

Statement of Zhanāe Dodd

Name: Zhanāe Dodd
Date of birth: 30 March 1997
Date: 18 March 2025

1. My name is Zhanāe Dodd, and I use she/her pronouns. I live in Rockhampton on Darumbal country in Queensland and travel out to Woorabinda and Blackwater as often as I can (that is my matriarchal ancestral country). I am 27 years old and a first-year student in my Bachelor of Global Indigenous Studies with the University of Newcastle (online).



2. I am a proud Aboriginal woman coming from the Ghungalu, Wadja, Kaanju, Birri and Wiri and Wungun people belonging to the Gurubil skin group. I live on Darumbal country in Rockhampton but my clan group on my mother's side boards Darumbal country. Therefore, we have a very longstanding connection. I have deep ties to the Darumbal people, and I'm blessed to be able to teach culture on their country. My totem is a googoobinj (scrub turkey). The scrub turkey is a really important spiritual guide and connection to country for me. Aboriginal culture in Queensland is mostly matriarchal. You follow your mother's lines and take mother's totems. Mob have more connection to mother's country. Your country is your mum, literally. For more photos of my life and the things I write about in this statement, please see Annexure A attached to my statement.
3. I'm a dancer with the Burriburra Dance Troupe in Rockhampton. I also take online Tahitian dance classes (Tahiti Ora), I play guitar (self-taught), I love being outside, I have committed to learning how to surf this year as a new hobby, I like to paint/draw, I am currently learning how to weave better than I currently

do. I've started with mat weaving, and I am learning the whole process of weaving to build up skills to be able to use materials from my country. I love live music, I dabble in musical theatre when I have time (my last production was Grease the musical) and I also LOVE travelling especially when it's for fellowships or personal/professional development programs. But perhaps my fav thing to do in my spare time is see family and friends and eat good food!

4. I am making this statement in support of my joint complaint to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change detailing how Australia is violating mine, and other young people's human rights. I have prepared this statement because I think the inaction of the Australian government on climate change is impacting the lifespan of our country, the wellbeing of our country, the longevity of our country. I can't separate myself and my country – spiritually and identity wise, it is who I am as a person and what I do every day is deeply intertwined to not only the country that I am from but also where I live. Every decision I make in my life is guided by country. I talk to country, seek advice from country and when I am away, country calls me home. I have deep ties to Darumbal country, and I think it looks after me so well because I am trying to do the right thing by country.
5. I hope that the Special Rapporteur writes to the Australian government about their inaction on climate change. I also hope that the Special Rapporteur visits Australia to meet with me and other young people so that she can understand how climate change is impacting our lives.
6. I have seen firsthand the devastating impacts of climate change in the Pacific and on my own country and I've seen how it threatens the continuity of our cultural heritage. It makes me think about my wellbeing, communities' wellbeing and the wellbeing of my country. You can't separate First Nations people (or mob as we call it) from country, it is such a deep relationship. I also think about my friends scattered across the Pacific and I listen to how urgent it is for them now – it is urgent for all of us too.
7. I am also deeply concerned about the degradation and destruction of cultural sites across Australia—not just due to climate change, but also due to government neglect. For example, the new Liberal National Party government in Queensland has taken Treaty negotiations with First Nations communities off the table, which would have enabled more proactive care of the land, among many other things. The fact that they no longer even consider it is frightening. There is no agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care, which makes the future uncertain.
8. I want the Australian government to know that you can't abuse something like the land and expect it to still give. It is the same with our human rights as young people. We have trusted the Australian government to take care of us and protect us from climate change and they have proven otherwise, time and time again, that they have no intention of doing so. I am one of many young people that will inherit this planet. But, as a young person, we aren't consulted enough when decisions (or lack of) are being made about climate change. What is my hope for the future for me and my kids and my culture if the government doesn't protect the land that we live on?

My DNA is tied to my country

9. I have lived in Rockhampton on Darumbal Country almost all of my life. Rockhampton is a city located in Central Queensland. I always tell people that if you want to see Australia, you should come to Rockhampton because it halfway between bush and beach – it is 30 minutes to the beach and the start

of the Great Barrier Reef and 30 minutes to the bush. The population is about 80,000 people and its very regional – everyone knows everyone. Rockhampton is the agricultural and mining hub for the region. There are cows everywhere and lots of people do fly-in fly-out work in the mines. It also has a massive river that runs down the middle of the town which is a water source for everybody that lives here.

