

Appendix 9: Quote from Mr Shane Mortimer, of the Ngambri People

The entire Ngambri land area is a site of cultural significance

These grasslands fed Ngambri ancestors for over a thousand generations. Ngambri families have been buried in these lands for over 25,000 years. Well in excess of 500,000 Ngambri People form part of this land.

Too much grasslands development has taken place in Ngambri Country, particularly the ACT section. The yam daisy was to Ngambri People, what corn is to American Indians or rice to Asians. Only a handful of yam daisies have survived in the ACT because of land development. The emu, koala, cod, platypus, brolga, bush turkey are no longer to be seen. We have witnessed the mass extinction of innumerable species in the past 200 years. The population of Ngambri People is indicative of the state of the land, but we are far from a spent force.

In 21st century terms

Indigenous Grasslands have more biodiversity and sequester more carbon per hectare than trees, and create the silicates that lock carbon into the ground for up to 20,000 years. Similar silicates to those that make opals.

The once over-grazed Mulligan's Flat area, having been left to regenerate, is responding well to being left for two years now to do so, Indigenous grasses among other biota have returned. Areas where *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass) now thrive preclude serrated tussock. All Grasslands in the ACT must now be left to regenerate. The seed of Indigenous understorey is in the ground and will germinate if all sheep and cattle are removed and the land left to spell for at least five years. Future development in the ACT must be concentrated in existing urbanised areas and made attractive for residents to want to live there. Global warming is going to bring rising sea levels and severe weather conditions; and for this governments must be prepared. A high-tech, desirable city for a million residents, built to withstand the rigours of harsh windy weather, must be sustainably constructed on existing urban area, possibly over the top of existing commercial centres and Indigenous grass covered. What do you see growing in high-wind regions? Grasses! We must take a lesson from nature and consider shelter beneath the surface.

The micro-organisms and root systems that support the ecosystem above far exceed the surface story in every way. Aboriginal People have an intuitive understanding of such matters. Ngambri People know this land better than any, as this is Ngambri land.

'Caring for Country' is essential for Ngambri future.