



FIRST

FIRST NATIONS
PANDEMIC RESEARCH
PREPAREDNESS NETWORK

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY PANELS: A PUBLIC HEALTH GOVERNANCE MODEL TESTED THROUGH BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS

March 2026

PROJECT:

First Nations Community Panels

PRESENTED BY:

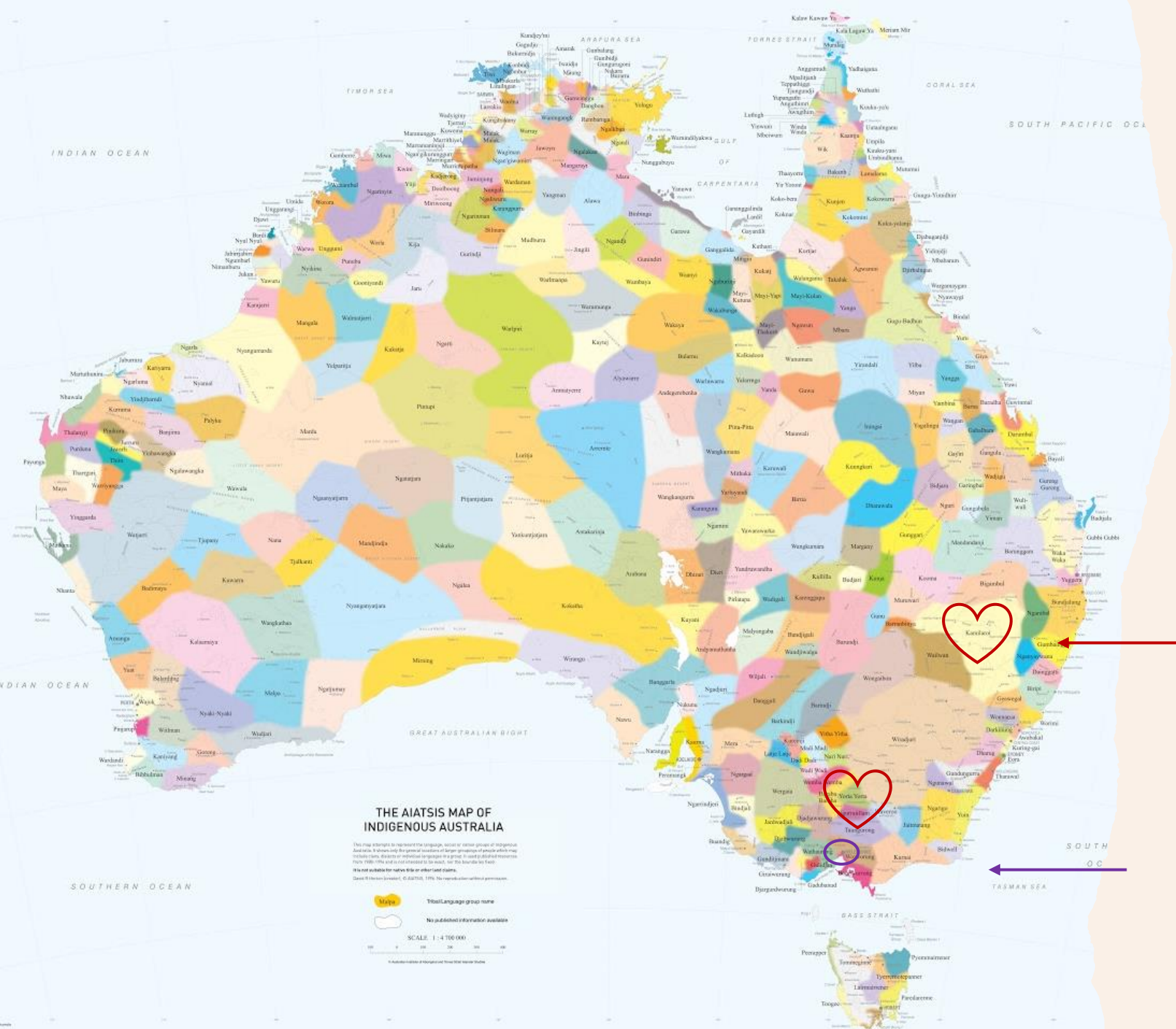
Bryony Roberts
& Steph Walker

PRESENTED TO:

MACH Aboriginal Health
Showcase 2026

FIRST respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land and seas as the First Peoples of Australia.

We pay our respects to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to all First People within our network.



