Conversations: Outcome Summary

First Nations Drone Policy Partnerships Project

RELATIVE CREATIVE

We proudly acknowledge that Jellurgal (Burleigh Heads), where we live and work, is on the unceded sovereign lands of the Yugambeh speaking peoples, part of the Bundjalung Nation.

We are informed by this and our own founder's Gamilaroi heritage.

We pay respect to all First Nations peoples.

Contents

Overview

Background

The conversations were designed in two parts. The intention of the these conversations was to:

- Provide clarification on the project
- Get to know each other and share questions and views on the project and its purposes
- Help refine policy partnerships purpose, scope, and priorities for future drone policy action in support of Closing the Gap

INTRODUCTION

- Introduced project, including purpose, project team and overview of partnership template.
- Used questions to prompt discussion/sticky note documentation on partnership approaches and the opportunities and threats of drone use.

The outcomes of the introduction workshop were used to determine the themes of the following two conversations. These were intentionally left broad enough to give scope to conversation:

THEME 1: TRAINING

- Explored Cultural Safety, the accessibility of training (e.g. in terms of cost, language and requirements to participate) and opportunities aligned with accessible training.
- The design of the workshop provided space for other ideas and concerns to be presented.

THEME 2: DATA

- Engaged with the significant topic of Data Sovereignty while also exploring considerations around data collection, storage, access and use.
- Opportunities were provided to consider concerns such as internet access as well as the cost and accessibility of data storage.

Each workshop was facilitated through Microsoft Teams and used a Miro whiteboard to engage with prompts and provocations and provide participants with a space to document their thoughts. This was supported with open discussion.

Upcoming Activities

April– May:
Collect case studies, deeper discussions on themes /topics identified in this meeting

June:
Directions Group Workshop in Cairns

July:
Provide outcomes to Government and review / consider partnership

More Info

Directions Group Workshop

11–12 June, in Cairns (option for virtual if required)

Day 1: trip to GMYPPPBC

Day 2: Workshopping what we intend to present to government – shared learnings, policy priorities etc.

Travel allowance available for First Nations members.

Slide from the Introduction workshop

Key Outcomes

Policy might not be the Outcome

While this project seeks to understand what role policy might have in this space, it also recognises that it is not the only answer to creating change. This was reaffirmed throughout the conversations.

Recommendations

1. **Consider a National Drone Policy that provides broad industry guidelines while empowering individual Nations to develop and implement their own policy or protocols:** this can be supported by working with Nations to develop their own policy or protocols.
2. **Communicate regulations in one easy-to-navigate online location:** work on presenting these, and any changes, in plain English for better understanding.
3. **Prioritise the development of cultural awareness within the drone industry:** including understanding the wishes and implications of Elders regarding drone use across land and sea Country. Noting this will vary across Nations.
4. **Offer more support, especially financial, to First Nations engaging in the industry** allowing for self-determined opportunities to develop projects, purchase equipment, and receive training.

Training needs to be Rethought

It has been reaffirmed throughout the three sessions that the cultural responsiveness of the drone industry needs further consideration and work.

A key recommended change was to reconsider the current approach to training and accreditation, to ensure that this is designed to better suit the unique needs of Rangers in different Nations. This should continue to be explored with project participants.

Recommendations

1. **Develop a deeper understanding of this through case studies:** Opportunity to explore alternative approaches to training with group participants
2. **Reconsider the approaches taken to training and accreditation,** ensuring they are culturally appropriate and aligned with the needs of First Nations communities. This might extend to design training programs to accommodate different levels of education and numeracy/literacy skills within the First Nations population, tailoring the content to their needs. Any work done to redesign this process **needs to be done in close partnership with/designed by First Nations peoples.**

Data is not just a Drone Industry Issue

While work around data sovereignty is a significant consideration, as the use of drones currently focuses on the collection of data; data sovereignty is a much broader issue and one that requires consideration on a national scale. There is opportunity for the drone industry to play a leadership role in this space and examples have been provided by participants to this end.

Recommendations

1. **Case studies, research and conversations will continue to explore approaches to supporting data storage and internet access,** noting that needs differ from community to community.
2. **Further exploration of a Commonwealth Data repository embedded with data sovereignty protocols, designed by First Nations communities.**
3. **Support the use of Starlink (or similar) in regional and remote communities** to improve internet access (and data sharing/access) where the national network is not sufficient.
4. **Any work on data storage and access must recognise the different requirements each Nation might have** and respond accordingly.

Introduction Session

Introduction: Overview

Background

The information workshop was held 28th March, 2024. Designed to inform potential partners about the project, ask questions and gain further insight that will contribute to further refining the program.