10. Rockhampton was also one of the biggest port towns during colonisation. It has a massive mix of Traditional Owners who live in Rockhampton too. There are lots of Ghungalu people who live here and a lot of mob are transient between here and Woorabinda as well (Woorabinda means Kangaroo sit down in my language).
11. During colonisation, there were about 51 to 52 clan groups removed from their country and put onto a government-run mission in Woorabinda (which is 200km away from Rockhampton). Even more clan groups were removed from their country and sent to other government-run missions like Cherbourg (451km south of Darumbal country) and Palm Island (almost 1000km away and accessible only by boat). A lot of that mob from those clan groups have now migrated into Rockhampton and there is a massive mix of clan groups in Rockhampton now which can sometimes cause some tension. There are lots of Aboriginal people who live here too as well as people from the Torres Strait, Fiji and Papua New Guinea and lots of Melanesian people live here too.
12. During colonisation, my ancestors on my mum's side were moved to the Woorabinda mission. My mum's grandmother was Aboriginal from Bauhinia Downs area and her grandfather, we think was from southeast Queensland. We are currently tracing records which suggest that that her grandfather had an Aboriginal mother and a South Sea Islander father from Santos Island in Vanuatu who we think must have been blackbirded to Australia.
13. My mum's dad and grandparents lived on the Woorabinda mission but were then moved to Rockhampton after they were made exempt from the mission. The reason they were made exempt from the mission is because one of their sons (my Pop's (grandfathers) brother (my great uncle)) passed away while living on the Mission because he didn't receive proper healthcare. On my dad's side, my great-grandfather and great-grandmother were moved to the Palm Island mission. They originally came from the Cape York Peninsula area in Far North Queensland, around Clermont and Nebo, and they were removed to Palm Island. There were no traditional owners of Palm Island because it wasn't inhabited so they used this island that was free to put all of our mob out of the way. It's isolating because there's water all around, so it made it hard to try and escape the mission. They were kicked off Palm Island and were sent to Woorabinda to make houses and then they moved into Rockhampton and were one of the first Aboriginal families to buy a house in the area.
14. For the last two years, my mum and I have been trying to track our family history. But it has been really difficult, a lot of records were burnt after the Missions were decommissioned and there is lots of trauma and sadness which means that this history gets lost. This is why truth telling is important.
15. Colonisation took so much from us—our cultural identity, our cultural practices, and our deep connection to the land. Our generation is working tirelessly to revitalize what was lost, but the damage to the land, to the extent we're talking about, may not be repairable. In the context of climate change, we may lose the land that has been home to our people for over 60,000 years.

16. We are the oldest living culture. We have lived through climate change before but not at the helm of how we look after country now, not after colonisation. A lot of factors are out of our control now and the government doesn't consider our knowledge to deal with climate impacts. Before colonisation, we survived changes to the climate because we lived with the land, we left no trace of us being here which is why we don't have pyramids or big buildings. Our DNA is tied in these lands and losing it would be like losing a part of ourselves. This is a connection that can never be replaced.

My experiences with climate change-fuelled disasters

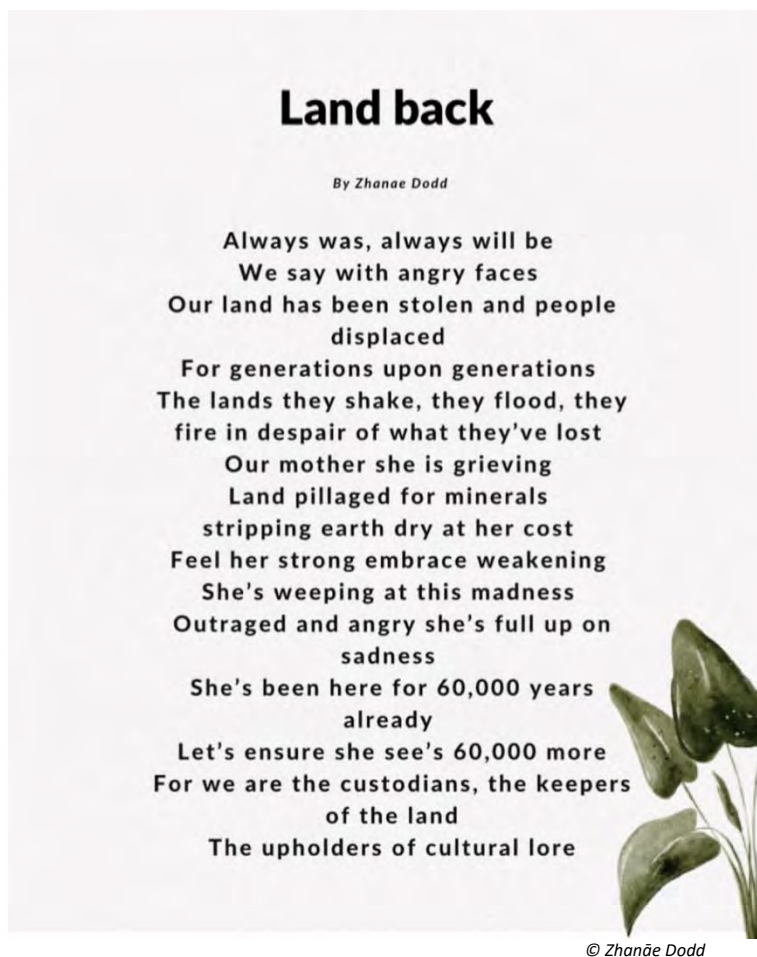
17. When my family moved to Depot Hill, Rockhampton, in 2005, I was eight years old. Born in 1997, I grew up experiencing a series of floods in the region that were unprecedented since the 1980s. The first major one I remember was the December 2010 – January 2011 floods, where the Fitzroy River reached a peak of 9.2 meters. The sight of all that water was overwhelming, and I struggled to comprehend how quickly it could arrive and the sheer power of it, I also remember how many snakes ended up in our house as our whole backyard and surrounding paddocks were flooded so they needed somewhere to go. I remember watching all the snakes swim in the water at the edge of our entertaining area at home. It made me realise how powerful mother nature is and how if we disrespect her, she retaliates. I remember thinking about how nature whispers and gives us signs and when we don't listen, she shouts which results in floods and cyclones. There were additional smaller floods, like the 2013 floods caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, which peaked at 8.61 meters, and again in 2015, when Cyclone Marcia brought heavy rainfall and caused significant flooding in the region.
18. In 2015, I was 18 years old, and I was working as a journalist for the Morning Bulletin in Rockhampton. This was also the year when Cyclone Marcia hit Rockhampton. I recall the rolling coverage in the office, covering the cyclone's path and impacts across Central Queensland. It was hectic—long hours of reporting, coordinating stories, and keeping the community informed. I even ended up sleeping in the office overnight a few times because the weather was so severe, and the situation demanded constant attention. Cyclone Marcia intensified rapidly to a Category 5 system before making landfall near Shoalwater Bay, north of Rockhampton, bringing destructive winds and heavy rainfall. The cyclone caused widespread damage to homes and infrastructure in Rockhampton and surrounding areas. I took some photographs of the flooding and they were published by the Courier Mail, which can be found [here](#).
19. Later, Rockhampton then experienced severe droughts for 3 years. I also covered these as a journalist between 2015 and 2018 with the Rural Weekly, I continued to witness the devastating impact on farmers and the community. An article I wrote about flooding can be found [here](#). I spoke with heartbroken farmers who were forced to put down their livestock due to the lack of feed and water. I had grown men in tears talking to me on the phone telling me "I had to shoot the last of my cattle". They form attachments to their livestock too. Many shared stories of immense financial, mental, and physical strain, leading to tragic losses such as suicides. These conversations remain with me, a reminder of the harsh reality faced by those in Central and Central West Queensland during those years.
20. I remember the devastation of people losing so much of what they worked hard for. I remember having really deep yarns where people would just pour their hearts out to me, essentially a stranger. I remember being so well connected, information-wise, was always so helpful for my family because I could give them

