.

“There is a sense of loss in seeing the land ‘sick’; as many of us know, if our country is suffering ... we also suffer.”



Dr Veronica Matthews



Amba-Rose Atkinson



Illustration by Julia Curtis

Energy poverty

Concerns about energy poverty intersect with the health impacts of rising temperatures in Central Australia.

Speaking to CroakeyVoices for an upcoming podcast, Mr Jupurrurla pointed to research he is working on with Dr Simon Quilty, an academic at the Australian National University and specialist physician working as medical advisor for Purple House, on energy poverty experienced by many remote-living Aboriginal people.

“The hot weather is exacerbating this form of poverty,” Quilty said. “It’s getting so hot that the electricity required to run their air conditioners is becoming so [costly] that they run out of power all the time, so the inside of those houses could up well above 50, if not into the 60 degrees Celsius mark.”

Houses in the town are powered using a pre-paid meter system. When credit runs out on a weekend, residents are provided with a “friendly credit”, though many wake up on a Monday morning with the stark choice of paying a \$50 power debt to keep the power on or putting food on the table, Quilty explained.

It was these concerns that prompted Mr Jupurrurla to investigate putting solar panels on his roof, but the process to do so was unwieldy and the panels remain unconnected.

“All they need to do is flick the switch on and Norm will get almost free electricity,” Quilty said.

Planning for health

Speaking to Croakey after the roundtable, Donna Murray, CEO of Indigenous Allied Health Australia, said addressing the environmental determinants of health was an important addition to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health plan, which would guide policy until 2031.

“The things that enable us to be well are connectedness to culture, country, kinship, identity, self-determination, our rights, and part of that connectedness and inter-relatedness is obviously everything that’s living, that’s around us, and that’s the environment,” she said.

Murray said a key priority in the revised plan, which was expected to be released by the end of this year, was the re-establishment of an environmental health workforce. The workforce would be place-based, but with a common vision of per-person goals; that is, “living long and healthy lives in a future that is designed by us as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”, she said.

“There has to be a cultural match to the community priorities,” Murray said, adding that the impacts of climate on the environment and cultural practices in the Torres Strait Islands, which was dealing with rising sea levels and flooding, would be very different to the needs of communities in Central Australia.

“The issues [in Tennant Creek] are to do with heat and housing, where the infrastructure is not appropriate, with access to electricity for cooling and refrigeration difficult which then impacts on food security, health, hygiene, and mental health. Climate change is also impacting our communities with access to fresh drinking water, where the rivers and waterholes that are supposed to sustain life are drying up.”

And, Murray said, the health plan would also help to bring ancient cultural practices to the mainstream agenda and make governments accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by “supporting our ways of working, our priorities and with our leadership”.

“For hundreds of years we have been talking about the impacts that colonisation has had on the environment; look at our cultural burning, it has now become a solution. But this isn’t anything new, it has been happening for over 60,000 years quite efficiently and effectively,” she said.

Colonisation and climate

Speaking from his home in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Dr Rhys Jones (Ngāti Kahungunu), a public health physician and Senior Lecturer in Māori Health at the University of Auckland, said the groundwork for climate change and its impacts had been laid with centuries of colonisation.

“What we are seeing now is not just the impacts of industrial and other processes that have contributed to greenhouse gas emissions ... but an intensification of that very long and sustained colonial process,” said Jones, who was the founding Co-Convenor of OraTaiao (The New Zealand Climate and Health Council).

He noted that there were several key tensions in efforts to tackle climate change, including: human health versus planetary wellbeing; revolution/decolonisation versus incremental change; and urgency of action versus longer term restoration of relationships.



Dr Rhys Jones

Jones said that tackling climate change with the requisite urgency risked exacerbating the already marginal positions of Indigenous peoples around the world.

“In the current conditions that we have, any action that is taken like this with urgency to try and address what is clearly a very critical problem, will perpetuate and, in fact, exacerbate those [existing] inequities,” Jones said, pointing to a [US research paper](#) that explored the balance between ecological and relational tipping points.

He said effort needed to focus on dismantling “colonial forms of government and policy, health systems” and reinvesting in an “Indigenised way of being, thinking, knowing, [and] doing.”

“What would a climate action/climate justice approach look like if it was truly Indigenous-led, grounded in Indigenous knowledges and drawing on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing?” Jones asked the roundtable.