The key components of the workshop were:

- Introduction providing further detail on the project
- Opportunity for Q & A around project
- Designed activity prompt discussion on partnership approaches and the opportunities and threats of drone use. This was framed around three questions

Q1. PARTNERSHIPS

Thinking about creating partnerships

- What is important to you in a project partnership?
- What risks are there that you would like to see overcome?
- How would you like to be engaged in this project?

Q2. BENEFITS

It is clear that there are many benefits to using drones

- Do you agree, or have comments, in relation to those listed below?
- Do you have other benefits to add?

Q3. CONCERNS

There are some concerns around drone use and drone policy.

- Do you agree, or have comments, in relation to those listed below?
- Do you have other concerns to add?

Agenda

Time	Activity
20 Minutes	Acknowledgement
	Introduction to project, including purpose, project team and overview of partnership/group approach
10 Minutes	Short Q & A
25 Minutes	Digital Yarning Circle
	Questions to prompt discussion/sticky note documentation on partnership approaches and the opportunities and threats of drone use.
5 Minutes	Wrap & close

What actions will this project contribute to?

The aims and scope of this project include:

- **Establishing** a directions group to help inform government understanding
- **Understanding** what gaps & opportunities exist in the space
- **Defining** priorities for drones policy from this
- **Supporting** commercial and creative applications of drones by First Nations peoples.
- **Designing** guidelines or 'lessons learned, that can be shared with broader public servants through the Australian Public Service Academy to support culturally responsive policy making

Slide from the workshop

Introduction: Key Outcomes

Key Concerns

Participants were asked to summarise the key point they wanted to make, the top five concerns outlined were:

1. **Cultural safety and data sovereignty** are key considerations in the use of drones for First Nations communities.
2. **Mentoring and capacity building** were highlighted as being important to gain confidence in using drones.
3. **Training and education** are essential for First Nations communities to move into the operational side of drone use, a key example given was for beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations.
4. **Access** to accurate and clear information is vital to address misinformation and ensure First Nations communities have an accurate understanding of licensing requirements, internal policies, and flight regulations.
5. **Inequality in access** to data, internet, training, and funding should be addressed to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all groups interested in using drones.

Key Benefits

Participants were asked to summarise the key point they wanted to make, the top benefits outlined were:

1. **Caring for/Connection to Country:** It was broadly agreed that drones can be used to monitor and protect cultural heritage sites, such as sacred areas and cultural landscapes. This can also be extended to various operational purposes, such as monitoring and managing natural resources, conducting surveys, and supporting other land management activities.
2. **Access to information:** Drones can facilitate access to information, particularly in remote areas where internet access may be limited. They can be used to collect data and images that can be analysed and shared with communities for decision-making and planning purposes.
3. **Economic opportunities:** The use of drones can create economic opportunities for First Nations communities, such as offering drone training and becoming drone service providers for data collection and analysis.

Data Management & Sharing

The key concern regarding data management and sharing is the uncertainty and lack of clarity around who can access the data and how it will be stored. Participants highlighted how some Elders and community members are concerned about the unknowns of data storage and who has control over the data, especially when it comes to secret sacred and/or sensitive information.

There is a clear need to further explore how these obstacles might be overcome, including through addressing the challenges of data sovereignty. This extends to consideration around access to ensure that the data is managed and shared in a safe and culturally appropriate manner.

Additionally, there is a need for clear information and training on data management and sharing, as there is currently a lot of misinformation in this area.

Recommendations

Data, including data sovereignty, was a significant enough topic that we recommend further exploration through a themed conversation.

Introduction: Key Outcomes

Training & Education

The key concern regarding training and education is the lack of access to culturally appropriate and accessible training programs.

Participants also highlighted concern around the lack of clear information about licensing requirements and regulations, contributing to misinformation. A clear need for capacity building, appropriate training, and access to accurate and reliable information for Indigenous Rangers across the country was identified.

Additionally, there is a concern about the difficulty in accessing specialist advice and training in regional areas, as well as the inequality in access to data, training, and funding for different groups. The goal is to make training and education fair, clear, and easily accessible, taking into consideration factors such as internet access, literacy issues, and cultural safety.

Recommendations

Training and education within the drone space were an important topic throughout the conversation. As such we recommend it is a theme for one of the themed conversations.

Forming Partnerships

Trust and cultural safety were highlighted as being significant factors in the development of partnerships. Central to this is respect and clarification around where decision making power lies.

Following a co-design process with commitments to power sharing, collaboration and ICIP guidelines is a clear approach identified.