an early heads up or let them know when certain things were happening. These events made me so hyper aware of the power the press had, I had access to information before anyone else did and was able to tell my family - just makes me think about the control the media have on these narratives.

Coal mining on my country and lack of legal recognition

21. When I go out on country, I like to talk to country and often I will talk to country in language. For example, when I'm on Darumbal country, I speak in Darumbal language or when I'm on my country, I will speak my language, and I like to walk barefoot in the grass and connect with country and my ancestors.
22. As an Indigenous woman, I feel the impact of these events and the overall lack of care for country and her sadness. It's not necessarily climate change on its own, it's natural disasters and pollution too. You walk country and she's littered, she might be dryer when she is supposed to be looking lush. When I'm on country, I feel her sadness from those events. Country is always listening and keeps score and as I see climate change take hold and seeing the damage being caused to her, it is deeply painful to me.
23. It's incredibly hard to care for our land when we don't have full access or rights due to the limitations of native title. Native Title recognises the traditional rights and connection to our lands as well as heritage protection (but that is limited by weak enforcement and lengthy legal processes). We don't have native title but even with it we are still limited in proving continuous connection under colonised legal frameworks and therefore we cannot override existing leases, mining interests, farming etc so we mostly still can't access country and rely on the "goodwill" of companies to work with us on land care for country. We still see sacred sites damaged or completely gone for development/mining.
24. Our connection to the land runs deep, but when we're prevented from practising true custodianship because of legal constraints, it feels like a constant struggle. The coal mining activities on our land, coupled with the lack of binding environmental protections due to the gaps in native title, only deepen this sense of helplessness. These industries, without proper regulation, continue to damage the land without being held accountable for restoration or reducing their carbon output.
25. We walk a fine line as Indigenous people in this region when it comes to mining because we need to look after our families, and we need money and some of the best economic opportunities that exist are apprenticeships and jobs in the mines. However, there are a lot of work that needs to be done in rehabilitation and cultural safety for workers in the mines and how to work in cultural safe ways and also caring for country. We have mindset that because we don't have native title you need to work with them because these companies are going to do it anyway. There are great examples from my mob for improving cultural safety in mines. There are a lot of different opinions in this region about it.
26. As my connection with my country and culture strengthens, I understand her (my country) pain and sadness on a much deeper level. I now take time to sit with her and yarn with her. Not just my country but also all of Queensland. There are different and better ways to do things, and you can't keep taking from our land and expect her not to retaliate. Coal is only going to last for so long. We are now seeing renewables folk come through and there's no talk about decommissioning of wind farm mines once they are done. So once again we are seeing some renewable companies take advantage of the situation. The footprint that windfarms leave after they are finished sucks too.

27. Land is part of our kinship system. Mining is so extractive and does so much damage to country. When I look at how damaged country is, it's like seeing a relative sad and sick. The older you get, the deeper you get and the more that you understand it. I believe that climate change is country fighting back. I have written poems about this. Like my poem Land Back:



28. The power that mother earth holds - there is a reason that we live with the land and not on it. Money is good but if you have no country to live then it's worth nothing. Climate change is country speaking back, 100%. We are seeing the fires in LA and Queensland and just this month in Rockhampton, we've had extreme thunderstorms, extreme heatwaves and then pouring rain for days after that. We've even had hail - I've only ever seen hail in Rockhampton once or twice, now it is happening regularly. This weather is not normal. I think she's angry. She will be whisper and gives you hints, like the change of the seasons, but just like a child, she's going to scream if you're not listening.

