



**AUSTRALIAN FOOD  
SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE**

## **Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance Peoples' Food Plan**

### **First Peoples**

#### **Executive summary**

*We, the First Nations Sovereign peoples of Australia, acknowledge and affirm our inherent Rights, which include succession of Traditional Knowledge and Values. These Values and Intellectual Rights Per Se, to which our First Footprints, celebrate the First Hands to plant, and preserve the Covenant to the Creator Mighty God, as the witness to the First Sunrise. To the Elders, Educators and Successors of Truth, we now restore the Last to the First, and the First to the Last, in all we aspire, to collectively and concisely set Precedence, in literature and beliefs, to celebrate our Ancestors, their knowledge and obligation to fulfil Sovereign Rights in all our Societal Rights, to which include Food, and all of its properties.'* Cherissma Costelloe of the Gurang, Meeroni and Gooreng Gooreng Peoples

Respecting and promoting the sovereignty and rights of Indigenous Peoples is core to food sovereignty globally, and is reflected in AFSA's ongoing work to decolonise our solidarity and support just relations between First Peoples and settlers in what is now called Australia. A First Peoples First<sup>1</sup> approach to food sovereignty reflects AFSA's position that the food sovereignty movement in the settler colonial state of Australia must prioritise anti-colonial work towards reparations. Key issues identified in the Peoples' Food Plan include:

- Loss of Country and Right to Land
- Loss of Indigenous Food Sovereignty
- Loss of Biodiversity
- Loss of Rights to Traditional Knowledge and Genetic Resources

The most obvious means to address the issues colonial capitalism causes for First Peoples is a full return of self-determination and Country. While the grassroots actions and peoples' recommendations to institutions and governments offer diverse pathways forward, at their core is an insistence to respect First Peoples'

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<sup>1</sup> <https://afsa.org.au/first-peoples-first/>

sovereignty that was never ceded, and to listen to First Peoples as they lead settlers to the ways to reparations they have long advocated. The updated Peoples' Food Plan offers living examples of First Peoples' initiatives working to benefit Traditional Custodians' food sovereignty within traditional and colonial food systems, as well as examples of collaborations between smallholders and First Peoples to repatriate Aboriginal Land.

## Key peoples' policy recommendations\*:

### Local Governments

- Recognise First Peoples' right to relate to Country by providing unfettered access to Country - starting with all public lands. Governments must:
  - Remove land-use regulations that restrict First Peoples' access to public lands;
  - Enact legislation to ensure First Peoples have access to cultural food provisioning practices on Country;
  - Develop a Traditional Knowledge Code of Practice in consultation with Indigenous communities to require benefit-sharing negotiations;
  - Embed First Peoples' food, land, fire and economic management practices in all Indigenous Land Use Agreements and National Parks, above and beyond Native Title determinations;
  - Increase funding and training opportunities for First Peoples rangers and custodians to care for Country; and
  - Include First Peoples' input through culturally-appropriate engagement practices in the development of land and water resource management and planning.
- Recognise First Peoples' right to relate to Country by promoting access to Country on private lands.
  - Support partnerships between First Peoples and private landholders to give access to Country for social, cultural and economic purposes, in adherence to CSIRO's Our Knowledge Our Way guidelines;
  - Provide funding and opportunities for horizontal knowledge exchanges between First Peoples and farmers (and other landholders); and
  - Introduce 'Pay the Rent'<sup>2</sup> rates in local property taxes, to be paid directly to the Traditional Custodians.

### State Governments

- Learn across state jurisdictions, such as the Victorian Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanical Strategy<sup>3</sup>, and Queensland's Biodiscovery Regulation (2021)<sup>4</sup> to develop a coordinated national strategy.

### The Federal Government

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<sup>2</sup> Pay the Rent, n.d.

<sup>3</sup> Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Queensland Regulation, 2021

- Apply a rights-based framework to Indigenous food and land management, and across the food system more broadly, fulfilling the obligations outlined in the Nagoya protocol and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- We support the recommendations made in the Water Services Association of Australia report<sup>5</sup> to:
  - Establish a First Nations water advisory group to focus on safe drinking water supplies for First Nations remote communities;
  - See the Commonwealth Government use its leadership position and processes for a renewed National Water Initiative, featuring: a First Nations ‘voice for water services’; commitment from all states and territories to improving water quality, and to review, formalise or develop safe drinking water legislation and minimum drinking water standards; and a minimum level of service (health and aesthetic properties, engineering and plumbing standards, service reliability) to apply across all jurisdictions; and
  - Simplify governance arrangements: Streamline processes for delivering water services for First Nations remote communities; nominate clear accountability for continuous engagement with communities, planning, delivery, handover of commissioned assets, maintenance, skills and training, reporting, addressing issues as they arise, and water quality.

***\*Please refer to the Right to Food section of AFSA’s Peoples’ Food Plan for a full list of policy recommendations for local, state and federal government.***

## Case studies

### **Yaamarra & Yarral<sup>6</sup> (Gamilaraay self-determination and food sovereignty)**

*A Gamilaraay led enterprise to resurrect the Gamilaraay people’s ancient grain economy and flip agriculture on its head*

The Gamilaraay people and their neighbours in the Northern Murray-Darling Basin once managed vast luxuriant grasslands which were resilient and adapted to our variable environment. These grasslands could be activated into food systems of abundance under the right conditions, allowing for the harvest of edible grains.

The vibrant cultural practice and reciprocity, the social organisation and cohesion, the environmental resilience and diversity, and the economic activities, all of which arose from this food system, have been all but lost to colonisation. But, they have not been forgotten.

<sup>5</sup> Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA), 2022.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.yaamarraandyarral.com.au/>

Remembering what we have lost, inspired by the strength and resilience of our ancestors, hopeful of a better future for all people, we have begun building Yaamarra & Yarral.

Gamilaraay people will bring back our food systems, led by Gamilaraay people, on Gamilaraay Country. We are not interested in replicating Western ways of doing business, or in the concentration and consolidation of power, or in speaking for other communities. This work is about nation building and making our models of success (and failure) freely available for other communities to replicate and learn from. It's about decentralisation of the food and agriculture industry and equitable First Nations involvement, particularly within the bushfood industry.

### **Belvedere Farm (land repatriation)<sup>7</sup>**

Belvedere Farm is on 20 acres of Jinibara Country, in the hinterland of Queensland's Sunshine Coast, run by Nick and Brydie. Belvedere run pastured cattle, pigs, and layer chickens for eggs in highly mobile systems, as well as some vegetables grown in the fertile soils left behind the livestock.

For Nick, reciprocity extends between the land and him and to its Original Custodians, and he has 'repatriated' an acre of land on his title to Jinibara songman BJ and his wife Libby. Nick firmly believes that non-indigenous farmers should not dictate to First Peoples how they inhabit repatriated land.

Nick observes that 'getting right with Country' is not a simple task for non-indigenous Australians, though he is able to clearly express the ways he listens to Country, saying:

*When Jinibara people speak, Country hears them, it doesn't hear us. I feel I benefit from being a peripheral part of their connection to Country... 'getting right with Country' – if you're not decolonising, not involved in acts of solidarity... then I don't think you can be right with Country. Decolonising yourself is such an ongoing job.*

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<sup>7</sup>Jonas & Gressier, forthcoming