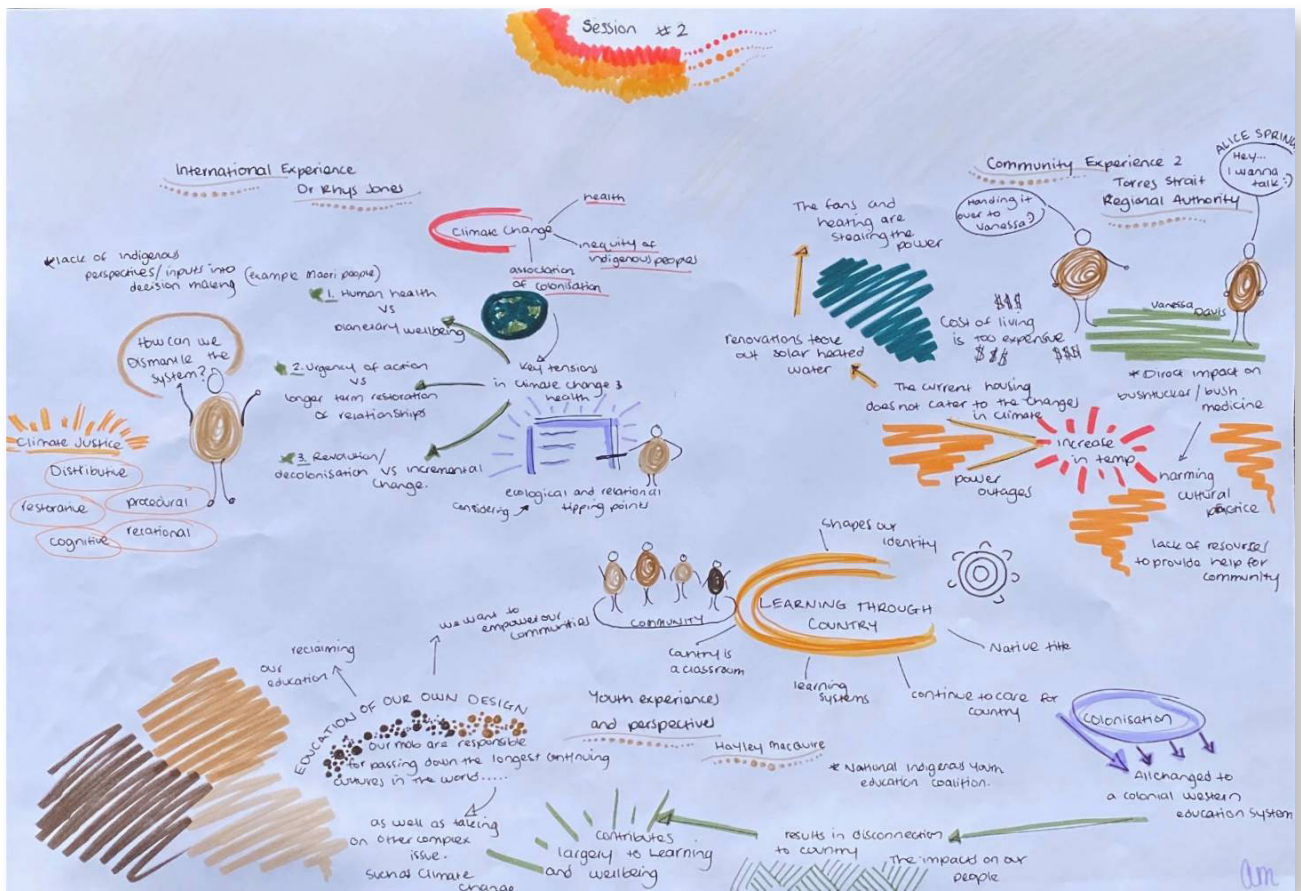


Illustration by Allirra Moore

Youth forces

Asking these questions too were young Indigenous climate activists and education advocates.

Speaking from the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, Amelia Telford, a Bundjalung and South Sea Islander woman and the National Director of the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network (SEED Mob), told the roundtable that her involvement in environmental activism and protecting country was an extension of her cultural identity.



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#IndigenousClimateJustice21 roundtable is now hearing from @AmeliaTelford, a Bundjalung and South Sea Islander woman and the National Director of @SEEDMob, the Indigenous Youth Climate Network.



“This is just being a Blackfulla, right; this is about our values and our responsibility to care for country and care for each other, but that not being seen in the national conversation ... about climate change,” she said. “Often, [these conversations are] caught up in the scientists being the experts, and about a price on pollution and carbon dioxide, when really we are talking about protecting Country, and our mob has been doing that for tens of thousands of years.”

Telford said it was also important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be considered the “heroes” in the response to climate change, not the victims. She noted that SEED Mob intentionally used the term ‘protecting Country’ rather than ‘climate action’.

“We started shifting to the terminology that our mob has used ever since the land rights movement, which is ‘protecting Country’. That centres us as the experts of Country; we know our Country,” she said, adding that such knowledge could inform local place-based solutions to protecting Country.

Learning through Country

Key to efforts to protect Country, said Hayley McQuire, is an education system that respects and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ identities and connection to Country.

McQuire, a proud Darumbal and South Sea Islander woman and co-founder and Director of the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, said Australia’s education system was the fourth most socially segregated education system in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

“Our young people are going through this education system where they can’t be their full selves ... while also being responsible for passing down the longest continuing cultures in the world [and] facing complex futures,” she said.

“Climate change, in particular, is taking away the very classroom – which is Country – where we learn who we are. It is our cultural heritage, but it is also our teacher.

“Our knowledge systems have been built through this connection and learning through Country.”

In summing up a roundtable breakout group discussion, Amba-Rose Atkinson said her group emphasised the importance of moving towards renewable energy, with collaborative, and community-led efforts honouring First Nations knowledges and education.

“We can’t have climate justice without justice for First Nations peoples,” she said.



Listen up! Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders are demanding a key role in climate change solutions



First Nations people around the world – with strong and abiding connection to Country – increasingly are bearing the brunt of climate change. From rising sea levels, to ferocious bushfires, storms and drought, they often feel the impact first and hardest.

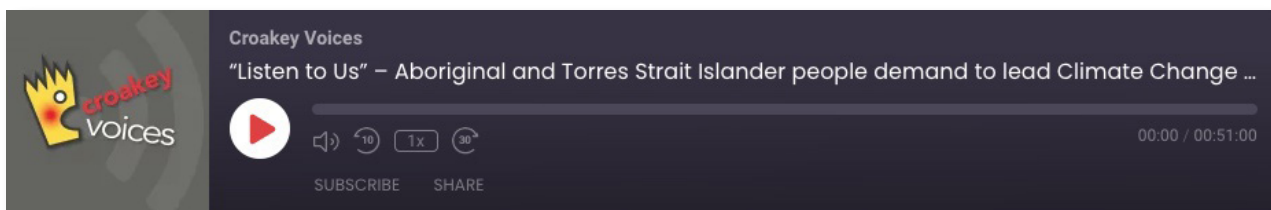
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are part of a global First Nations movement demanding a seat at the table as decisions are made on climate change mitigation and abatement.

A recent virtual roundtable meeting hosted by the Lowitja Institute in partnership with the National Health Leadership Forum and the Climate and Health Alliance heard from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, researchers, scientists and leaders on the impact of climate change and solutions and actions in response to the UN's COP26 summit.

CroakeyVOICES caught up with some of the participants as part of **Croakey Conference News Service** coverage of the event #IndigenousClimateJustice21.