How my health is impacted by climate change

29. I have a chronic health condition called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome or POTS as we call it. POTS is a health condition that causes dizziness and a fast heartbeat when you stand up, as well as a range of other symptoms. It can make daily activities very difficult. It is caused by a problem with your autonomic nervous system. This is the part of your nervous system that controls body functions that happen automatically, without you needing to think about them, such as your heartbeat, blood pressure,

body temperature and digestion. It took me ages to get diagnosed with POTS, especially because I live in a regional area, and I had to go through the private healthcare system to get a diagnosis. The public healthcare system sent me away because they thought I was too young.

30. I also have asthma, and I have since I was young. Moving to Rockhampton when I was four years old was actually a decision made due to pollution in Brisbane worsening my Asthma and Croup. My asthma improved upon moving to Rockhampton and I ended up only having to really worry about my Asthma in winter (seasonal).
31. I have been told that one of the things that could remedy my POTS was to live in a cooler environment and avoid hot places (which is hard when you come from Central Queensland). I tried living in New Zealand and it improved my POTS so much, my quality of life was crazily different, but I missed my country and connection to my ancestors and cultural practices too much so moved home. Living back in Queensland now is taking a toll on my body – but it is a sacrifice I have to make. It will only get worse as climate changes heats up our beloved spaces and places.
32. I have a different connection to Queensland, all my family are from clans in Queensland, compared to anywhere else. When I left to go to New Zealand, I just got really sick after a time and had back-to-back sicknesses. The doctors just said that I got unlucky and had caught one sickness after the other and I ended up having to go to hospital. I talked to my mob and friend Jordy, and they said maybe you should just come home. It's that unexplainable connection you have to country. It's in your DNA. When you get sick, you use bush medicine from your country to heal you from sickness, because it is your DNA. When we don't have access to that, what does it mean to for us. I'm not alone in that experience in that either.
33. As I mentioned before, my totem is a scrub turkey. My friend Jordy's totem is an eagle. When I see a rainbow, I know it's a sign from my old people and ancestors representing our creator of life the rainbow serpent. When I went home from the hospital in New Zealand, I saw an eagle and I knew it was time to go home. The googoobinj (scrub turkey) started visiting all my friends when I got home to Queensland. People said that they hadn't seen googoobinj in years. When I got home, I started seeing rainbows in our house, and I knew that I needed to be home. I get signs from my ancestors and as well as each other's ancestors. We take our instruction from nature, country, everything has a season and time to be in certain places. Things work out all in good time, and we are exactly where we are meant to be.
34. As temperatures rise, I know that managing my POTS will get much harder. I already struggle with the heat, and while I can do certain things to manage it, I fear that there may come a time when I'll have to leave Queensland—my ancestral home—to move somewhere colder just so I can function "normally" as a human. This is extremely stressful to me because I can feel country and my ancestors, it is always calling to me. Our land matches our frequency and that's why you feel so good when you are on your country. New Zealand was so quiet for me because they weren't my ancestors. It's different, and I don't want to lose that.
35. Traditionally, when you die, mob are buried in trees so we can go back to land. I think about the importance of returning bones and returning to country so spirits can rest. It worries me that I might not be able to live on and return to my country if climate change continues this way. I hear of mines that operate on sacred sites, and they get lots of spiritual activity. Are we going to get lots of unsettled ancestors because of climate change? There is power in returning to country because the old people are

there. When my grandfather was buried, he didn't want a hard cover grave site so his spirit could go free. He was so adamant. When people disrupt sacred sites, you will have unsettled spirits and ancestors causing a bit of mischief. The land holds a lot more spiritually than people give it credit for. I will never take something from someone else's land because it's not mine to take. You have to leave the place better than when you found it and only take what you need. If we have places that are so mistreated and devastated as a result of climate change, there are going to be a lot of unsettled ancestors. I would be an unsettled spirit too if this happened to me.

36. I always say that when we are born, we come from country, and when we die, we return to it. My old people and ancestors live in the country—every tree, rock, waterway, and animal holds the yuindi (the spirit) of my people and culture. They are an extension of our kinship system; we talk with the land, walk with the land, and take cues from the land for what happens in our next season of life. What happens when I no longer have my land to sit with? Where will my spirit go when it's my time? I want to rest with my mob on my land—climate change threatens that reality.

