Atmos. Chem. Phys. Discuss., doi:10.5194/acp-2016-867, 2016
Manuscript under review for journal Atmos. Chem. Phys.
Published: 7 October 2016
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Composition, size and cloud condensation nuclei activity of biomass burning aerosol from north Australian savannah fires.

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Abstract

The vast majority of Australia's fires occur in the tropical north of the continent during the dry season. These fires are a significant source of aerosol and cloud condensation nuclei (CCN) in the region, providing a unique opportunity to investigate the biomass burning aerosol (BBA) in the absence of other sources. CCN concentrations at 0.5% supersaturation and aerosol size and chemical properties were measured at the Australian Tropical Atmospheric Research Station (ATARS) during June 2014. CCN concentrations reached over 10^4 cm^{-3} when frequent and close fires were burning; up to 45 times higher than periods with no fires. Both the size distribution and composition of BBA appeared to significantly influence CCN concentrations. A distinct diurnal trend in the proportion of BBA activating to cloud droplets was observed, with an activation ratio of 40% ± 20% during the night and 60% ± 20% during the day. BBA was, on average, less hygroscopic during the night (κ = 0.04 ± 0.03) than during the day (κ = 0.07 ± 0.05), with a maximum typically observed just before midday. Size-resolved composition of BBA showed that organics comprised a constant 90% of the aerosol volume for aerodynamic diameters between 100 nm and 200 nm. The photochemical oxidation of organics led to an increase in the hygroscopic growth and an increase in daytime activation ratios. Modelled CCN concentrations assuming typical continental hygroscopicities produced very large overestimations of up to 200%. Smaller, but still significant over predictions up to ~100% were observed using AMS and H-TDMA derived hygroscopicities as well as campaign night and day averages. The largest estimations in every case occurred during the night when the small variations in very weakly hygroscopic species corresponded to large variations in the activation diameters. Trade winds carry the smoke generated from these fires over the Timor Sea where aerosol-cloud interactions are likely to be sensitive to changes in CCN concentrations, perturbing cloud albedo and lifetime. Dry season fires in north Australia are therefore potentially very important in cloud processes in this region.

1 Introduction

Biomass burning aerosol (BBA) can act as efficient cloud condensation nuclei (CCN) and form cloud droplets. Fires can therefore influence cloud formation, growth, reflectance, precipitation and lifetime (Kaufman et al., 1998;Warner and Twomey, 1967). The contribution of CCN from fires results in higher concentrations of cloud

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droplets, which yield whiter clouds that generally survive longer than clouds with fewer droplets (Platnick and Twomey, 1994). While greenhouse gases and black carbon emitted from fires absorb radiation and have a warming effect, the influence of solar radiation scattering by organic material and the production of CCN has a cooling effect on the Earth's lower atmosphere. The net forcing of carbonaceous combustion aerosol is thought to have an overall global cooling effect(Spracklen et al., 2011;Ward et al., 2012). The complexity arises from variability in emission factors, BBA size, composition and aging, and contributes to a large uncertainty that these fires have on the radiative budget (Carslaw et al., 2010). Thus detailed measurements of the physical and chemical properties of BBA from all regions in different seasons are essential in determining their impact on clouds (Spracklen et al., 2011). Very few studies have taken place within Australia, despite Australia contributing an estimated 15% of yearly global burned land area (van der Werf et al., 2006). Australian studies have been typically focused on fires in the southern continent (Lawson et al., 2015) or east coast cane fires (Warner and Twomey, 1967). The extent to which dry season fires in north Australia impact CCN concentrations has not been explored in detail.

Most of central north Australia is unpopulated and is characterized by savannah vegetation. The vast majority of Australia's fires occur in this region. During the dry season (May until November) thousands of fires burn via prescribed burning and spontaneous or accidental ignitions. The frequency and severity of these fires increases as the season progresses from the early dry season to the late dry season (Andersen et al., 2005). Under Aboriginal management, fires were lit in the late dry season in order to prepare for the wet season. These late dry season fires may have been lit intentionally to trigger the onset of rainfall following the formation of pyro-cumulus clouds, among other ecological reasons (Bowman and Vigilante, 2001;Bowman et al., 2007). Under non-Indigenous management, early dry season prescribed burns are commonplace in order to reduce the severity of late dry season fires (Andersen et al., 2005). Outside of the only major urban center in this region, Darwin, prescribed burns are the dominant source of accumulation mode aerosol particles (Mallet et al., 2016, submitted). Thus these prescribed burns will dictate CCN concentrations in the region.

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The vegetation (fuel) type, burning conditions and atmospheric aging determines the size, composition and the hygroscopicity of BBA, and in turn their ability to act as CCN. BBA is typically a mixture of elemental carbon, organic carbon and can contain inorganic material (Reid et al., 2005). The precise organic carbon composition of primary BBA can vary greatly depending on the fuel type and these organic constituents can be weakly or highly hygroscopic (Carrico et al., 2010;Mochida and Kawamura, 2004;Novakov and Corrigan, 1996;Petters et al., 2009). The hygroscopicity of BBA can change with oxidation and with the condensation or evaporation of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) through atmospheric aging (Hennigan et al., 2011). Smog chamber experiments have shown that after a few hours of simulated photochemical aging, the hygroscopicity of BBA converges to weakly hygroscopic for many different fuel types (Engelhart et al., 2012; Giordana et al., 2013).