Featuring in the podcast are:

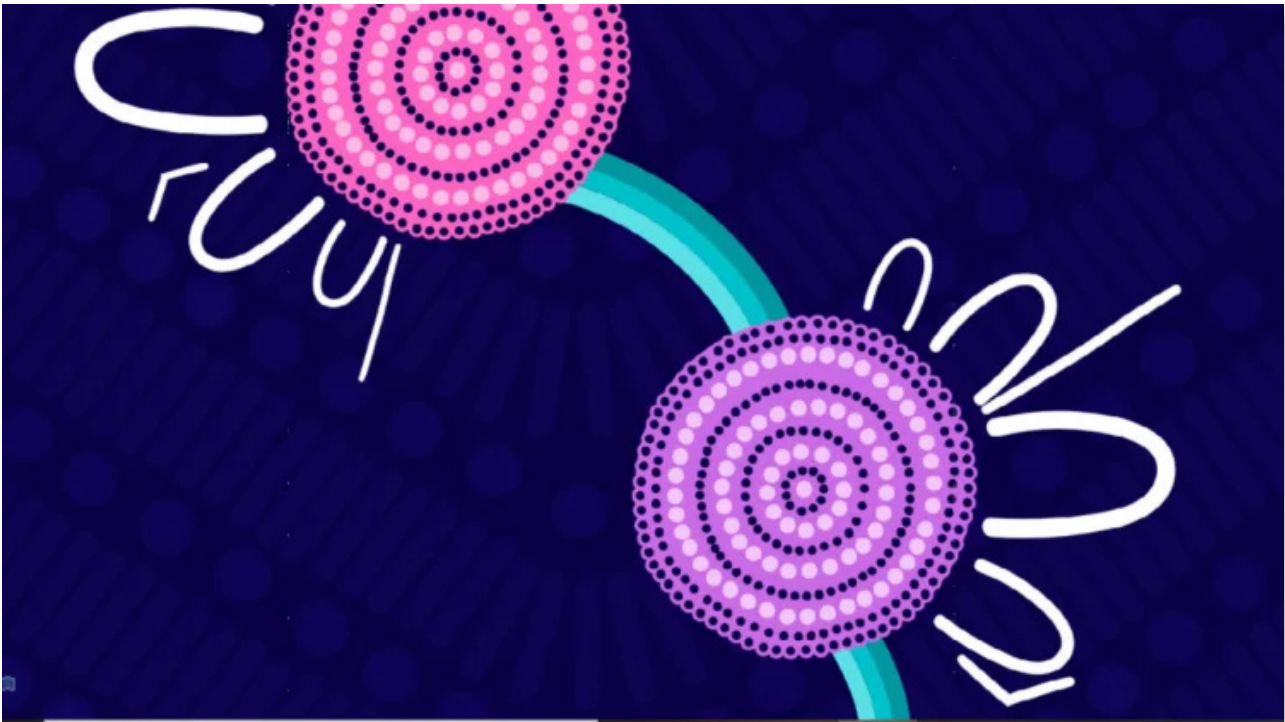
- **Norman Jupurrula Frank:** Warumungu Traditional Owner. Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation.
- **Dr Simon Quilty:** Senior Staff Specialist, Alice Springs Hospital, and medical advisor for Purple House. Academic, Australian National University.
- **Vanessa Napaltjarri Davis:** Warlpiri and Northern Arrente woman and senior researcher Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation.
- **Dr Veronica Matthews:** From the Quandamooka community, Minjerribah, in south east Queensland, Dr Matthews heads the Centre for Research Excellence – STRengthening systems for InDigenous healthcare Equity (**CRE-STRIDE**), Centre for Rural Health, University of Sydney.
- **Millie Telford:** Bundjalung and South Sea Islander woman and National Director, **Seed Indigenous Climate Network**.
- **Josie Atkinson:** Gumbaynggirr woman and research assistant at the University of Wollongong.
- **Mibu Fischer:** A Noonuccal, Ngugi and Gorenpul woman from Quandamooka Country and Marine ethno-ecologist with the CSIRO.
- **Nicole Kilby:** A Wiradjuri and Ngemba woman and policy officer with the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (**NAATSIHWP**).
- **Pat Anderson:** An Alyawarre woman and Chair of the **Lowitja Institute**.



Listen here.

This podcast is part of **Croakey Conference News Service coverage** of the event [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

“Wake up, Australia, we have got a country to save”



The Lowitja Institute's new report features digital artwork, entitled 'Bindarray' (Gumbaynggirr for 'Many Creeks'), by Talah Laurie (Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl mobs)

A **landmark discussion paper**, launched by the **Lowitja Institute** at a **COP26 side meeting** on 5 November, calls for four key actions to ensure the voices and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are at the heart of efforts to tackle the climate emergency. Nicole MacKee reports.

Nicole MacKee writes:

Action on climate change is “extremely urgent” say Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders, **who are calling for** First Peoples’ knowledges and rights to be central in efforts to mitigate and adapt to the climate emergency.

In a **side meeting at the COP26 climate talks** in Glasgow, **Lowitja Institute** CEO Dr Janine Mohamed, a proud Narrunga Kurna woman from South Australia, released a discussion paper on **‘Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health’**.

“Climate justice will affect us all, but some of us more than others,” Mohamed told the live-streamed meeting, **Better Futures Australia meeting**.

She said climate action initiatives needed to be informed by historical truth-telling.

Mohamed said:

“We need to learn it, accept it and commit to never repeating the wrongs of the past. This, for us, is climate justice, and it’s deeply linked to race relations in Australia.”

Mohamed pointed to the case of the ‘Torres Strait 8’ – highlighted in the report – in which a group from the low-lying islands of Zenadth Kez have lodged a complaint against Australia to the United Nations Rights Committee for breaching their human rights to culture and life for failing to address climate change. The islands are being impacted by sea-level rises of 6-8mm per year.



Dr Janine Mohamed

Call to action

“Our discussion paper maps out clear calls for rights-based climate action, place-based adaption and mitigation, it has four high level calls,” Mohamed told the meeting. These are:

- **Take action:** Climate action that respects human rights and achieves equitable health and environmental outcomes is urgently required. The climate crisis is already disproportionately affecting the health and wellbeing of First Peoples. We need to address existing inequities and ensure future action (or inaction) does not perpetuate these inequities.
- **Value and centre our knowledges and rights as First Peoples:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have protected Country for millennia and have survived dramatic climatic shifts. We are intimately connected to Country and our knowledges and cultural practices hold solutions to the climate crisis.
- **Work with us:** Communities need dedicated resources and support to protect Country and implement adaptation and mitigation planning. We are ready to work in partnership and we need equitable access to housing, renewable energy solutions and our lands and waters to protect Country.
- **A movement for climate justice:** Climate change will affect us all – but some of us more than others,” the report states. “We are all intimately connected to one another and our planet. Climate change is an opportunity to re-set our relationships for the better and seek a healthy and just future for all Peoples. We need to ensure climate action (or inaction) learns from the past and does not perpetuate existing inequities. This is climate justice.”

‘Two-way seeing’

The report notes that, to date, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have been “overlooked and undervalued”.