Communication was highlighted as important, this includes clarity around what the opportunity is, detail around what to expect in relation to outcomes but includes elements as simple as consideration of timezones.

Participants want partnerships to have clear outcomes such as practical implementation and capacity building for their organisations/communities.
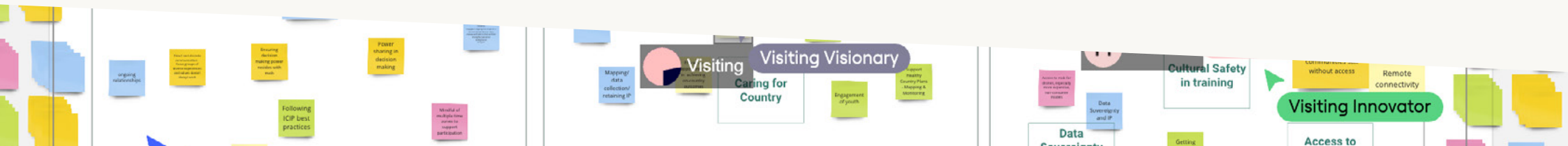
Recommendations

Carefully consider all communication across the project and how participants can remain informed. Provide further clarity on expected outcomes, benefits and how decision making power is structured. This could be done visually.

Designing the Two Themed Conversations

In recommending the themes of Training and Data, we believe that a broader discussion can be maintained with the group, as a number of components are relevant to each topic.

Training – would explore Cultural Safety, building trust and the accessibility of training, in terms of cost, language and requirements to participate (cost, internet access, ID).

Data – would engage with the significant topic of Data Sovereignty while also exploring considerations around data storage and how this relates to internet access, the cost and accessibility of storage and so on.

Theme 1: Training

Training: Overview

Background

The themed conversation focussing on training was held 15th April, 2024. 11 people participated in the workshop (in addition to a project team of 4).

This workshop was designed to explore Cultural Safety, the accessibility of training (e.g. in terms of cost, language and requirements to participate) and opportunities aligned with accessible training. The design of the workshop provided space for other ideas and concerns to be presented, both on the Miro whiteboard and through open dialogue. Guidance in using Miro was offered to all invited participants prior to the workshop to support its use.

The workshop activities occurred across three separate boards with a series of prompts. While Miro access was recommended, participants were able to contribute verbally and through the chat function of Microsoft Teams.

Key to our facilitation approach is to adapt the agenda when necessary, for example when more open discussion is required. In this instance participants were provided less time to complete the final activity when we switched the workshop focus towards discussion.

It is noted that at least one workshop participant continued working in the Miro space after the workshop concluded. The existing content was locked by the team, on conclusion of the workshop to prevent accidental changes occurring. Additional content provided has been incorporated into this report.

Agenda

Time	Activity
20 Minutes	Acknowledgement Group introductions Introduction to topic
60 Minutes	Three activities have been designed to support discussion and idea sharing focussing on: • Cultural Safety: using the cultural responsiveness framework • Accessibility of Training and how this might be improved • Opportunities created through training and accreditation
5 Minutes	Wrap & close

Screenshot from workshop

Training: Key Outcomes

Cultural Responsiveness of Industry

Participants confirmed that the drone industry is at the very beginning of being culturally responsive: working towards cultural awareness. This clearly has impacts on:
- the way regulations are communicated,
- existing policy
- training within the industry.

Recommendations

1. **Further development of cultural awareness within the industry:** The drone industry should prioritise the development of cultural awareness among its practitioners, including understanding the wishes and implications of Elders regarding drone use across land and sea Country.
2. **Communication of regulations:** Work should be undertaken to ensure regulations are located in one, easy to navigate online location. Presenting regulations in plain English would also be beneficial.
3. **Reconsider the approaches taken to training and accreditation:** see Design and Structure of Training (right).
4. **Offer more support (especially financial) to First Nations engaging in the industry:** self-determined opportunities to develop projects, purchase equipment and train allow for a deeper understanding of the technology to be developed.

Design and Structure of Training

Overall, the suggested approach to training in this context is to prioritize cultural awareness, accessibility, and practicality, while also recognising the unique needs and perspectives of First Nations communities, through their involvement in training design.

