

The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought interesting. Read on for five comments or discussions I thought worth highlighting.

[From donkey votes to dog whistles, our election language has a long and political history](#)

[Christine Nicholls](#) shared a piece of political terminology that links back to an Indigenous language:

Great article - many thanks to the authors. (And not only that but it's good for all of us to lighten up a little with regard to the intensity forthcoming election).

I do recall that not so long ago the members of the Country Party (now the National Party of course) were described as the "Mulga Mafia" but that term seems to be no longer in use.

My reason for bringing this one into the arena is that it seems to be the only political terminology (at least that I know of - you may well know more, and so it would be terrific if they could be included in any further comments you make) that has a direct connection with Indigenous Australian languages - the use of 'mulga' to describe a dry, scrubby environment seems to extend from some language groups from SA - NSW. My original upbringing was in the country and it was certainly in use in those days for non-supporters of the Country Party (a minority at that time).

Your article left me wanting more - thank you again!

To which one of the article's authors, [Kate Burridge](#), replied:

Interesting — I'd forgotten about the extended use of "mulga". I just checked and there's an entry in the Australian National Dictionary with a quotation for mulga mafia (referring to the National Country Party). But I don't know of any other expressions that have gone into political language. But doesn't mean there aren't any — a good place to look would be the Oxford Uni Press book: Australian Aboriginal words in English : their origin and meaning.

Indigenous reconciliation is hard, it re-opens wounds to heal them

[Ed Wensing](#) argued that that the customs of "British colonisers" need to acknowledge and interact with those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia have never ceded their lands and Australia has never dealt fairly with them about the loss of their lands. We can no longer deny that the root of all property in land for settler Australians was acts of dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, acts of theft for which no-one has ever been held responsible (Kerruish and Purdy 1998). This denial of the existence of prior Aboriginal ownership of Australia has become an international embarrassment. It is no longer tolerable that we continue constructing legal orthodoxies that suit the settler state. For example, the provisions in the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) declaring that the extinguishment of native title has occurred (partly or wholly) will not make the laws and customs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people disappear.

We could start by accepting the reality that there are two systems of law and custom in Australia: that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the other brought to Australia by the British colonisers in 1788. These two systems are distinctly different from each other, and they have to learn new ways of dealing with each other more respectfully and with greater dignity than has been the case in the past.

Antarctic ice shows Australia's drought and flood risk is worse than thought

Michael Kirk had some questions about the article's research, to which one of the authors,

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Anthony Kiem, provided a comprehensive answer.

[Michael Kirk](#) :

Very interesting study - but I suspect there is a fair margin of error in the predictive ability for Australian climate from the Antarctic data.

It seems a single variable is taken from the ice cores (salt deposition) and it is mentioned in the article that this value is affected by at least three separate factors - ENSO, IPO, and SAM. Unless these three things are dependent on each other (i.e. a single phenomenon), it seems unlikely that you could predict the state of all three systems from a single variable. Furthermore, although there is about 1000 years of ice data, there is only about 100 years of records with which to test the correlation.

I was confused also by the reference to a specific region in Australia - the Williams River catchment. Is the ice data being used to guess at a state for the ENSO, IPO, and SAM, and then climate models used to map from the estimated state to a expected length of wet or dry in a particular region? If so, what would the margin of error be?

[Anthony Kiem](#) :

Thanks Michael. You are correct about the margin of error. There is uncertainty associated with this, and every other reconstruction, especially around exactly how wet the wet periods were. However, the uncertainty associated with the timing and duration of the pre-instrumental wet and dry periods is a lot less than the uncertainty associated with magnitudes. How do we know this? By comparing our results with other independent studies that use totally different sources of palaeoclimate information to provide insights about pre-instrumental history. When we do this we find that the multiple lines of evidence agree a lot of the time and importantly the main conclusion doesn't change – that the instrumental period (last ~100yrs) does not capture the full range of variability that has occurred. Some other papers to look at include:

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Ho, M., Kiem, A.S. and Verdon-Kidd, D.C. (2015): A paleoclimate rainfall reconstruction in the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB), Australia: 2. Assessing hydroclimatic risk using preinstrumental information on wet and dry epochs. *Water Resources Research*, 51, doi:10.1002/2015WR017059.

