

## Viewpoints from the New Australians on Aboriginal Land Usage and Management

---

### Source 1

*The gloomy forest had opened, and about 2 miles before, or rather beneath us – for the ground, thinly dotted with trees, sloped gently downwards – lay a plain about 7 miles in breadth. Its centre was occupied by a lagoon ... On either side of this plain, for some distance, was as level as a bowling green, until it was met by the forest ... The whole, as far as the eye could reach, was clothed with a thick coat of grass, rich and luxuriant, as if the drought, so destructive elsewhere, had never reached this favoured spot.*

*When the first white men came to the Omeo Plains (Victoria) all the best country was treeless.*

Reference: Henry Haygarth in Recollections of Bush Life in Australia, 148 in Bill Gammage, The Greatest Estate on Earth, 2012.

### Inquiry Questions:

1. Why would the new Australians describe the forest as gloomy?
2. Define the terms - lagoon, plain?
3. How was the landscape transformed into rich productive grasslands?
4. What contemporary issues arise from rural areas as a result of destructive drought?
5. What current land use management strategies are being used to combat drought prone Country?

### Source 2

*The 'natives' seemed to have burned the grass systematically along every watercourse, and round every waterhole, in order to have them surrounded with young grass as soon as the rain sets in. These burnings were not connected with camping places, where the fire is liable to spread from the fire places and would clear the neighbouring ground. Long strips of lately burnt grass were frequently observed extending for many miles along the creeks. The banks of small isolated water holes in the forest were equally attended to and although water had not been in either for a considerable time. It is no doubt connected with a systematic management of their runs, to attract game to particular spots in the same way that stockholders burn parts of theirs in proper seasons.*

Reference: Leichhardt in Bill Gammage, The Greatest Estate on Earth, 2012.



Joseph Lycett (c1775 – 1828), View on the Wingecarrabee River, NSW, 1821. State Library of Victoria.

### **Inquiry Questions:**

1. What would be the purpose of Aboriginal peoples having waterholes surrounded in grass?
2. What type of game was being lured to these rich surrounding water course grasses?
3. How would game be hunted, prepared and cooked?
4. Suggest reasons why camping areas were not connected with burn offs?
5. Refer to the Joseph Lycett painting above. Describe the landscape, in particular the vegetation cover. What does this suggest about ways Aboriginal peoples used and managed local Country and environment?

### **Source 3**

#### **Farms and no Fences**

By all accounts a farmer implies full time work. But no one did that in 1788, 'not by farmer notions of work (as in today) anyway'. Henry Waterhouse, 1804,

*I am at a loss to describe the face of the country otherways than as a beautiful park, totally divested of underwood, interspersed with plains with rich, luxuriant grass: but for want of feeding off, rank, except where recently burnt. This is the part where the cattle that have strayed have constantly fed – of course, their own selection.*

Reference: Bill Gammage, The Greatest Estate on Earth, 2012. PP. 281-2.

**Inquiry Questions:**

1. Why couldn't the author comprehend Country was a beautiful park?
2. How was Country transformed into this productive resource?

**Source 4**



Location. Royal Botanical Gardens Sydney NSW. Photo. Dave Lardner

**Inquiry Questions:**

1. How does this plaque ignore the practices of land usage by Aboriginal peoples?
2. Explain why this plaque represents a Eurocentric viewpoint?

## Source 5



Ku ring gai Chase by Sidney Nolan (1948). Source: National Gallery of Australia

### Inquiry Questions:

1. Describe the nature of the fire across the landscape in the image above – intensity, wind, ferocity, heat, possible noise, smoke etc.
2. Does this image promote a controlled burn or that of a bushfire?
3. Outline the impacts this sort of fire would have on local Country?
4. How can fire on local Country create ‘new beginnings’?