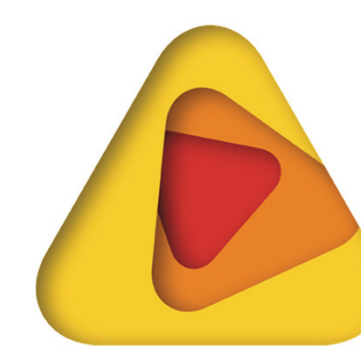




Changing Lives in a Changing World – recognising and respecting foundations of Indigenous community resilience

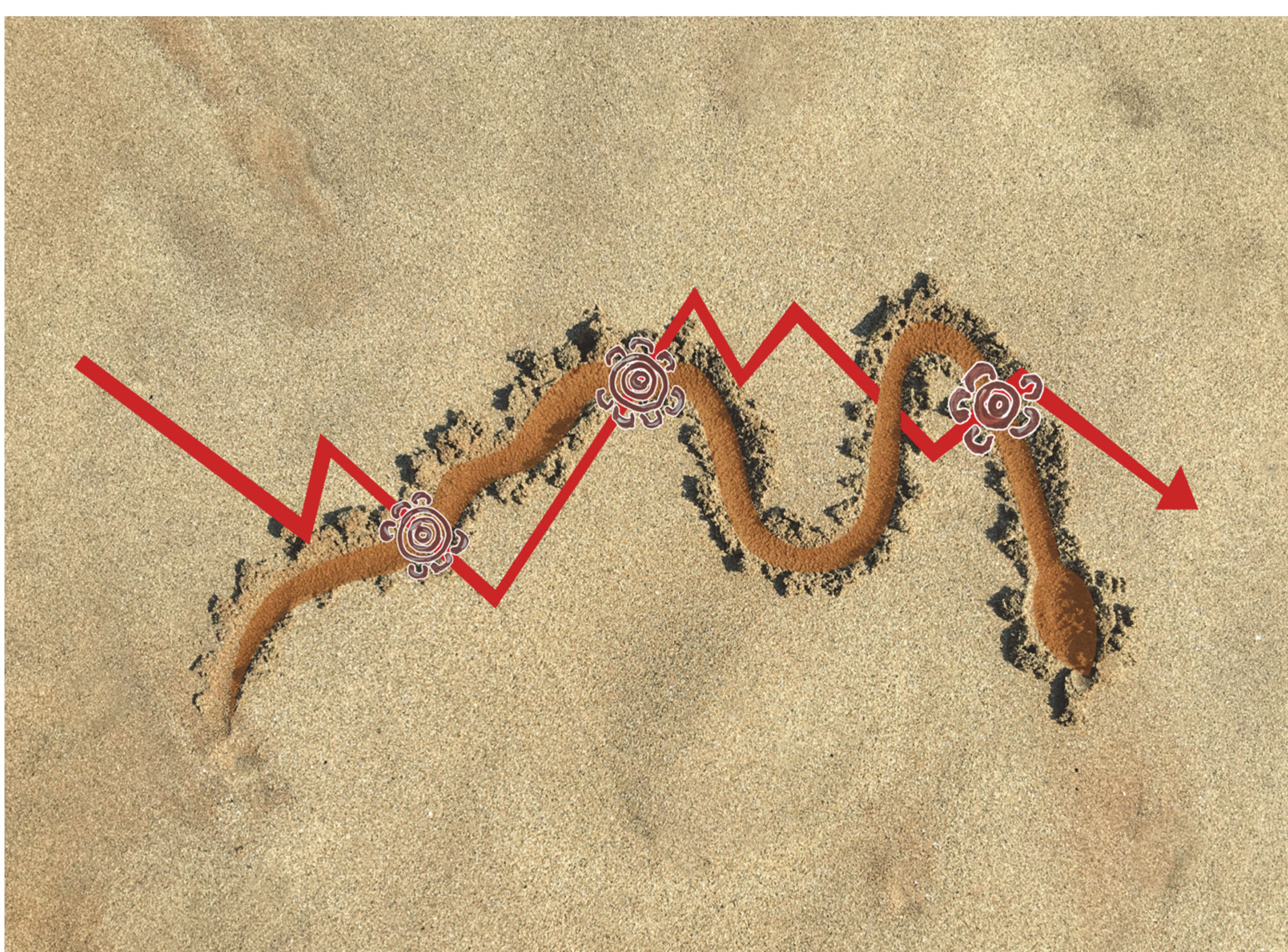
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The Bushfires and Natural Hazards CRC is supporting the investigation of Indigenous driven interests and initiatives in building community resilience as a foundation for more effective relationships with Emergency Management agencies.

Indigenous culture and society is central to the future development of North Australia. Although the physical assets are easily recognised – land and sea, pristine environments, biodiversity, minerals, fishing resources, places for tourism etc. – the social and cultural assets of the people who belong there and who are defined by their land and sea are not so easily recognised. The many layers of paternal governance and agency superimposed over Indigenous customary estate-based social organisation have eroded local authority and control over recent generations. Despite this, persistent expressions of resilience abound, often obscured from and unrecognised in 'top-down' service delivery and higher order policy settings.

Local expressions of the quality and richness of Indigenous societies contain important clues for relationship building, as to their persistence, the features of strength and resilience and the values that people draw on for prosperous cultural futures. Though there are many, we have selected a basic set of conceptual categories of value (features of resilience) that resonate in the stories and depictions of complex life. Concepts of connection, identity, knowledge, power and seasonality acquire meaning in local settings but provide a useful lens to identify resilience features across time and geography.



Biluru (Aboriginal people) and Beragud (non-Aboriginal) don't see the world in the same way, but where our interests overlap there is opportunity to build strong relationships that can deliver mutual benefit. We must seek and make the most of those opportunities without losing sight of who we are. This takes recognition and trust.

Where paths meet - two ways, one future

(image: Duwun Tony Lee, Birrimilanga Nadine Lee, Ian Lee, Glenn James)

Many of the things that people say make them stronger or more resilient are things they carry with them or seek to draw from their heritage. These things (for example, local language learning and kinship networks) are often viewed by governments and others as cultural quirks of less importance to 'closing the gap' than mainstream development values . . .

It is this erroneous way of thinking that strengths-based approaches seek to redress. But they are not mutually exclusive. . .

Can Governments and others recognise important and subtle values in Indigenous resilience and respect them for their critical role in local and wider societal reliable prosperity? . . .

. . . non-Indigenous agents respect cultural difference and the ability of Indigenous leaders to interpret across the cultural divide what's important to them as the basis for productive relationship building and for what constitutes success

Excerpts from:

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