“This is despite the accumulation of traditional knowledge from sustainably adapting and looking after Country over millennia,” the report states.

“Climate change provides an immediate opportunity for ‘two-way seeing’ – weaving together of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges with Western science to inform mitigation and adaptation approaches,” the report says.

Mohamed told the meeting that the Lowitja Institute discussion paper development was led by Indigenous researchers.

“We would certainly like to see more evaluation and research done in this area, and more elevation of the solutions, which are in our communities,” she said.

“In Australia we have a very strong identify of being fair and treating everyone the same, but treating everyone the same doesn’t get the solutions, [or achieve] equality or equity. We actually have to meet people where they are at, talk to people, be in community, have place-based solutions.”

One such place-based solution highlighted in the report is the work of Arnhem Land Fire Abatement (Northern Territory) Limited. The report notes that the Aboriginal-owned, not-for-profit company uses fire management for carbon abatement across around 80,000km² of savanna Country in Arnhem land.

“This case study demonstrates the successful weaving together of knowledge systems, combining remote-sensing technology to measure emissions reductions alongside Aboriginal fire management methodologies,” the report states.

Government hypocrisy

Addressing the meeting from Glasgow was **Pastor Ray Minniecon**, a Sydney Pastor and descendant of the Kabi Kabi nation and the Gurang Gurang nation of South-East Queensland.

Minniecon said he was disappointed in the Australian Government and its alignment with mining industries, which was on display at these critical Glasgow talks.

“The government here is supported by the mining industries and all these extractive industries; they have come here trying to show the world what they are doing, but this is a climate change conference, not a trade fair,” Minniecon said, noting that there was no acknowledgement by the Government of Aboriginal Peoples and what “we bring to the table”.



Pastor Ray Minniecon addresses the meeting from Glasgow

“We face a crisis here that is of enormous risk to our communities and we Indigenous People are at the forefront of all of these risks,” he said. “Wherever there is mining, there is pain and struggle for our people. We want to make that stop, we want to have a better say in our country, we don’t want to be patronised, and we don’t want paternalism either.”

Minniecon said it was important for Australians to “watch and observe” who the Australian Government was listening to in its response to climate change.

“[The Government is] are not listening to you, they are not listening to me, they are listening to the mining companies, executives and their shareholders. Wake up, Australia, we have got a country to save.”

Laggard to leader

Mohamed said Australia was, sadly, always lagging, especially on human rights.

“In a first-world nation, we have third-world health outcomes, and we are the only nation with a colonial history whose constitution does not recognise its First Peoples,” she said.

“The current Government dismissed what was offered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as a gift to the nation, the **Uluru Statement from the Heart**. It called for voice, treaty, and truth.

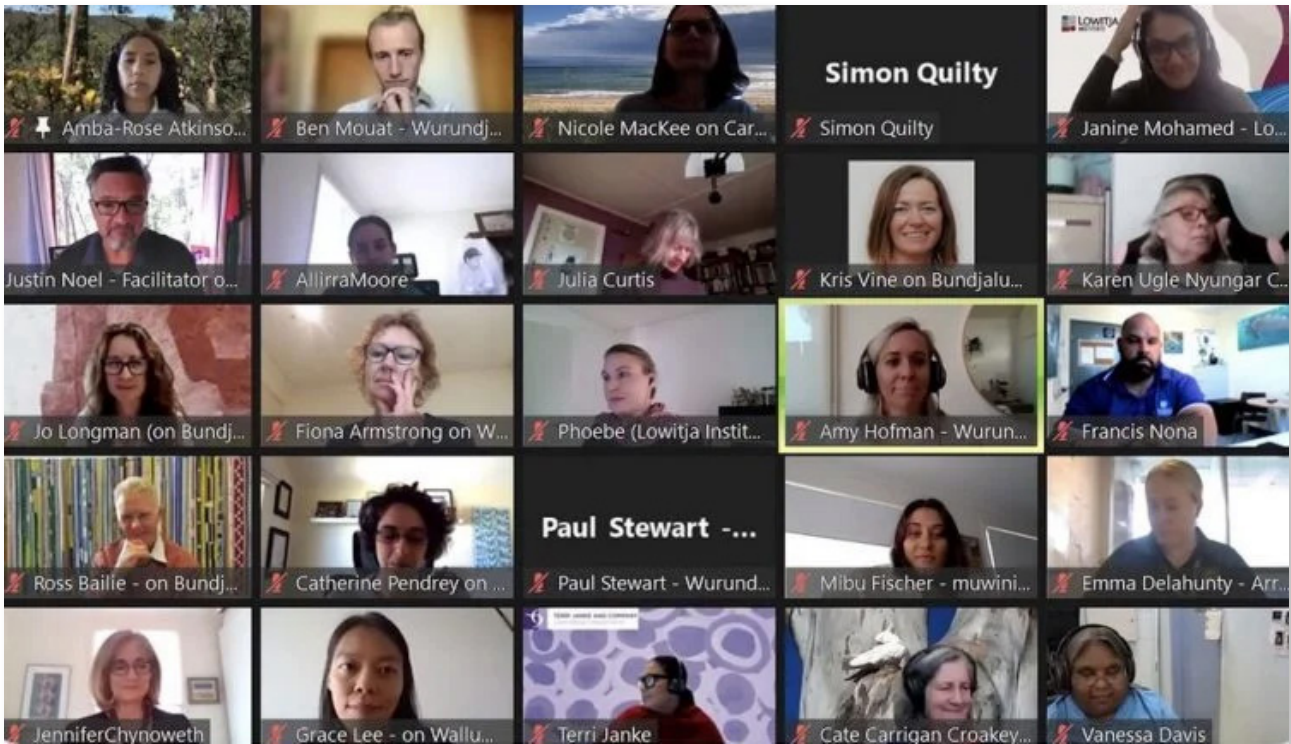
“At Lowitja, we believe it’s time to go from laggard to leader, and to an Australia we can all be proud of.”

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See all coverage of [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) [here](#).

You can track Croakey's coverage of the Conference [here](#).

Wrapping the tweets from a landmark event, #IndigenousClimateJustice21



Some of the participants in #IndigenousClimateJustice21 roundtable meeting, 20 October, 2021

As **previously reported**, key thinkers on climate change and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recently came together for a virtual roundtable meeting, hosted by the **Lowitja Institute** in partnership with the **National Health Leadership Forum** and the **Climate and Health Alliance**.