Who We Are

Where We're From

FIRST Governance Group



Katrina Clark



Kiarra Smalle



Kristy Crooks



Robert James



Robert Monaghan



David Barras



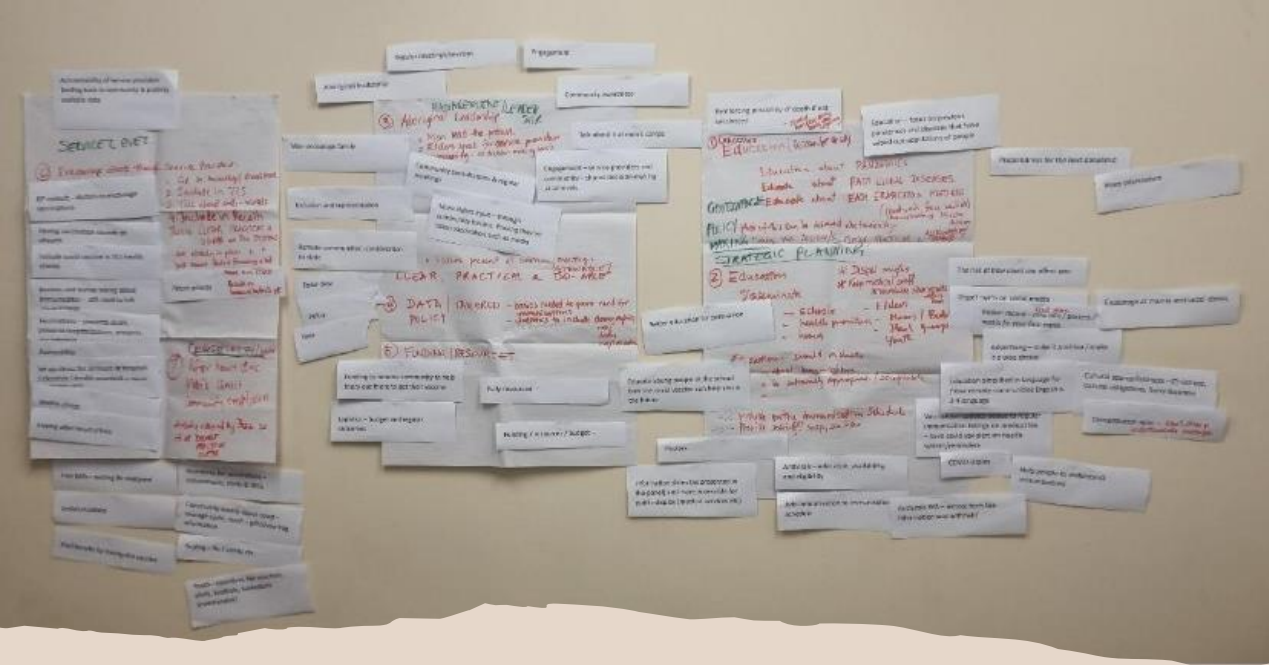
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Listening to Country

- Country tells us stories through animals, weather, and wellbeing.
- Listening to Country means paying attention to that knowledge, alongside western science.
- It's about hearing and respecting the wisdom of place and people before we act.





Turning listening into practice: Community Panels

- Community Panels are structured ways to hear from communities.
- Adapted from citizen juries but grounded in cultural ways of learning and deciding.
- Bring together community members to hear evidence, yarn, and form recommendations.

Community Panels Method



Community Engagement (online)

- Meet with the local Aboriginal Medical Service (Board) and community representatives (Elders) to discuss the issue and understand the community's goals for the project.
- Community representatives can also identify people interested in being part of the First Nations Community Panels

Pre-panel yarning session (face-to-face)

- Panel members will be invited to attend a 1-2 hour pre-panel yarning session the afternoon before the first panel session. This will be an opportunity for panel members to meet the project team and informally discuss the issue.

Evidence & deliberation days (face-to-face)

- Panel members will hear from health experts and get the opportunity to ask questions to help further their understanding about the health issue.
- Panel members will receive a "Yarning with Mob: Your voice, your decisions, your way" take home pack, and will be encouraged to yarn with their family and friends about the topic, and share feedback from the conversations back to the Community Panel.
- Panel members will work together to identify community priorities and develop strategies that help protect their community against the specific health emergency.

Follow-up yarning session (online or face-to-face)

- The project team will follow up with panel members to check in if things have changed since attending the evidence and deliberation days.

Final Recommendations Report

- The project team, in consultation with panel members, will finalise the recommendations report and submit to health policy decision-makers for consideration.