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Allen, K.J., Nichols, S.C., Evans, R., Cook, E.R., Allie, S., Carson, G., Ling, F. and Baker, P.J. (2015): Preliminary December-January inflow and streamflow reconstructions from tree rings for western Tasmania, southeastern Australia. *Water Resources Research*, 51, 5487-5503, doi:10.1002/2015WR017062.

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Barr, C., Tibby, J., Gell, P.G., Tyler, J.J., Zawadzki, A. and Jacobsen, G. (2014): Climatic variability in southeastern Australia over the last 1500 years inferred from the high resolution diatom records of two crater lakes. *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 95, 115-131.

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McGowan, H., Marx, S., Moss, P. and Hammond, A. (2012): Evidence of ENSO mega-drought triggered collapse of prehistory Aboriginal society in northwest Australia. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 39(L22702), 1-5.

Even though there is uncertainty associated with the catchment-specific rainfall reconstruction (acknowledged and discussed in the paper)... in hydrology and water resource management we have methods of dealing with this (e.g. stochastic modelling etc.)....see here for example:

- Mortazavi-Naeini, M., Kuczera, G., Kiem, A.S., Cui, L., Henley, B., Berghout, B. and Turner, E. (2015): Robust optimization to secure urban bulk water supply against extreme drought and uncertain climate change. *Environmental Modelling & Software*, 69, 437-451, doi:10.1016/j.envsoft.2015.02.021.

Regarding ENSO, IPO and SAM....they are different ocean-atmospheric processes but not

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really separate....they are related to each other with, for example, IPO modulating the frequency and magnitude of ENSO impacts (see here for example:

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Kiem, A.S., Franks, S.W. and Kuczera, G. (2003): Multi-decadal variability of flood risk. Geophysical Research Letters, 30(2), 1035, doi:10.1029/2002GL015992.) SAM and ENSO also interact to influence rainfall in Australia....see here for example:

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Wenju Cai, Arnold Sullivan, and Tim Cowan (2011) Interactions of ENSO, the IOD, and the SAM in CMIP3 Models, Journal of Climate 2011 24:6, 1688-1704

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Michelle L. L'Heureux and David W. J. Thompson (2006) Observed Relationships between the El Niño–Southern Oscillation and the Extratropical Zonal-Mean Circulation, Journal of Climate 2006 19:2, 276-287

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Kiem, A.S. and Verdon-Kidd, D.C. (2009): Climatic drivers of Victorian streamflow: Is ENSO the dominant influence? Australian Journal of Water Resources, 13(1), 17-30.

Hope that helps answer your questions.

Erectile dysfunction often has a psychological basis

[Vanessa Hamilton](#) shared her experience on helping men strugglign with erctile dysfunction:

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A complex problem, thanks for addressing some of the important elements. As a Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Consultant in a rehab and medical setting, patients benefited from education explaining that the brain is the most important sexual organ and I found that, encouraging Outercourse rather than Intercourse/Penetration was very useful for men with a psychological component to their ED. As you said most have a psychological impact, even with a diagnosed physical cause. My patients were in rehab so had many medical causes of ED. Giving them the alternative option of outercourse as a main focus means that all people - including paralysed or brain injured or post prostate cancer surgery, can have meaningful intimacy, connectedness and often orgasm response during intimate pleasure. Outercourse is full of ways to please their partners - especially if partners are [female](#) .

With the current sex educator, pronography, replacing intimacy with penetration and violence it's no wonder men have such a devastating response to their non functioning man hood combined with a lack of knowledge and awareness of importance of intimacy.

[A Moon Shaped Pool and the unmistakable alchemy of Radiohead](#)

Finally, [Duncan McPherson](#) made an observation about Radiohead's new album that blew my mind:

Here perhaps is the most facile observation made - so far at least - about this album: all the tracks, as they appear in the download, are in alphabetical order.

More impenetrable and ineffable spookiness from Yorke, Greenwood et al.

Read a comment you thought interesting? Let me know during the week. You can leave a comment below or send me an [email](#) .

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