



An authorised Ambassador of the Treaty Council Worldwide & the Sacred Sites Preservation Project  
Community | Volunteering | Response |  
Environment | Conservation | Sustainability  
ICN 10152 | ABN 74 610 603 429

19<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation Warns Against Expanding the Great Koala National Park Under Current Frameworks**

#### **More national parks do not automatically guarantee greater protection of land and wildlife.**

Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation (BTBIC) ICN 10152 and sister organisations — the Treaty Council and the Sacred Sites Preservation Project Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations ICN 9045 & 9279 - seeks to highlight that the plan to annex nearly 500,000 hectares of Allodial Country into the ‘Great Koala National Park’ will not deliver the protection the public expects.

BTBIC stresses that this statement is not in opposition to conservation over more land itself.

*“We support land being set aside to end clear felling and protect habitats. But placing this land under the mandates of the Wilderness Act and NPWS Act restrict it into a narrow scope of management that guarantees ecological decline.”*

— Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation

The framework governing national parks is mired in contradictions:

- The Acts acknowledge fire but in practice it is mishandled - reduced to high-intensity, fast hazard-reduction burns. These are framed as “within scope” and “successful” because agencies define the metrics to suit themselves. Such burns damage ecosystems while leaving millions of hectares untouched burgeoning in fire debt. The contradiction is stark: mandated targets drive short-term box-ticking, while long-term collapse and irreversible environmental change spread across the landscape.
- Frequently prescribed fire is misclassified in law as a threat (Key Threatening Process), contradicting the biological laws of the continent and 60,000 years of knowledge. This forces management plans to restrict burning even in landscapes that evolved with it. The result is a destructive paradox: in national park estates, fire is simultaneously treated as indispensable yet damaging, while prescribed burns often cause the very harm they are meant to prevent. Under summer fire weather, fire becomes a double-edged sword — existential to the environment and equally to human life, livelihoods and property.
- The doctrine of fire suppression presides over estates. The longer it is allowed to continue, and the more active management is restricted, the more destructive and indiscriminate governing fire regimes become — a negative inverse relationship where suppression directly amplifies severity. The effects are most acute in changed environments, where even in the absence of fire, landscapes trend toward monodiversity and eventual collapse.
- Wilderness ideals do not reflect changed and adulterated environments. The Wilderness Act mandates “minimal interference,” yet most parks are already altered by regrowth, fire debt and floristic shifts. Treating them as untouched wilderness and continuing passive management only accelerates decline.
- Cultural fire recognised but it is constrained by other conflicting acts. While cultural burning is acknowledged in policy, it remains bound by legislative and procedural red tape that prevents it being applied at the scale or frequency needed.
- Management plans are forced into compliance, park managers must draft plans that fit these contradictions, leaving them unable to prescribe the regimes that Country actually requires.

*“You cannot legislate Australia as wilderness — it was always Country. To ignore that, not only do you deepen environmental collapse, but you ignore Aboriginal lore and stewardship.”*

Instead of restoring health, these acts impose contradictions that make them incompatible with the realities of this continent. Grounded in the romanticised ideal of untouched nature, a myth. Australia was always inhabited, managed and nurtured.

*“Existing national parks are already in decline under these Acts. Annexing more land will only accelerate environmental change in both the absence of fire and in the wake of it.”*

By forcing management plans to conform to this ideology, the law gives symbolic recognition to Aboriginal knowledge but strips it of practical application. What is championed in policy is undermined in practice, leaving cultural fire and knowledge developed over millennia sidelined. The same applies to the stewardship of generational land managers, graziers and foresters. The result is legislation that is not only incompatible with pre-1788 Australia, but dangerously negligent in today’s altered landscapes.

*“If destructive fire regimes are not already governing these landscapes, they soon will — just as they do across the rest of the NPWS estate.”*

Koalas are not safer in these estates.

Land managers and our scientific commission observe actively koalas abandoning park estates in search of healthier habitat on adjoining managed lands.