How climate change is impacting my life and my culture

37. Climate change is putting cultural practices and preservation at grave risk. For First Nations peoples, the land is our connection to identity, spirit, and knowledge. Rising sea levels, wildfires, and land degradation endanger sacred sites, disrupt traditional ecological practices, and threaten the continuity of our cultural heritage. Moving to Indigenous-led farming practices offers an opportunity to preserve land, restore ecosystems, and embed sustainable agricultural methods that have been honed over thousands of years.
38. I am also deeply aware of the broader effects of climate change. The intensifying frequency and severity of wildfires globally are devastating ecosystems and emitting vast amounts of carbon dioxide. Being a young person without children yet, I often wonder whether I should bring children into this world. I would love to, but the issues surrounding climate change and the uncertain future often make me doubt it.
39. As a young Indigenous young person, I also think about what my responsibility is to country? Is it advocacy, is it what you do everyday life and how do I honour these systems and new ways of operating? I would hate to my country be touched and hope that it remains untouched. A big climate change impact is likely to be drought for my country. A lot of river systems rely on rain.
40. I worry that I won't be able to live on country because of climate change. There is a heatwave in Rockhampton (Rocky for short) at the moment. We always get a heatwave but it's ridiculous this year. That standard temperature feels like it's getting hotter and hotter each year. It gets so ridiculously hot. I worry about how viable it is for mob living in remote or discrete communities too who rely on water sources from estuaries and streams which are fed by rain and but there's water allocations diverting our water away. What's the viability in 20- or 30-years' time? I have good friends from Woorabinda, which is a discrete and remote Indigenous community about 2.5 hours west of Rocky. It's got a lot of bushlands and it's really dry. The population is 1,019 people and I am related to lots of people out there and know almost everyone. The community in Woorabinda rely heavily on rain and when I go out there I see how much my friends struggle to live in town.
41. You need access to a car to get to Woorabinda and it's expensive to get fuel. The pressures that the country out there is facing, and I don't know what it is going to look like with worsening climate change

impacts. I don't know where our mob go if they can't live on country. What do dry seasons look like? What do wet seasons look like? Woorabinda relies on the Dawson River but then if things impact that river, then what does it look like for mob living out there? Its already, economically, hard to live out there because there is no economy out there for mob. But people want to live on country so what does that look like if climate change makes it easier to live on coastline and they choose or are forced to leave?

42. I worry about the water the most and it's a very dry country here. We know that no water leads to bushfires. Mob I talked to who grew up in the mission, they are so close to nature, they understand how nature works. They are seeing the creeks fill up and dry out firsthand. Suburban people don't see nature as severely day in and day out. It's such a visual thing and seeing it and you know.
43. What happens if there's no water? In Rocky we can get relaxed about water access, it's a massive river and it's a massive water system as it's so well connected to other river systems but it's important to take cues from the seasons and not just be reactive about water access. With Indigenous ways of living, we take cues from the world around us and act accordingly.
44. Because of climate change, a lot of our law is changing too and in terms of how we read country and how we navigate sky country. With light pollution we can't navigate sky country and the changing of seasons due to climate change is causing the sky and land country to not match up. The Dark Emu constellation when it's positioned in a certain way indicates what's happening with the emus here on land. As seasons change and nature adapts because of climate change, this knowledge is not reflective of what's happening anymore.
45. Totems are also important, it is another way is to keep the food sources balanced in nature. Depending on what clan group you come from totems are different, but on my country the totems that you are given you are not allowed to eat. I wouldn't be able to hunt googoobinj, but another clan group could. However, if you are gifted another totem from another group, then you can eat it. Having totems helps with marriage systems and kinship systems but it also ensures ecological balance so there is not overhunting of certain food sources. Totems can be animals, rivers, plants, and anything that exists in nature. So, the whole idea that our old people had is to maintain balance.
46. We have hunting rules too – like not hunting emus when they are having babies. June-July are emu hatchling months. But other times of the year, you can hunt and cull them because the populations are so large. Currently we don't have such strong laws now, but the old ways kept everything really beautifully balanced.
47. My Elders always said growing up “As above so below” which means what's happening in the sky affects what's on the ground. We've always taken our guides from the sky but now down here is dictating what's happening up there. There is almost this disconnect between land and sky country. That's never happened before. These are unprecedented times.
48. We now don't know who has cultural authority to change our approach. We don't know which Elders have the right knowledge. This could be because of their own trauma they carry or because of disagreements between who holds what authority and what gets passed down. Sometimes only knowledge get passed down within a family group. My Elders teach my family group but what they share might not be to the whole family group or tribe.

49. Getting younger ones to understand all of this is hard: how to do the knowledge transfer, how the knowledge is changing, how do we make the next generation that care now when there are so many young people that care but are still acting young? These conversations aren't happening in communities. They see the changes to country but aren't making the connection to climate change so they don't understand why it's happening and what we can do to change it. It's education and the yarns, but we've stopped talking about the big things in depth.
50. This combination of natural disasters, climate harms, and systemic barriers to land access has had a profound impact on my culture, my people, and my ability to protect our environment. Seeing so many extreme weather events also made me observe that it was one of the only times communities rallied around one another. Indigenous people have valuable knowledge and frameworks for addressing these issues, yet we're often left out of the conversation. I have been thinking about this recently with the L.A bushfires. There are lots of eucalyptus trees planted in L.A and they explode when they catch on fire. Eucalyptus trees are native to Australia. All someone needed to do was ask an Indigenous person from Australia about these trees before they were planted, and they could have explained that they can explode when they catch fire. To me, this experience emphasises the urgent need for more Indigenous-led solutions that allow us to care for country and address climate impacts.
51. Seeing climate change impacts to country, it gives me the same feeling as if you know a relative is sick with cancer and you are not sure what to do. You think about the efforts of recovery or support but there's also your own physical reaction, where you think, 'I don't know what's next, when am I going to lose you, will you pull through?' It's like when you physically see someone sick or take a turn and you hold your breath. That's the closest I can explain.

