

Colonial Load and Cultural Conflict

Project T5-A1

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Acknowledgement of Country

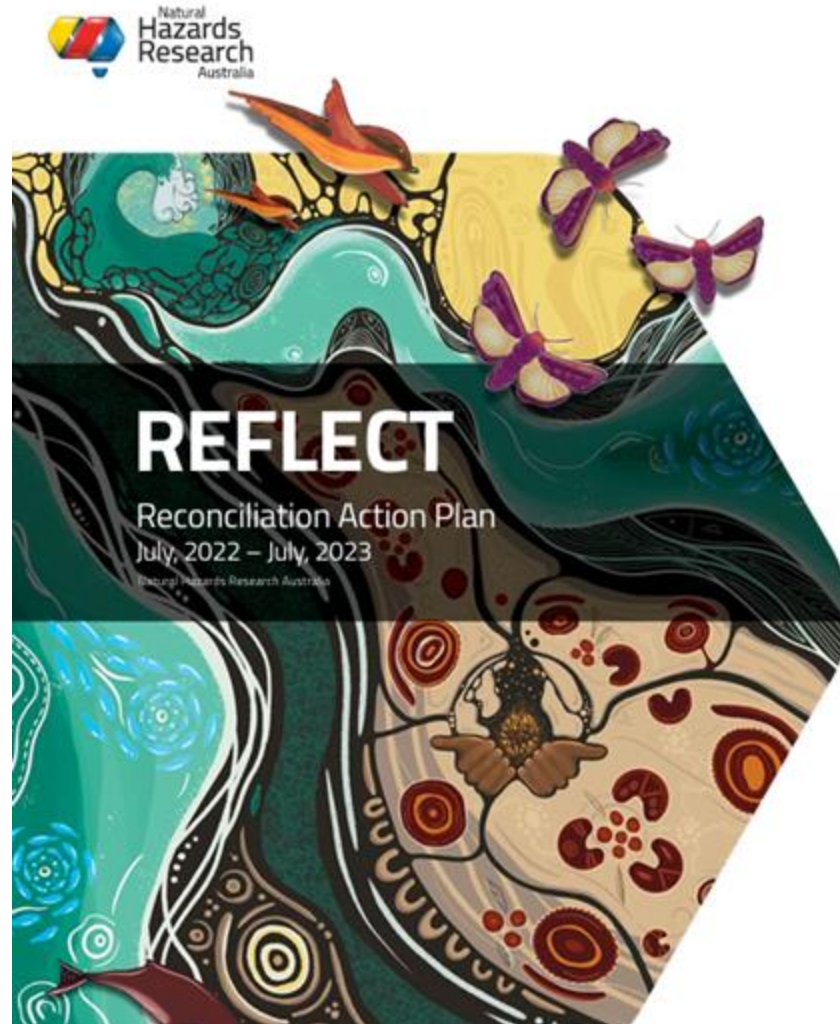
We acknowledge we are on Aboriginal Land.
Lands belonging to the Traditional Owners, the Kurna People.
We pay our respect to them, their culture, and Elders past and present.



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Background

There is little information about the rates and retention of First Nations staff and volunteers in Australia's emergency management sector. The limited evidence that exists suggests First Nations people are **under-represented** in Australia's emergency services and resilience sector (the Sector).

Challenges include **sourcing, recruiting, and retaining** skilled First Nations staff and volunteers.

Stronger Indigenous leadership is key to safer, more resilient Indigenous communities.

To improve representation, we need to understand:

- Causes of, and contributing factors to, **colonial load and cultural conflict** for First Nations staff and volunteers within the Sector



Research Project

Project Aim: Understand the experiences of current and former First Nations staff and volunteers in Australia's emergency services, land management, and resilience sector.

Project Objectives:

- Measure First Nations participation in the Sector
- Explore experiences of First Nations staff and volunteers
- Identify drivers of **colonial load** and **cultural conflict**
- Define what safe, inclusive, and welcoming workplaces look like
- Develop recommendations for the Sector



Colonial Load - What is it?

Colonial Load refers to the burden placed on First Nations staff and volunteers by their organisation and non-Indigenous colleagues to provide education, knowledge and support around First Nations history, culture and inclusion.

- First Nations people who do remain in the Sector often carry this additional burden.
- **Without support**, this can lead to:
 - Burnout
 - Isolation
 - Stress
 - Other wellbeing issues

It is important to recognise this as **colonial load**, rather than cultural load, because providing free labour is not an inherently cultural practice.



Cultural Conflict - What is it?

- First Nations people may hold different values and worldviews to their organisation and non-Indigenous colleagues.
- This can lead to conflict between the agenda of agencies, and what is determined to be **beneficial** or **good** for Country and communities.

Without support, First Nations people may experience conflict with their:

- Colleagues
- Family
- Community
- Obligations to Country

Cultural conflict refers to both the conflict within organisations and staff, as well as the conflict First Nations staff and volunteers may experience within their own communities, or themselves.



