

COOL BURN • TRADITIONAL OWNER PARTNERSHIPS

Traditional Owners join the Burnett Mary's *cool burn* journey

BURNETT MARY REGIONAL GROUP • July 2026

When BMRG designed its NRMEP cool burn management project, three full-time fire practitioners were budgeted within the project. Instead of simply filling those roles, BMRG made a deliberate choice: it converted the three full-time positions into *six half-time positions* (0.5 FTE) across the three-year life of the project, and opened them to the region's Traditional Owner organisations to work alongside the cool burn squad during the burning season (April to September).

BMRG's cool burn program applies the broad principles of traditional land management to modern agricultural landscapes without encroaching on cultural burning practices, which are unique to Traditional Owner groups. It is this balance of traditional land management with modern land use that made Traditional Owner involvement essential. BMRG wanted the region's Prescribed Bodies Corporate and native title organisations to be partners in the work, not observers of it.

Five organisations *answer the call*

Following a call to Traditional Owner groups across the Burnett–Mary region, five of the six positions have been taken up — by the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation, the Jinibara People Aboriginal Corporation, the Kabi Kabi Peoples Aboriginal Corporation, the Auburn Hawkwood People Aboriginal Corporation, and the Wakka Wakka Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. That means five of the eight Aboriginal corporations in the Burnett Mary region are now actively part of this work.

Several organisations have nominated emerging fire practitioners — younger people who can work alongside the cool burn squad and absorb the experience of not only undertaking cool burns, but running a cool burn

operation. It is an investment in each Traditional Owner group's future, using BMRG's model as a template to build fire programs of their own.

Meeting organisations *where they are*

The region's Aboriginal corporations are at different stages of capacity and capability, so rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, BMRG adapted. Some organisations contribute a staff member; others take part through attendance at burns and events, or workshops delivered jointly with BMRG's cool burn squad.

Each arrangement reflects what that organisation needs right now, while keeping the door open to deeper involvement as capacity grows. Credit is also due to the State Government for supporting this flexibility within the program, for a better outcome.

What matters most is the destination: bringing traditional land management back to the whole Burnett Mary region — with Traditional Owners on the journey from the start.

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One of the most rewarding parts of the Cool Burn Squad has been creating opportunities for Traditional Owners to reconnect with Country through seasonal fire management. Working in partnership with landholders has allowed Traditional Owners to be actively involved in planning and delivering cool burns. Seeing these partnerships grow and deliver positive outcomes for both people and Country has been a real highlight of the project.

— John Green, Cool Burn Lead, BMRG

AT A GLANCE

6

half-time (0.5 FTE) roles redesigned from three full-time positions, over three years.

5

of six positions taken up by Traditional Owner organisations across the region.

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Aboriginal corporations in the Burnett Mary now actively part of this work.

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flexible ways to take part — staffing, events and joint workshops — matched to each group's capacity.

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