Recent failures — koalas dying in NPWS captivity and failed translocations — highlight the risks of bureaucracies “playing God” with wildlife.

*“Conservation must mean more than annexation to appeal to metropolitan votes. Real protection comes from cultural fire, proven prescriptions and stewardship that align with Australia’s endemic biospheres — not from paper parks that exploit public goodwill while guaranteeing decline.”*

BTBIC calls for measurable and practical management based on common sense:

- Ecological forestry to continue sustainably with selective thinning to stabilise altered landscapes and reduce stem densities.
- The safe reintroduction of cultural fire, supported by proven management practices from land managers.
- An interdisciplinary approach where outcomes are measured not only by the elevation of biosphere health and recovery but also tangible Aboriginal outcomes, improving the safety and resilience of communities, productivity on managed lands (agriculture and ecological values), and broader benefits including tourism and preservation of culture.
- A shift from paper parks layered in legislation to active stewardship and accountability.

*“The ideology of wilderness destroys Country.” Conservation law “creates the conditions in which climate-driven bushfires become megafires.”*

— Professor Michael Shawn Fletcher

*Indigenous Knowledge Institute | University of Melbourne.*

###



[backtothebush.org.au](http://backtothebush.org.au) | [treaty-council.com](http://treaty-council.com)  
Treaty Council acknowledges the traditional custodians and pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Indigenous on the continent of Australia. We must always remember that under the concrete and asphalt, the land, sea, and waterways were, and always will be, traditional Indigenous land.





*An authorised Ambassador of the Treaty Council Worldwide & the Sacred Sites Preservation Project*  
Community | Volunteering | Response |  
Environment | Conservation | Sustainability  
ICN 10152 | ABN 74 610 603 429

## **About Back to the Bush**

Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation (ICN 10152) is an indigenous-led social and environmental charity that focuses on protecting and preserving Australia's diverse environments through the involvement of local indigenous tribal communities in tandem with the preservation and continuation of indigenous culture. The Charity also advances the environment across all land and community frameworks through a myriad of conservation initiatives and projects, advocacy and the protection of indigenous culture and heritage within the environment.

Established in 2010, Back to the Bush's community philanthropy extends to a wide-ranging social enterprise strategy. That includes volunteering time and deploying physical resources in imperilled communities and environments.

Additionally, the charity engages in grassroots community initiatives and First Nations interests in partnership with tribal councils of several indigenous nations and the Sacred Sites Preservation Project Indigenous Corporation, as well as myriad land management practices and frontline responses to natural disaster arrangements.

Back to the Bush is co-directed by the Treaty Council ATIC and Sacred Sites Preservation Project ATIC.

## **Recognising our Sister Organisations:**

The charity is formally backed and endorsed by our sister Indigenous Corporations, with directors and members of the respective organisations holding mutual officeholder positions in the Corporation.

## **Treaty Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation**

All Indigenous people have the human right to prosper & grow their land & seas.

The Treaty Council was formed to financially empower and establish pathways to economic independence for the Indigenous nations it represents, focusing on facilitating economic treaties between Indigenous groups and business interests. The council comprises several First Nations business and media consultants, international corporate investors, and constitutional legal experts.

The Treaty Council assists with exercising sovereignty, access, and economic support to develop, protect & sustain their lands & seas, leading to a more autonomous and independent life for future generations without government involvement and dependency.

The Treaty Council is a member of Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation.

## **Sacred Sites Preservation Project Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation**

The Sacred Sites Preservation Project mission is to preserve and protect sacred sites and safeguard the rights of allodial owners. The organisation's sacred sites registry is the only collective registry in Australia owned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and clans. With a comprehensive team of volunteers, the project acts urgently by independently surveying, recording, rehabilitating, and lobbying to protect and preserve sacred sites.

The Sacred Sites Preservation Project is a Back to the Bush Indigenous Corporation member.