

Capacity building

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Cultural Burn Workshop: Building Drought Tolerance

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



Hay Plains Landcare delivered an educational Cultural Burn Workshop: Building Drought Tolerance, facilitated by Dean Freeman and the Gugaa Collective to broaden understanding of Cultural Burns to reduce exotic weed, promote native ground cover and increase drought tolerance. Over the two days we shared learning and strengthened Cultural understanding, supporting intergenerational learning and preserving First Nations Heritage.

The issue

The Australian landscape has evolved with Cultural Burning for many thousands of years. In our landscape this ancient practice can encourage biodiversity and help maintain open, grassy ecosystems that are dominated by our valued native species. Hay Plains Landcare identified they wish to learn more about traditional revegetation techniques in modern land management systems and delivered this unique opportunity to the Hay community.

The solution

Supported by the Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal, Hay Plains Landcare delivered the free, 2-day workshop in June 2025. Forty-seven people were involved over the two days with an indoor information session and cultural artefacts display & discussion, then a cultural fire walk onsite before conducting the Cultural Burn. The workshop was facilitated by Dean Freeman and the Gugaa Collective with Hay Shire Council & the Rural Fire Service assisting. Participants included landowners, community members and Year 8 from Hay War Memorial High School, with representatives from National Parks & Wildlife Service, Crown Lands, Rural Fire Service, Hay Local Aboriginal Community Working Party and South West Yiradyuri Clans.

The impact

Attendees learnt that Cultural Burning involves the application of low-intensity, patchy fires to clear away exotic weeds and thick leaf litter, without damaging the soil or mature vegetation, creating space and light for native species to regenerate. This low level, very gently disturbance can improve native groundcover that, in turn, builds drought tolerance by promoting reduced erosion & evaporation, improved organic matter & structure, and therefore enhanced moisture retention. Further to positive ecological outcomes, attendees also gained invaluable skills in land management, biodiversity and teamwork, while learning about and preserving First Nations Ecological Practices and their integral involvement in this custom.



Key facts

- Free, 2-day workshop
- Unique educational opportunity for Hay
- Twelve organisations engaged
- Very positive feedback
- Great location for easy regeneration observation

Project Partners



This initiative is made possible by the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, a collaboration between Local Land Services and Landcare NSW supported by the NSW Government.

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