

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



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SUPPORTING TRADITIONAL OWNERS TO CARE FOR COUNTRY

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting Aboriginal Victorians to care for Country with a \$22.5 million investment to reinvigorate Traditional Owner-led cultural land and fire management practices.

As part of the *Victorian Budget 2021/22*, the funding will support Aboriginal Victorians to implement the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy*.

Ensuring access to Country and enabling Traditional Owners to practice cultural fire and other land management activities plays a key role in supporting self-determination. It's also vital in helping to keep our state safe.

Traditional Owners undertake cultural burning for a range of reasons associated with caring for Country – including promoting revegetation, producing food and game, and maintaining spiritual connection with Country.

This investment also acknowledges that First Peoples have been using fire as a tool to manage the land – and reduce the risks of bushfires – for tens of thousands of years.

Not only can these practices help keep Country safe from extreme fires, it can also help to rejuvenate local flora, protect native animal habitats, and respond to weeds and pests.

Under the strategy, an Aboriginal-led Cultural Fire Leadership group will be established, helping to bring together Traditional Owners and land managers in delivering local cultural fire plans.

This investment will also support Traditional Owners in sharing cultural burning techniques with our state's emergency services and conservation groups, identifying areas that are well-suited to cultural burning, and safeguarding this knowledge and practice for future generations.

The funding will also provide employment opportunities for First Peoples' communities.

Building on \$1.25 million in last year's Budget, this further investment will deliver on the commitments made as part of the Labor Government's *Self-determination Reform Framework* and the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023*.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"For tens of thousands of years, Traditional Owners and their knowledge of Country has been protecting and making the most of our natural environment."

"With this investment, we'll make sure Aboriginal culture and knowledge continues to inform the way the land is cared for."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"We know outcomes for Aboriginal people are better when they're led by Aboriginal people – and cultural fire practices reflect our Government's commitment to achieving self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians."