

Australian and New Zealand Leadership Summit 2017

Down here in Melbourne, Australia, we have just held our inaugural Australia New Zealand Leadership Summit (ANZLS).

Taking inspiration from the annual Burning Man Global Leadership Conference, this summit has been spoken about in the local community for many years. With the support and encouragement from Megs, Steven and the regionals team at BM HQ we met for our inaugural ANZLS on Saturday the 10th of June.

Our mission statement was:

"To facilitate meaningful dialogue, skill-sharing, knowledge exchange and relationship building between regional event organisers and community leaders in the Australian & New Zealand region."

The ANZLS key theme was – Participation, Collaboration, Appreciation

Invited along to participate were all of the Burning Man regional contacts from Australia and New Zealand, lead official Regional event organisers from KiwiBurn, Burning Seed, Blazing Swan, and our newest official regional "Modifyre". Modifyre has just been granted official Regional Burn status for their fourth event to be held in July, Queensland Australia. We also had six community leaders, chosen by regional contacts, to join us.

The tyranny of distance has often hampered greater Burner community collaboration in this country. The ANZLS was a significant event to bring us all together on a multinational level and build stronger relationships across incredible distance.

To put things in perspective, Australia is a very large country. Our delegates from Western Australia flew 1,697 miles to join us and our northernmost regional contacts from Far North Queensland had a 1,445 mile journey. Pete "Lumos" Watt, one of two regional contacts in New Zealand and Board member for KiwiBurn, flew 1,681 miles across the ditch ("large ocean area") from Auckland New Zealand to collaborate with us.

Before the ANZLS, a number of the attendees met up informally on the Friday night at the home of AlanJohn Jones and the post Summit celebration was timely for support of a local theme camp fundraiser event on the Saturday night.

Kicking off the day's proceedings was 'Aunty Diane', an elder from the Wiradjuri nation who performed a Welcome to Country and Smoking ceremony. This ceremony is an ancient custom of great significance to many Indigenous people (for more details, please read;

<http://www.australianstogether.org.au/stories/detail/welcome-to-country>

Aunty Diane spoke about her people's long tradition of coming together on this land. Aunty Diane implored us as leaders to listen to each other, as all leaders should do. It was an extremely moving and poignant way to start the ANZLS.

For our first year, we chose to hold the ANZLS on one day only. The invitees, as mentioned earlier, were a diverse group of Burners across our communities in Australia and New Zealand. We encouraged as many of the attendees to present as possible within the one day event schedule.

Richard Martin and Robin Macpherson spoke about the early days of the Burning Man movement in Australia. They shared with us the concepts of “servant leadership” philosophy and practice. We enjoyed the metaphors of holding the flag and playing in the sandpit as guides for how we encourage succession, embrace change and expand into new endeavours.

Steph from Artery Team at Burning Seed shared with us the growth in art projects and grants over past years. We were taken on a journey of art at Burning Seed, the development of grant processes, artist mentoring and the increasing opportunities for artist moving between local regional events and other community festivals.

Frank Mitchell, Perth regional contact and Artery team lead for Blazing Swan explained the current challenges for flame effect artists. The current national standards and regulations, or lack thereof, for fire effects in Australia poses many challenges. This led to a greater appreciation of the shared opportunity across artists working in this field to collaborate on addressing the gaps in existing regulations.

Amy Richardson from the Modifyre (did we mention our newest regional burn!!!) shared with us the stories from her local region Brisbane, Queensland. We were inspired by their year round community endeavours which now culminate in their annual celebration as a community with Modifyre.

Jarred Taylor, regional contact for Sydney shared important updates from the regional network team in San Francisco. He discussed upcoming changes to the Burning Man website that will facilitate more focussed local community interactions by creating multiple regions within Australia. Jarred outlined how the growth of Burning Man in Australia now provides a great opportunity for more local community leadership and involvement in the selection of Regional Contacts.

Nick Woodford as Theme Camp lead, Burning Seed, gave us a brief history of some of the largest and long running theme camps – the ups, the downs and the highlights of their amazing community gifting. Rhianna, Burning Seed lead for volunteers (which we refer to as “Crew wranglers”), shared the insights of facilitating volunteers for a large regional Burn.

Shaye Harty, Burning Seed, shared experiences, learnings and the collaborations occurring between regional events including AfrikaBurn, KiwiBurn, Blazing Swan, Modifyre and Burning Man through sharing of people, skills, knowledge, processes and policies.

AlanJohn Jones built for us a vision of the emerging Effigy build guild.

We were also privileged with the presentations from Ollie (Blazing Swan), Jo Roberts (Red Earth Ecology) and Pete Lumos (KiwiBurn). Ollie shared stories from the “Nest” which is one of the main the community spaces that supports the burner community throughout the year for building large art, events, skills, work programs and event storage facilities. Jo inspired us with the experiences of building extended community in the rural areas our events are held. Building relationships with the local communities where our events are held requires patience, time and lots of face to face meeting. Ecology renewal and remediation has been a deeply effective way of building relationships between the Burning Seed community and local residents through shared rituals.

Pete from KiwiBurn helped us explore the value of play and creativity in helping new burners connect more deeply at our burn events. His stories made us laugh and be inspired to find new ways of engaging with and helping newbies to embrace the culture of Burning Man.

Our final presentation was given by Justin McGhee, Neil Power & Dan Taylor. The subject was “Forming a National Burn Association” This was warmly received and an advisory committee has been formed.

A national body is a big evolutionary step for us down here and we're excited by what we can achieve together.

Out of the summit has come Australia & New Zealand wide collaboration & ongoing conversations around Australian Fire effects guidelines / standards, cross pollination of Burn policy's & procedures Crew volunteering procedures, Burner exchange program, Local community engagement ideas & programs, Effigy building skill sharing, Tree planting programs and a Burner Art exchange program.

The gathering was a resounding success and has paved the way for more cross Burn & community collaboration and engagement.

Jarred and I need to say a big thank you to Megs, Steven, Iris & Sauce from the Regionals team at Burning Man headquarters. Organising the summit was not without its hurdles and the crew at BM HQ were there with us every step of the way with advice, support and encouragement.

Next year's summit in 2018 will be extended to a full two days with more guest speakers, extended community invitation, further emphasis on regional event operational logistics, building stronger local communities and civic projects.

If you want to learn more about our Burns, please visit;

KiwiBurn - <http://www.kiwiburn.com/>

Blazing Swan - <http://blazingswan.com.au/>

Burning Seed - <http://burningseed.com/>

Modifyre - <http://www.modifyre.org/>

ANZLS 2017 Facilitators

Justin "The Captain" McGhee & Jarred "Jayman" Taylor