Optional: Co-designing recommendations with policy makers

- Following the reporting stage, the panel members are offered the opportunity to meet with policy makers and health representatives. They will be given the opportunity to share their findings, and collaboratively design recommendations.

Culture as the foundation of preparedness

Systems and partnerships

Trust and relationships

Culture and Country





Applying the model to Bird Flu

- Panels will explore the impacts of bird flu on people, animals and Country
- Delivered in partnership with local Aboriginal organisations
- Confirmed one community in NSW. In conversations with other communities in WA, NT and QLD.
- Evidence presenters: vet, public health, wildlife and environmental experts
- Findings will be fed to state and national agencies for consideration.

Guiding questions for the Bird Flu Panels

Panels will be asked to consider:



1. **Caring for wildlife and Country**

How should wildlife and Country be cared for and prioritised during catastrophic events such as Bird Flu?



2. **Engaging community**

How should community be engaged in preparedness and the response?



3. **Acting early**

What strategies should be implemented when or before health concerns such as Bird Flu are detected in animals living in community?



4. **Communicating clearly**

What are some effective ways health authorities could communicate Bird Flu updates to community?

COMMUNITY PANEL ON KAMILAROI / GOMEROI COUNTRY

Key Findings and Recommendations for
Caring for Country, Wildlife, and Community
during Avian Influenza

SURVEILLANCE & DISPOSAL

- Surveillance system across farms & public areas
- Rangers, fishers, pig hunters & roo shooters help identify cases of bird flu
- Burning rather than bury carcasses



FUNDING

- Funding for rapid response activities
- Subsidise vet costs for bird flu related sickness & death
- Invest in Train the Trainer programs
- Resource and fund PPE
- Commit to long-term funding, not one-offs



EDUCATION

- Aboriginal health workers and land council to build knowledge on bird flu preparedness and response
- Visual interactive learning
- Culturally safe, easy to understand & suitable for all ages
- Education in ranger tours on Country
- Local champions lead education & info sharing
- Address questions about bird flu vs COVID19



CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Mandatory shoe cleaning when visiting cultural sites
- Community-controlled organisations lead cultural site protection
- Monitor cultural sites, national parks & wildlife sanctuaries
- Involve mob in planning and decision-making



COMMUNICATION

- Text alert system for bird flu cases
- Health alert app for bird flu updates
- Public figures to promote awareness
- Information shared through ACCO
- Information delivered across multiple channels, to reach different age groups
- CLEAR, SIMPLE & MEMORABLE public health messaging



Building preparedness and response together

Panel reports will be shared with local, state and national agencies to support culturally informed decision-making.

Findings will help guide future collaboration between human, animal, and environmental health sectors.

Our goal: to ensure One Health preparedness and response planning meaningfully reflect First Nations voices, values, and priorities.

How listening strengthens the system



Listening to Country connects people, animals and the environment.



Embedding culture turns coordination into real collaboration.



Communities become knowledge partners in preparedness, not just the recipients of information

An illustration of two brown hands cupped together, holding a green fern-like plant with a bird's nest containing two white eggs. The background is a warm yellow-orange gradient with faint white circular patterns.

Listening to Country strengthens One Health systems

Country holds knowledge;
community holds solutions.

Preparedness grows from
relationships, not responses.

A culturally grounded and informed
system is a ready system.

FIRST Next Steps...



IMPLEMENT PANELS on Bird Flu in additional communities across Australia



CO-DESIGN step to be created and implemented by community and Australian CDC



NEW TOPIC for implementation in 2026



SECURE FUNDING after June 2026

FIRST Ongoing project work



STANDING ETHICS APPROVAL. Topics to be added as amendments



CONSULT & ENGAGE community and government on priorities



ONGOING ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT with communities for future panels



CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP with government agencies to ensure implementation of recommendations

Winanga-li – *listen and remember*

Thank you to the communities who shaped previous panels.

Acknowledgements to the local Aboriginal organisations for their support and to the experts for their contributions.



Join the First Nations Pandemic Research Preparedness NeTwork (FIRST)!

SCAN TO JOIN TODAY!



Elevating First Nations communities to be at the heart of pandemic preparedness - led by us, for us.



FIRST amplifies community voices, values, and priorities into national public health research and policy.



LEARN about
research
opportunities &
initiatives



ACCESS
professional
development
opportunities



CONNECT with
First Nations
members in a
culturally safe
space



ENGAGE in FIRST
working groups /
sub-committees

<https://bit.ly/firstpandemicnetwork>

THANK YOU

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