Methodology

Stage 1: Establishment

- Select case study agencies
- Design of survey
- Ethics approval

Stage 2: Data collection

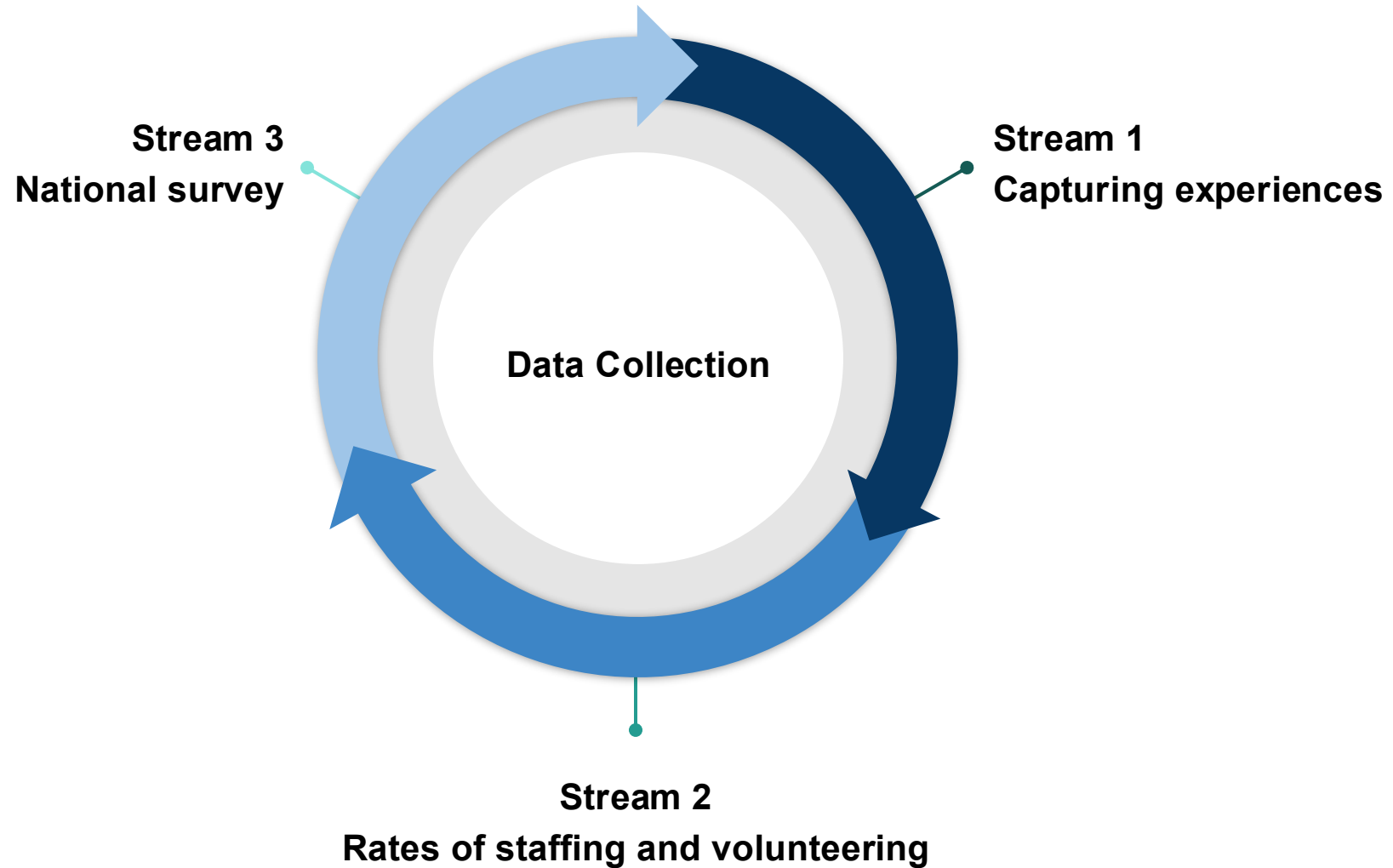
- Conduct literature review
- Collect employment and volunteering records
- Undertake oral interviews with First Nations participants

Stage 3: Synthesis, analysis and recommendations

- Collate data
- Analyse results
- Discuss key themes
- Make recommendations



Data Collection



Data Collection

Stream 1: Capturing experiences

- Case study agencies
- 1:1 interviews
- Focus groups

Stream 2: Rates of staffing and volunteering

- Gather data on First Nations staffing and volunteering
- Compare participation across sectors and jurisdictions
- Comparative analysis across agencies and jurisdictions

Stream 3: National survey

- Survey First Nations staff and volunteers
- Capture data on roles, responsibilities, satisfaction, and seniority
- Explore cultural conflict and colonial load in the workplace



Interested in the project?

Contact us at

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