Recommendations

1. **Considerations around language:** Training programs should take into account the language barriers that may exist and ensure that language is accessible and inclusive.
2. **Making training accessible:** Efforts should be made to make training programs physically and logistically accessible to First Nations participants, including providing resources for internet access and addressing the challenges of remote and regional areas.
3. **Recognising different levels of education:** Training programs should be designed to accommodate different levels of education and numeracy/literacy skills within the First Nations population, ensuring that the content is understandable and tailored to the participants' needs.
4. **Creating opportunities for deeper relationships between trainer and trainee:** Training programs should encourage conversations and relationship-building between trainers and trainees, allowing for a better understanding of cultural contexts and individual needs. This has the potential to contribute to increasing industry cultural responsiveness.
5. **Adjusting timelines to better suit the needs of Rangers:** Flexibility in training timelines should be considered to accommodate the specific needs and responsibilities of Rangers, allowing them to participate in training without compromising their other duties.
6. **Developing training (in partnership with communities and Rangers) that is practical, culturally appropriate, and applicable to field work and data collection requirements:** Training programs should focus on practical skills and knowledge that are relevant to the specific field work and data collection requirements of indigenous communities, ensuring that the training is culturally appropriate and aligned with their needs.
7. **Performing from an informed understanding and position:** Training should be based on an informed understanding of the cultural contexts and needs of indigenous communities, allowing trainers to provide culturally responsive and relevant instruction.
8. **Reconsidering the structure and approach to examinations:** A shift from textbook-based written learning and exams towards hands-on practical tasks was recommended
9. **Structuring training to celebrate the skills trainees have** through strength-based approaches to training.

Theme 2: Data

Data: Overview

Background

The themed conversation focussing on training was held 17th April, 2024. 9 people participated in the workshop (in addition to a project team of 4). One participant joined late due to other commitments but with an expressed interest to continue participating.

This workshop was designed to engage with the significant topic of Data Sovereignty while also exploring considerations around data collection, storage, access and use. Opportunities are provided through the design of the workshop to consider concerns such as internet access as well as the cost and accessibility of data storage.

The design of the workshop provided space for other ideas and concerns to be presented, both on the Miro whiteboard and through open dialogue. Guidance in using Miro was offered to all invited participants prior to the workshop to support its use.

The workshop activities occurred across two separate boards with a series of prompts. While Miro access was recommended, participants were able to contribute verbally and through the chat function of Microsoft Teams. Rich conversation occurred throughout the workshop.

Agenda

Time	Activity
20 Minutes	Acknowledgement Group introductions Introduction to topic
60 Minutes	Two activities have been designed to support discussion and idea sharing focussing on • Data Sovereignty • Accessibility of internet and data storage • The use, storage, access and sharing of data
5 Minutes	Wrap & close

Screenshot from workshop

Data: Key Outcomes

Informed Decision Making

Participants emphasised the importance of informed decision making and transparency in data collection and use. This is necessary to manage the risks around data collection, including its use as a colonial tool and to ensure data sovereignty is maintained.

Suggestions to support this included:

- Traditional Owners should be fully informed about what data is being collected, how it is being collected, and by whom to support informed decision making
- Ensuring ownership of data always remains with Traditional Owners
- Transparency around access to collected data and how data might be used in the future is important to informed decision making
- All data should be returned by researchers, not just what they interpret as relevant

It was highlighted, that while initial collection and use might be ethical, without community control of data, future uses are unknown.

Recommendations

Continued conversations with the group and via case studies exploring this topic, alongside research of successful approaches provided by participants will be important next steps.

Data Storage

The way data is stored and by who has major implications in achieving data sovereignty. Third party data storage companies often have complex use policies that were a concern. Conversations lent towards how data storage could benefit communities.

Important considerations include:

- Data storage options should be designed by (or co-designed with) the community for the community
- There is a preference for data to be stored on Country but the implications of this need further consideration
- Government support for different types of storage (online, cloud, offline)
- Appropriate cultural access to data is an important and continued consideration that relates to how data is stored.
- Proposals for a safe and Cultural data keeping place for mob to use
- Facilitation of the repatriation of data.
- What a commonwealth data repository might look like

Recommendations

The storage of and access to data is a concern that reaches beyond the drone industry, work to address this would need to be cross-departmental and involve an in-depth co-design process with individual Nations.

Policy Development

Conversations throughout this workshop reiterated the need for policy or protocols to be responsive to place and local (Country-based) protocols.

It was also evident that ethics need to sit behind any rules, procedures or processes. The ethical use of data is crucial, and there is potential that considerations should be made in regard to policy the could ensure appropriate use of the data.

Broadly, data sovereignty is viewed as a significant topic, not just impacting new data but data already stored. There is a bigger question at play here in relation to the governments role in establishing, supporting and maintaining the data sovereignty of First Nations peoples. This question goes beyond the drone industry.

Recommendations

While recognising that policy isn't a necessary outcome of the project there is scope to consider how a national policy might support the development and observance of localised protocols.

Further research into use (or misuse) of data should be considered, looking at global successes and failures within the First Nations space and how this relates to policy contexts.