Dancing as a way of keeping culture alive

52. As I mentioned above, I'm a dancer with the Burriburra Dance Troupe in Rockhampton.¹ Burriburra means people of the fire in my language (Ghungalu) and Darumbal language. With my Dance Troupe, we do the traditional style of dance which is corroboree and through our dancing we tell stories of our cultural protocols and of land and landscape. The dances that we do are very specific to Ghungalu country and Darumbal country. For example, some of the songs intertwine both Darumbal and Ghungalu language and we do dances that make sure people are safe when they are walking on the countries. Our songs are new songs based in our languages. We've got a handful of dances, and we are continuously building them.
53. Our culture is always evolving and changing and moving to keep telling the stories that come along, you don't just tell one story over and over again, it's the same with culture. New dances come based on our

¹ For videos of my dancing please see here:

<https://envirojustice.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/share/EVTMuf9rTY1Kmm5I51l4tbIBReVafH0dPx7KX1StPyFGaQ?e=5sNNys>
<https://envirojustice.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/share/EQXb5IMCq5ZPTyXzRjzFnWABT0IECBXuql1Qh8bOrn8h6A?e=fmPVc7>
<https://envirojustice.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/share/EUkcU3ZNICBNvrzdgBPmYQ4B9gRKUKgl1OCHZxIRA3XTyA?e=qfCclV>

cultural lore and processes which also change as we and society evolves. As long as our practices are rooted in our traditional ways, we are allowed to tell our modern stories. That's how we came to be the longest continuous living culture in the world. We also create our dances and stories as a collective, I am a woman so I cannot play didgeridoo and therefore we need to men to co-create with us so we as the women can sing our songlines and create our stories as a collective. Everyone has a strength and must be involved because we as people were not built to do it all or hold all the knowledge, we were built to live collectively, we need each other and that's why it takes a community, a village.

54. In our dance troupe, we have a dance which is a welcoming to country. We have a dance which mirrors the way Brolgas dance (Brolgas are Australia's largest water bird) to represent the landscape we live on. We also have a "medicine woman" dance which tells the story of the medicine woman who would wrap twine around the teeth of someone who was sick and bleed the gums with twine to get rid of sickness and illness and then they would be okay to continue with their life. When I think about climate change, I don't know how we could continue to create dances to share important cultural knowledge when the dances and protocols are based on our land and country. As a First Nations person, I have an unexplainable connection to country – it is just in my DNA. Country knows how to heal you and fix you and when I think about the fact that climate change is threatening access to that, it makes me wonder what that means for my culture and community both physically and spiritually.
55. Our boys have a war cry, this is equivalent of the Haka, the traditional Māori dance. The war cry is the story about how the men would fight before you are able to come onto country. The Dance Troupe is important because you need to be a collective to share this information – each person brings specific skills. For instance, playing the Didgeridoo can only be played by boys. If you don't have a boy who can do this part, then the knowledge is lost. In the dance troupe, we also try to bring our traditional dances into contemporary settings. Recently, we did a Neon corroboree – we paint ourselves in neon paint and performed under black lights. The audience who showed up to watch the corroboree was huge. These are more important than ever because we are keeping the knowledge and passing it on to the next generation.

My work and advocating for Indigenous-led innovation to tackle climate change

56. Many Indigenous communities are on the frontline of climate impacts, facing threats to their land, cultural heritage, and livelihoods, often with limited resources to adapt. I'm particularly worried for my friends in the Pacific and the Torres Strait, who are facing the real possibility of losing their homes and becoming climate refugees, as their homelands are threatened by rising seas and resource scarcity. Where will they go? Will Australia be able to support them? And, more importantly, will Australia be willing to? Historically, the treatment of refugees in Australia has been appalling, and I fear that pattern will continue.
57. Nuclear testing in Australia and the wider Pacific has only compounded environmental degradation, further delaying effective climate solutions and leaving a toxic legacy for future generations.
58. My response to these urgent issues is rooted in solutions that empower Indigenous communities and harness the wisdom of our knowledge systems. I am currently working on my startup, **Burri Energy**, which focuses on utilizing Indigenous knowledge in **Direct Air Capture (DAC)** technology. By leveraging

materials like ochre, limestone, and mining tailings, we aim to accelerate the natural carbon capture process. As Indigenous peoples always use the resources that are abundant to ensure ecosystems remain balanced and this area in Central Queensland is super limestone rich.