Pat Anderson, Chair of the Lowitja Institute, and the Institute's CEO Dr Janine Mohamed launched the discussions and gave Acknowledgement of Country.





Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

Replying to @CroakeyNews

"We are rising up because — like Indigenous peoples across the globe — we are uniquely equipped to drive solutions to deal with the climate crisis, using experiential, traditional and cultural knowledges ... @JanineMilera. #IndigenousClimateJustice21



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

@JanineMilera says there is much richness in the report, but points to one crucial quote by the "deadly" Seed Mob youth climate movement: "All around the world, sea levels are rising. And so are First Nations peoples." #IndigenousClimateJustice21. @AmeliaTelford @CroakeyNews

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Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

@JanineMilera tells of the grief traditional owners have experienced after the destruction of Juukan Gorge, a blast that destroyed evidence of continuous occupation and cultural knowledge stretching back 46,000 years. #IndigenousClimateJustice21 @CroakeyNews @Lowitjalnstitut

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Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

"Now climate change presents an even more devastating threat — not only to the physical health, but also the spiritual and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to our cultural determinants of health," says @JanineMilera. #IndigenousClimateJustice21

1 6 2



Croakey News
@CroakeyNews

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not only rising up because of the disproportionate toll of climate change that we are experiencing. - Compounding on the long known and existing gaps that already exists ... @JanineMilera. #IndigenousClimateJustice21



Dr Summer May Finlay @SummerMayFinlay · Oct 20

A thread to kick off the #IndigenousClimateJustice21.

It's an important discussion. Indigenous ppl have been caring for Country for generations & have an intimate understanding of their Country.

A deep knowledge that should be given the respect it deserves.



Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Launching #IndigenousClimateJustice21 discussions, the chair of @Lowitjalnstitut, Aunty Pat Anderson, an Alyawarre woman, acknowledges Elders past and present; their custodianship of our lands, seas, cultures, and, most especially today, their wisdom and knowledges.

[Show this thread](#)



CroakeyVoices @CroakeyVoices · Oct 20

Aunty Pat Anderson chair @Lowitjalnstitut

"We must integrate our knowledges and strengthen partnerships to ensure that our collective wisdom and knowledge as Australia's First Nations is integrated into climate adaptation and mitigation planning"

#IndigenousClimateJustice21

Dr Summer May Finlay @SummerMayFinlay · Oct 20
Great question & an important one!

[#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20
The key question in today's discussion is: How can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and communities take a central role in the response to climate change, ensuring equitable action for climate justice? [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

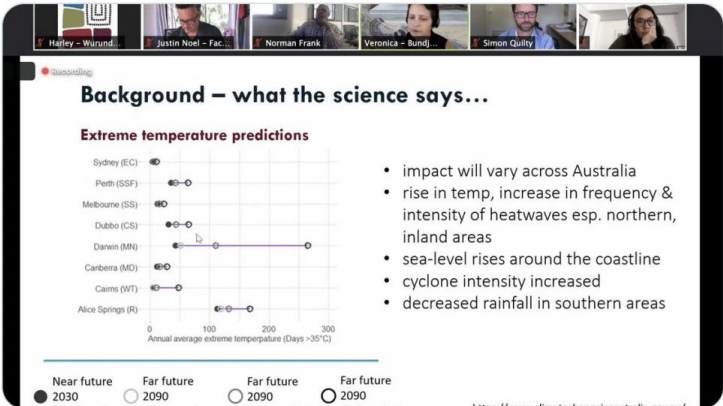
[Show this thread](#)

Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20
With excellent facilitation from Justin Noel, keeping the [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) discussions flowing



Participants heard from Dr Veronica Matthews from the University of Sydney and Amba-Rose Atkinson about the findings of the discussion paper (read more [here](#)).

Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20
[@DrVMatthews](#) introducing the Climate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health discussion paper and speaking to the background and research of the project and the urgency of this work [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Background – what the science says...

Extreme temperature predictions

Location	Near future 2030	Far future 2090
Sydney (EC)	~10	~100
Perth (SSF)	~10	~100
Melbourne (SS)	~10	~100
Dubbo (CS)	~10	~100
Darwin (MN)	~10	~100
Carberra (MD)	~10	~100
Caerns (WT)	~10	~100
Alice Springs (R)	~10	~100

Annual average extreme temperature (Days >35°C)

- impact will vary across Australia
- rise in temp, increase in frequency & intensity of heatwaves esp. northern, inland areas
- sea-level rises around the coastline
- cyclone intensity increased
- decreased rainfall in southern areas

Legend: Near future 2030 (filled circle), Far future 2090 (open circle)

<https://www.climatechangeinqueensland.gov.au/>



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

...

@DrVMatthews is a lead investigator of @CRE_STRIDE @HEALenviron and is now addressing the key points in the discussion paper. #IndigenousClimateJustice21 @LowitjaInstitut @healthy_climate



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

...

Now addressing the roundtable meeting is @amba_rose, a proud Gumbaynggirr woman and is from the University of Queensland. She discussed indirect and direct climate change impacts ... #IndigenousClimateJustice21



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

...

Amba-Rose Atkinson talking to the indirect/direct impacts on health & well-being of climate change:

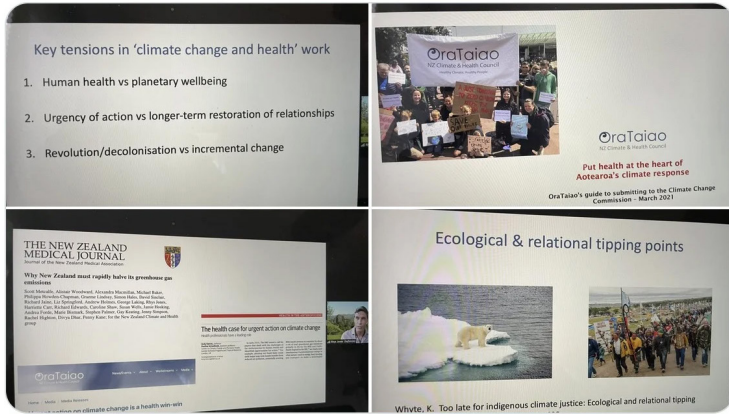
"Water shortage, housing infrastructures, intangible losses such as caring for country and forced relocation due to rise of water levels"

