



PICTURED L TO R: MYKAH MCLENNAN, NATHAN BROWN, KEAGAN ATKINSON, KIARNE JAMES



## YORTA YORTA SPOTLIGHT

# Our Marrin Bidja Crew Steps Up to Protect Country and Community

This long weekend, four members of our Marrin Bidja crew were part of the emergency fire response roster, having successfully completed all required accreditations. This milestone reflects the dedication, training, and readiness needed to respond when Woka (Country) and community need it most, in partnership with Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVIC) Hume Region.

Seeing Yorta Yorta Yenbena (people) on the frontline is a powerful step forward. It enhances our ability to protect Country, support community safety, and uphold our long-standing cultural responsibility of caring for land and fire. We are proud of this achievement and the leadership it represents –another step toward building strong, skilled Yorta Yorta representation in emergency response and land management.

Support from communities across the Hume region has been outstanding. Partnerships with Parks Victoria in the Barmah and Shepparton areas are creating meaningful opportunities to care for Country together, blending cultural knowledge with contemporary firefighting expertise to safeguard both land and people.

The cultural use of fire is a socially and ecologically complex practice, governed by kinship, eldership, spiritual connections to Country and environmental interactions with fire.



After the 2019/20 bushfires, Traditional Owner groups across Victoria—including Yorta Yorta—called on the government to better integrate our deep knowledge of fire and Country. This wisdom, passed down through countless generations, guides how we manage river systems, floodplains, grasslands, and forests, using the right fire at the right time to maintain the health of Woka.



WYTASIE WALKER & KIAN WISE

Our advocacy has focused on ensuring Yorta Yorta people play a direct role not only in bushfire response but in year-round land, water, and fire management. Our connection to Walla and surrounding wetlands is guided by unique cultural practices, seasonal indicators, and responsibilities to Yenbena and Woka.

This vision is now taking real shape. Yorta Yorta Nation formally participates in collaborative fire response arrangements with Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVIC), Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Parks Victoria, and other partners. When a bushfire occurs on Yorta Yorta Woka, trained Yorta Yorta Yiyir and Winyas (Men and Women) are on the ground—applying both cultural knowledge and contemporary firefighting skills to protect Country.

Yorta Yorta continues to grow its capacity in this area. The dedicated Marrin Bidja team expands each year through training, recruitment, and Cultural Fire programs. This growth strengthens our ability to care for Country according to Yorta Yorta cultural obligations while supporting emergency response and land management in partnership with the state and the wider Hume community.



These achievements show the power of culture, knowledge, and collaboration in keeping communities safe and Country healthy.

We, as Yorta Yorta people, have strong aspirations towards revitalising cultural burning practices as listed in our 2021-2031 Whole of Country plan as a focus area in working towards Healthy woka and the Health Culture of our people.