59. Burri Energy integrates these methods with solar energy and Indigenous kiln ovens to remove carbon from the atmosphere efficiently. We plan to co-locate some DAC operations in Indigenous communities, creating opportunities for economic empowerment that are not just financial but also social, environmental, spiritual, and physical. Our captured carbon will be sold to industries such as the emerging hydrogen sector in Central Queensland, ensuring that our solutions contribute to sustainable economic growth while addressing climate change. Burri Energy reflects my belief in the power of Indigenous-led innovation to tackle climate change, restore ecosystems, and ensure our cultural and environmental futures are preserved for generations to come.
60. My advocacy is grounded in creating equity and opportunity for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous peoples worldwide. Meaningful conversations about First Nations justice, equity, and opportunity must address land back, land care, sovereignty, climate change, and the structural inequalities our communities face. My work—past and present—focuses on advancing human rights for Indigenous people and children. I've passionately worked in the Youth Justice space, championing proactive and restorative approaches over punitive systems. I advocate for better educational approaches for our kids, including embedding truth-telling into curriculums to foster understanding, respect, and cultural pride. I've also been a vocal advocate for improved Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) approaches tailored to the unique needs of our mob, as well as cultural safety training for police to ensure better outcomes for our communities. As a strong proponent of Indigenous governance and economies, I work to empower First Nations self-determination through initiatives that centre Indigenous leadership and sustainable economic development. Through my work in teaching our culture and cultural practices widely, I aim to highlight the immense power of our knowledge systems while emphasising the unbreakable connection between our people and our country.
61. Given my algorithm on my socials (FB, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn) and the advocacy work I am involved in across the Pacific, I am looking at news on climate change daily. Even if I am not actively looking it is there and in your face. I use a lot of sources for my news. I rely on sources like National Indigenous Television (NITV), National Indigenous Times and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is a big source I use and then my friends who actually work in the climate change space fulltime. Instagram is where I get a lot of articles shared and linked to me.
62. I feel so annoyed a lot of the time, like why does it feel that only a handful of people care? I would absolutely LOVE to stick my head in the sand and live off grid and disconnect from the news cycle and frolic in nature but my way of living, my life, my culture, my mob, our Indigenous brothers and sisters and cousins globally are in a space where we must be tapped in, must be active, must know what is going on so we can activate community and mobilise our resources. My existence as an Indigenous person, as a woman is political and I was born into an advocacy role that I didn't get to choose because my right to exist peacefully with equity and sovereignty isn't a right that is practiced and accepted by the general public or systems yet and I want that to be the case for the next gen so I have to be tapped in.
63. Climate change sucks. To be honest I think the most infuriating thing is that Indigenous people globally have always held the solutions to climate change, yet they are rarely consulted, and it is not until a

disaster hits and effects mainstream people that there is push for Indigenous consultation. I always think about how we as Aboriginal people have lived with the land, walked alongside it. Look at our impact on the country over 60,000 years, we didn't impose on the environment and create grand scale architecture like the Egyptians or the Greeks or Romans, we really lived with the land – right down to burials in trees. We live with the environment.

64. I don't know who I am without my connection to country and that's something that's in my DNA that I can't change, it'll be something that's in my children's DNA (if I choose to have them). I guess sometimes this just feels really hopeless if I am being honest. It just feels like we talk about change, but it comes in such small doses that sometimes it doesn't feel worth it, but we push forward and keep going. I think that climate change affects every area of my life and the decisions I make. It affects my health on all levels, physically, mentally, spiritually and culturally. It affects my future ambitions too. For example, when Queensland took Treaty off the table, I gave up my dream spot at the New York Academy of Dramatic Arts Acting Conservatory program to lobby and advocate for treaty because that comes back to caring for country and climate change. I have had to shape my whole life around advocacy for mob and country because of the government's inaction.

Demanding Action: Treaty, Truth-Telling, Land Back, Indigenous Economic Models & Climate Justice

65. Australia is failing me, my culture and Country. The devastating impacts that I've seen from climate change represent the core of our downfall as a society in Australia. We are only as good as the people who lead us and the Australian government's failure to take action on climate change and to care for country is the reason why climate change is threatening my reality and deeply impacting mob, culture and Country.
66. I am concerned that we may be reaching the point of no return. Australia often operates under reactive governments, and by the time they realize something needs to be done, it's often too late. I'm scared that we will lose our coastlines and other vital parts of our environment. I want to see Indigenous burning practices implemented across the country to reduce the risk of devastating bushfires, but it often feels like no one is listening.
67. Australia stands at a crossroads, where the choices we make today will define our future and the legacy we leave for generations. As a proud Aboriginal woman, I call on the Australian government to take bold, meaningful action rooted in justice, respect, and environmental stewardship.

1. Treaty & Sovereignty

- Genuine reconciliation starts with Treaty. Treaty is more than an agreement—it is the recognition of our sovereignty and our right to self-determination. It means embedding Indigenous governance in every level of decision-making, ensuring that our cultural practices, laws, and knowledge systems are respected and upheld. The government must recommit to Treaty processes, ensuring that First Nations people are at the helm of shaping our collective future.
- I also think it's important to give Indigenous people access to these systems to make change. Don't just consult us tokenistically, don't just invite us to sit at the table. I want a new table, new chairs and I want equal representation in those chairs. I want to see knowledge valued in proactive ways, not reactive. Treaty is the foundation underpinning all of this. The Government needs to put money

where their mouth is. They need to invest the money in Indigenous people and futures, they can't just pump us for information.

2. Truth-Telling

- To heal and move forward, we must acknowledge the brutal realities of colonisation. This means implementing nationwide truth-telling initiatives, embedding our history in school curriculums, and creating platforms where Indigenous voices are heard and honoured. The truth is the foundation upon which meaningful change can be built.

3. Land Back, Native Title Reform & Indigenous Land Governance

- For over 60,000 years, First Nations people have managed and nurtured this land. Yet, our right to care for Country is undermined by weak protections, exploitative industries, and restrictive Native Title processes. The government must:
 - o Return decision-making power to Traditional Owners.
 - o Strengthen laws protecting sacred sites and cultural heritage.
 - o Enforce stringent regulations on mining and land use.
 - o Adopt Indigenous-led land management practices, like cultural burning, to heal and protect Country.