#IndigenousClimateJustice21



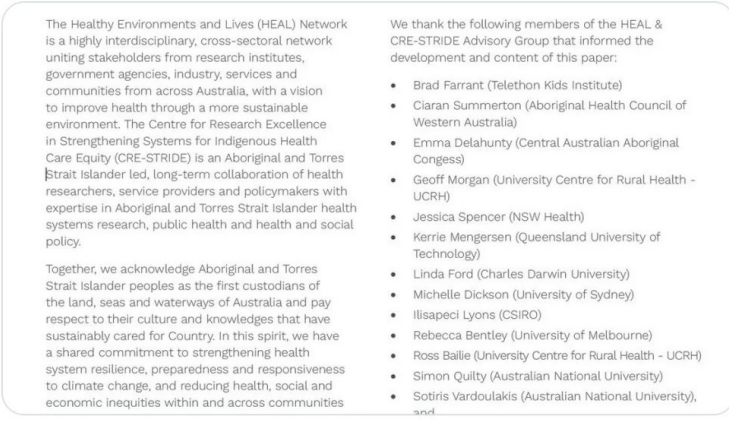
Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Hearing from [@rg_jones](#) re importance of critically examining common framing in climate action re focus on human health (rather than planetary health); urgent action (which can perpetuate injustices); focuses narrowly on ecological tipping points. [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Below are the acknowledgements for the important scoping review paper that will inform [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) discussions today. HT [@DrVMatthews](#) & [Amba-Rose Atkinson](#), [Grace Lee](#), [Kristina Vine](#) and [Jo Longmans](#). [@CRE_STRIDE](#) [@HEALenviron](#)



Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Follow [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) for news from imp't discussions: a roundtable hosted by the Lowitja Institute in partnership with the National Health Leadership Forum and the Climate and Health Alliance. Here is the artwork and story from a discussion paper.

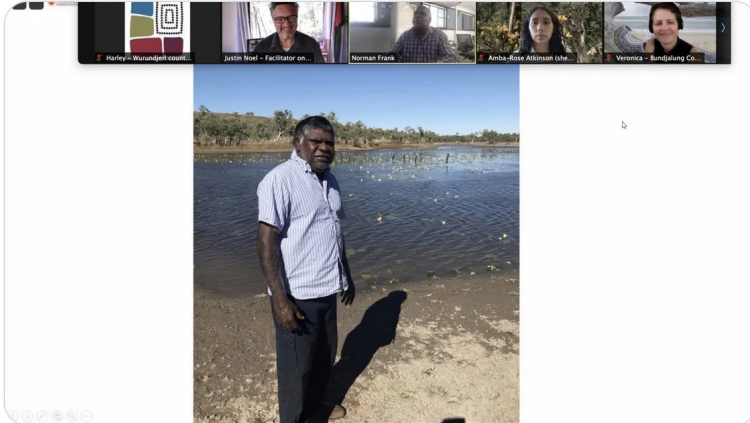


Mr Norman Jupurrurla Frank from the Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation at Tennant Creek spoken of the health impacts of extreme heat.



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

"When I was a kid, I never heard about climate change, climate justice. But now we are learning for younger generations because climate change is real and is coming" - Uncle Norman Frank [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



1 15 16



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

"If something happens to our land, it happens to us too," says Mr Norman Jupurrurla Frank. "It hurts." [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)
[@LowitjaInstitut](#)
[@healthy_climate](#) [@CroakeyNews](#) [@CroakeyVoices](#)



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

Mr Norman Jupurrurla Frank is discussing the installation of solar panels on his house. It's the first Indigenous govt house in the NT to have solar panels installed, but they are yet to be connected. [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

1 7 5

[Show this thread](#)



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

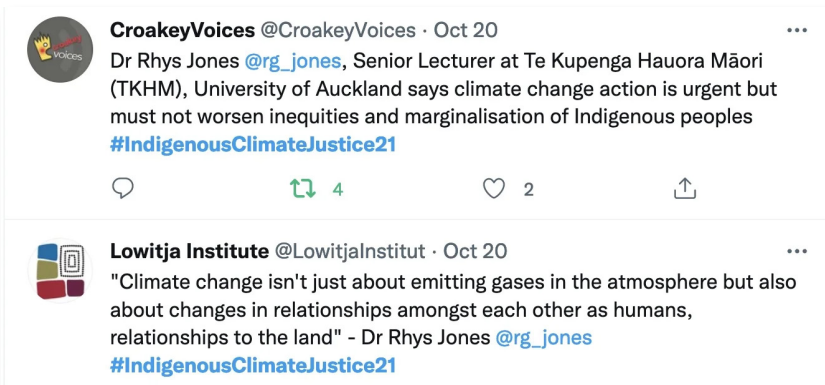
Now speaking at the roundtable is Mr Norman Jupurrurla Frank is a Warumungu Traditional Owner of the land in and around Tennant Creek.
[@LowitjaInstitut](#) [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Participants heard from Vanessa Davis from the Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation in Alice Springs.



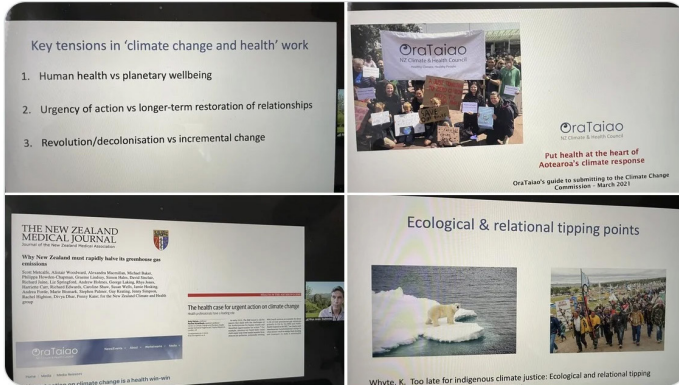
Dr Rhys Jones, a Māori public health physician from the University of Auckland, presented on decolonial approaches to planetary health.





Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Hearing from @rg_jones re importance of critically examining common framing in climate action re focus on human health (rather than planetary health); urgent action (which can perpetuate injustices); focuses narrowly on ecological tipping points. [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

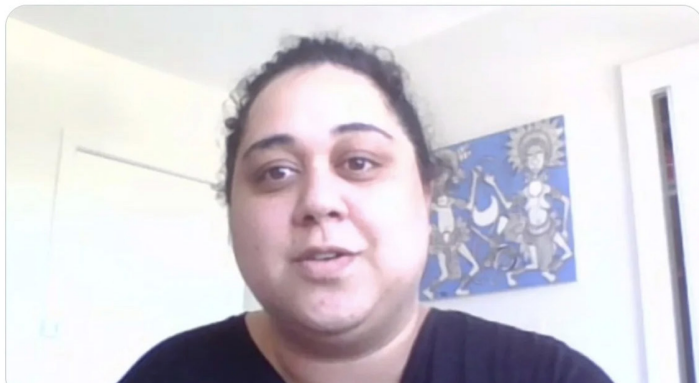


Hayley McQuire described the work of the [National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition](#).



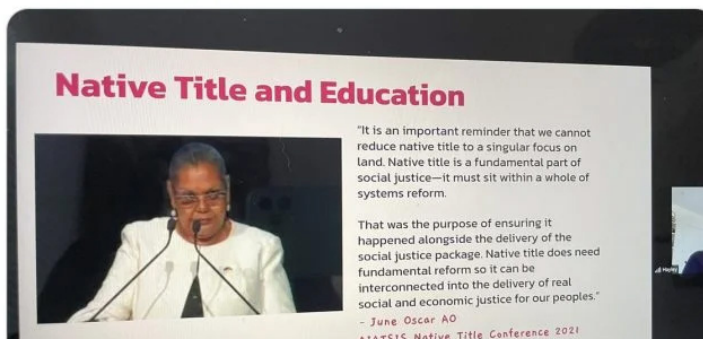
Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

Next at [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) is @HayleyMcQuire, proud Darumbal and South Sea Islander woman and National Co-ordinator of National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition.



Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

Our learning systems are connected to Country; Country is our classroom; it shapes who we are and our identity: @HayleyMcQuire [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

"More than 50% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is under 30. We have a huge proportion of our population learning from an education system that's colonial" - @HayleyMcQuire of @NIYECMob [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



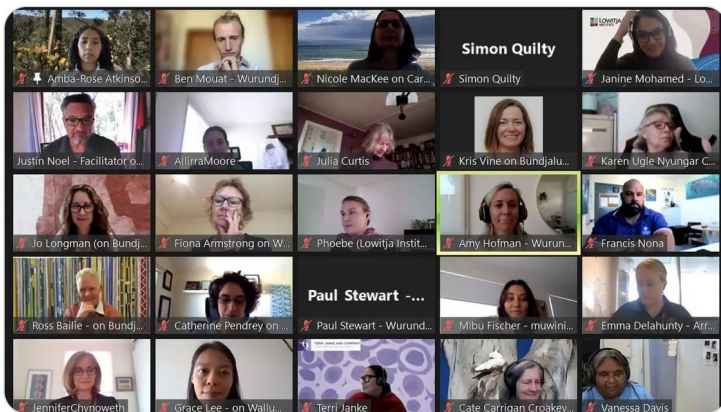
Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20
 Hayley McQuire talking about the responsibilities of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander young people @HayleyMcQuire
[#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20
 "We hear from young people time & time again, they can't bring their full selves to the classroom. Our full self is our connection to country. Our sense of connection supports our learning and growth" - @HayleyMcQuire
[@NIYECMob](#) [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20
 Next at today's landmark roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership on Climate and Health, key points from the discussion paper will be explored in breakout sessions. @LowitjaInstitut
[@healthy_climate](#) [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)

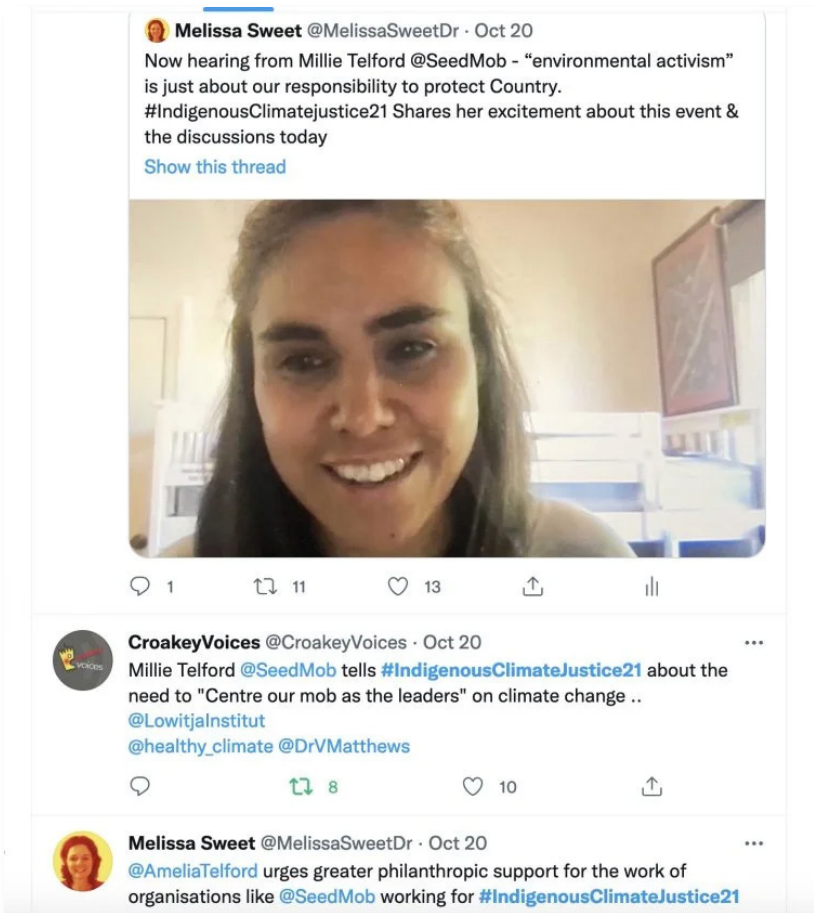


Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20
 Rapporteurs at [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)





Amelia Telford from Seed Mob called for funding support for organisations working to protect Country.





Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

"We need more funding to support our communities and achieving true determination especially in climate change. Social justice is all connected to climate" - @AmeliaTelford from @SeedMob sharing her wisdom and insight on the need for resourcing #IndigenousClimateJustice21

Artists Allirra Moore and Julia Curtis illustrated the discussions.