Native Title is Failing Our People

- Native Title operates within a colonial framework that still denies First Nations people true land justice. Instead of recognising our inherent ownership, it forces us to "prove" our connection to Country under a legal system that was designed to dispossess us. Some of the key issues include.
 - o **The Burden of Proof** – Mob are forced to provide overwhelming evidence of ongoing connection to land, despite colonisation deliberately trying to erase our histories and records.
 - o **Limited Land Rights** – Even when Native Title is granted, it rarely provides full control. Mining, agriculture, and development interests still take priority, and Traditional Owners often only receive "non-exclusive" rights.
 - o **White Decision-Makers** – Even when we provide evidence, non-Indigenous judges and government officials still have the power to reject claims and approve destructive projects against our wishes.
 - o **Colonial Decision-Making** – Native Title locks us into Western legal frameworks that don't align with our governance systems, preventing holistic care for both land and people.

4. Revitalising & Developing Indigenous Economic Models

- The Australian government needs to work from an Indigenous economic model, one that focuses on yuindi (spirit and wellbeing) rather than just monetary profit. Colonisation and capitalism are so deeply intertwined that it's hard to separate them, but Indigenous economies (globally) work differently. These economies centre the wellbeing of the collective, and wealth is not measured by how much you have, but by how much flows through your hands to benefit the collective. If we reshaped the economy in this way, climate change would be addressed more effectively. Indigenous frameworks, governance, and ways of being must be embraced—not just in Australia, but globally.

- The Australian government must move away from exploitative, Western capitalist economic models and recognise the power of Indigenous economies—systems that have existed for thousands of years and prioritise collective well-being over profit.
 - **Revitalising Indigenous Economies Nationally** – Indigenous economies are rooted in sustainability, community wealth-sharing, and reciprocity. We need government investment in Indigenous-led industries, including land care, carbon capture, renewable energy, and traditional trade networks.
 - **International Indigenous Economic Development** – Australia should be working with First Nations people globally to strengthen Indigenous-to-Indigenous trade, governance, and knowledge-sharing.
 - **Moving Beyond Capitalism** – True wealth is not measured by individual profit but by how much flows through the community. Indigenous economic models emphasise balance—ensuring that money, resources, and opportunities benefit the collective.

5. Support for Indigenous Start-ups & Innovation

- Indigenous entrepreneurs are pioneering solutions to capture carbon, restore ecosystems, and create sustainable futures. However, the current funding landscape remains restrictive, inaccessible, and rooted in capitalist models that prioritise profit over community impact. The government must:
 - **Invest in Indigenous start-ups focused on environmental innovation** by providing accessible funding and resources to scale these initiatives. Funding should not be tied to rigid Western business models but should instead reflect Indigenous ways of working, which prioritise collective benefit, long-term sustainability, and cultural integrity.
 - **Develop targeted grants and support programs** that prioritise Indigenous-led enterprises, ensuring that solutions are rooted in cultural knowledge and benefit our communities. These grants should be designed in partnership with Indigenous business leaders and remove unnecessary barriers such as excessive bureaucratic reporting, unrealistic timeframes, and rigid financial structures that do not align with Indigenous economic models.
 - **Create alternative funding and reporting models** that move beyond capitalist frameworks. Indigenous businesses do not always operate for individual profit—they often function as community-driven initiatives where wealth is shared, reinvested into land care, and distributed for collective well-being. Funding programs must recognise and accommodate these structures rather than forcing mob into restrictive Western economic models that do not serve our people.
 - **Provide long-term funding security** rather than short-term, one-off grants that require constant reapplication and justification. Indigenous solutions are generational, and funding should reflect that. Indigenous entrepreneurship is about more than just business—it is about cultural, environmental, and community survival. We need funding structures that empower Indigenous-led solutions on our terms, rather than making us conform to colonial economic systems that were never built for us.

6. Health & Well-being: Recognising "Longing for Country" as a Critical Health Issue

- Western health systems continue to fail Indigenous people because they separate mental, physical, spiritual, and cultural well-being. We need a health system that treats Indigenous health holistically—where land, culture, and community are considered central to well-being.

- **Recognising "Longing for Country" as a Mental Health Condition** – Tracey Westerman (Indigenous Psychologist) is advocating for "longing for Country" to be recognised as having the same psychological impacts as depression and anxiety. The separation from Country, often caused by colonisation, forced removals, and economic barriers, has direct effects on our mental and physical health.
- **Embedding Cultural Healing in Health Systems** – Indigenous-led health programs must be expanded and properly funded, ensuring mob have access to culturally safe care that recognises the importance of Country in our healing.
- **Health Policy Rooted in Indigenous Knowledge** – Governments must integrate Indigenous models of health and well-being into public health policy, recognising that Indigenous health cannot be treated separately from land justice, sovereignty, and cultural identity.

7. Global Environmental Advocacy

- Climate change is a global issue, but its impacts are deeply local, affecting our communities, culture, and Country. Australia must take a stronger stance on the international stage by:
 - Holding multinational corporations accountable for their environmental footprints.
 - Advocating for stringent global climate agreements that prioritise the voices and rights of Indigenous peoples.
 - Supporting climate refugees, especially our brothers and sisters in the Pacific, as their lands are threatened by rising seas.

I confirm the contents of this statements are a true and correct record of my evidence.

Name: Zhanāe Dodd


Signature

18/03/2025

Date

Annexure A







Warama