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

The Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable illustrations demonstrated below #IndigenousClimateJustice21



Croakey News @CroakeyNews · Oct 20

The roundtable discussions are being captured in these clever graphics ... @LowitjaInstitut @healthy_climate #HealthyCop26 #IndigenousClimateJustice21 @CroakeyN Show this thread



Julia Curtis @Pippisgirl · Oct 20

So wonderful to have had the opportunity to draw with Allirra Moore at the Climate Change Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Round Table #IndigenousClimateJustice21



CroakeyVoices @CroakeyVoices · Oct 20

Wonderful graphics summarising discussions from #IndigenousClimateJustice21 so far .. thanks to artists Allirra Moore and Julia Curtis @LowitjaInstitut @CroakeyNews





Banok Rind @banoky · Oct 20

Follow the tag [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) for important conversations about climate & health with an amazing line up of speakers

Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

Today we are holding a Roundtable in partnership with NHLF & CAHA to discuss climate justice & the health & wellbeing impacts of climate change for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. Participants include researchers, community leaders, youth & climate & health advocates



Lowitja Institute @LowitjaInstitut · Oct 20

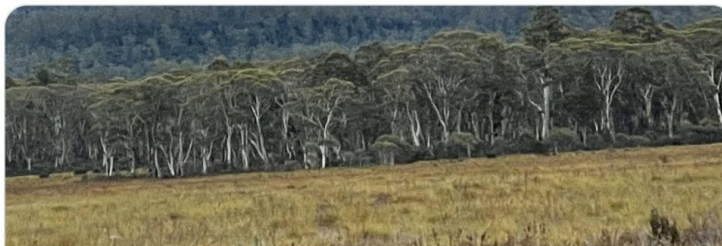
Our CEO [@JanineMilera](#) wrapping up all the important discussions from the Climate and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable

Thank you to everyone who shared their hearts, their knowledge and their stories with us today [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#)



Melissa Sweet @MelissaSweetDr · Oct 20

To stay in touch with the [#IndigenousClimateJustice21](#) discussions, follow this Twitter list:



List · 12 Members

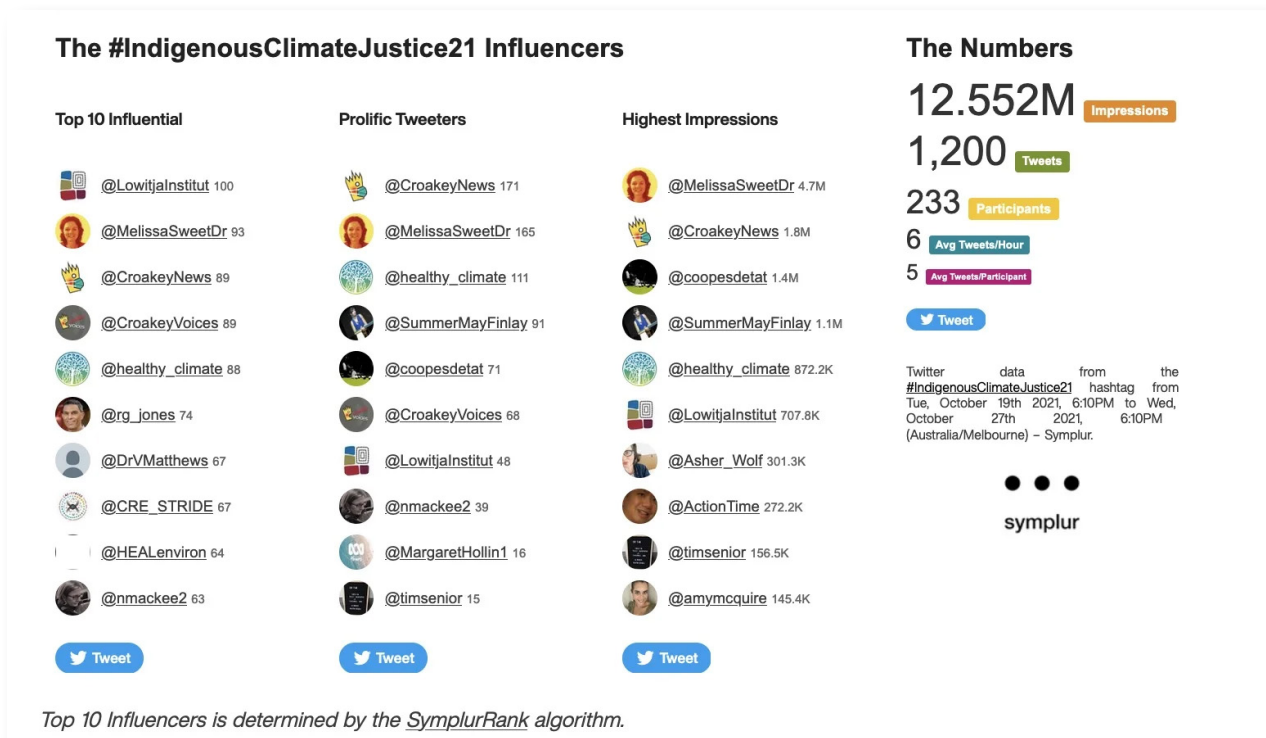
[#IndigenousClimateJustice](#)

[Melissa Sweet](#) @MelissaSweetDr

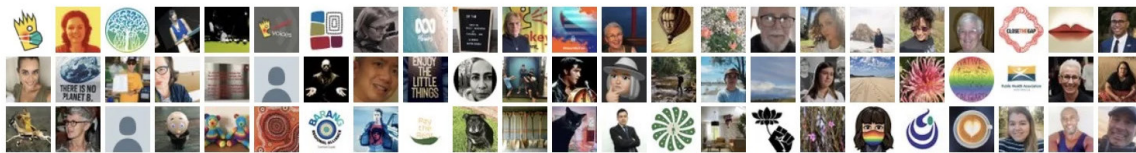
Follow the Twitter list [here](#).

Twitter analytics

On Twitter, 233 participants at the hashtag sent 1,200 tweets, creating 12.55 million Twitter impressions, according to [Symplur analytics](#) for the period 19-27 October. Read the Twitter transcript [here](#).



#IndigenousClimateJustice21 Participants



Data for #IndigenousClimateJustice21 can be up to 15 minutes delayed

Croakey Conference News Service

- Reporting by Nicole MacKee, Melissa Sweet and Cate Carrigan
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