While laboratory based measurements are useful in understanding the physical and chemical processes that can occur that determine the hygroscopicity and composition of aerosol, they do not necessarily represent ambient conditions. Due to feasibility, however, direct ambient measurements of the CCN activity of smoke plumes are rare (Lawson et al., 2015) and more measurements are useful in assessing the validity of climate models. A previous preliminary study of the CCN activity of savannah fires in the north Australian early dry season reported moderately hygroscopic BBA (Fedele, 2015), speculating that the aerosol is mostly made up of aged biomass burning particles with a coating of secondary organic aerosol. While these measurements took place over a short period, there was a discernable slight increase in the hygroscopicity of BBA during the day. Diurnal patterns in hygroscopicity have been observed in boreal environments (Paramonov et al., 2013) and in the southeast United States (Cerully et al., 2015), attributing increases in daytime hygroscopicity to the photochemical oxidation of organic aerosol.

Some studies suggest that the impact of composition, and therefore changes in BBA hygroscopicity due to photochemical aging, on CCN concentrations is much lower than the impact from the aerosol size distribution (Dusek et al., 2006; Petters et al., 2009; Spracklen et al., 2011). Under this assumption, changes to the activation diameter resulting from a change in hygroscopicity are less important than the size distribution of the BBA. Other studies have shown that while this is true for moderately and strongly

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hygroscopic particles, cloud droplet number concentrations are moderately sensitive to weakly hygroscopic particles (Reutter et al., 2009; Gacita et al., 2016).

Smoke from biomass burning can be transported over intercontinental distances and can reach the upper levels of the atmosphere (Andreae et al., 2001;Dirksen et al., 2009). Aircraft measurements during the early and late dry season in north Australia, however, suggest that smoke from fires in this region are contained within the planetary boundary layer (Ristovski et al., 2010;Kondo et al., 2003). Trade winds collect and carry this smoke northwest over northern Australia, the Timor Sea and the tropical warm pool. Cloud albedo is more sensitive to aerosol concentrations in pristine environments (Twomey, 1991). The biomass burning that occurs during the dry season is the dominant source of particles in north Australia, and is therefore likely to influence aerosol-cloud interactions over the tropical warm pool in the Timor Sea.

This paper presents a comprehensive data set of the particle size, chemical composition, hygroscopicity and CCN properties of BBA generated from fires in the dry season in this region. The impact of BBA size and hygroscopicity on CCN activation are discussed in detail. These parameters will be useful in climate models to assess the magnitude of climate forcing by BBA in aerosol-cloud interactions.

2 Experimental

Sampling took place at the Australian Tropical Atmospheric Research Station (ATARS; 12°14'56.6"S, 131°02'40.8"E), Gunn Point, in the Northern Territory of Australia as a part of the Savannah Fires in the Early Dry season (SAFIRED) campaign (Mallet et al., 2016). The research station is located near the tip of a small peninsula with close proximity to the Timor Sea and Tiwi Islands. The Territory capital, Darwin, lies 20 km to the south west of the station. Savannah vegetation with scarce human settlements transition over hundreds of kilometers to the south into the desert regions of central Australia. Sampling for the SAFIRED campaign occurred in June 2014 at ATARS. This period is the early dry season in this region, where strategic small-scale controlled burns are performed in order to reduce the frequency and intensities of fires in the late dry season in October and November. Despite sampling occurring during winter, daily temperatures can reach well above 30°C such that accidental and natural fires can also occur. Throughout the sampling period, thousands of fires were observed

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in northern Australia. This led to strong biomass burning signatures detected at the station, with numerous instances of very intense BBA events from both distant and close fires. A full overview of the campaign, including meteorological, gaseous and aerosol measurements is presented in Mallet et al. (2016, submitted).

Sentinel Hotspots, an Australian national bushfire monitoring system, was used to investigate the number of daily fires in the region. Sentinel uses data from the MODIS (Moderate-resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) sensors onboard the Terra and Aqua NASA satellites and the VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite) sensor onboard the NASA/NOAA Suomi NPP satellite. These satellites fly over north Australia once per day between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm local time. Although fire locations are therefore limited to those that are burning during these times, Sentinel is still useful in providing information on the spread and number of fires burning in the region. For this study, the total number of observed fires within 20 km and 50 km of ATARS were calculated (Figure 1b) for a qualitative assessment of how the smoke from these fires can affect cloud condensation nuclei concentrations.

2.1 Instrumentation

Aerosol size, concentration, composition, hygroscopicity and CCN concentration measurements were taken to characterise BBA water uptake and its potential impact on cloud formation. Ambient aerosol was sampled through an automated regenerating aerosol diffusion dryer to condition the intake to below 40% relative humidity. PM_1 filters were collected on a TAPI 602 Beta plus particle measurement system (BAM) for an analysis of elemental and organic carbon. A Scanning Mobility Particle Analyzer (SMPS) made up of a TSI 3071 electrostatic classifier and TSI 3772 Condensation Particle Counter (CPC) was used to determine the particle size distributions and number concentrations between 14 nm and 650 nm with a 5 minute averaging time. A Cloud Condensation Nuclei Counter (CCNC) was used to measure total cloud droplet concentrations at a supersaturation of 0.5% every 10 seconds. A Hygroscopicity Tandem Differential Mobility Analyser (H-TDMA) alternated measurement of the hygroscopic growth factor (HGF; D/D_d) of ambient 50 and 150 nm size selected particles exposed to a relative humidity of 90% (Johnson et al., 2004).

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An Aerodyne compact Time-of-Flight Aerosol Mass Spectrometer (cToF-AMS) was used to determine the size-resolved chemical composition of non-refractory sub-micron aerosol A full discussion on the cToF-AMS analysis of the composition of bulk PM_1 aerosol can be found in Milic et al. (2016). Briefly, in order to account for fragmentation table issues during periods of high signals in which some sulphate species were misattributed to organics, the high-resolution AMS analysis toolkit, PIKA, was used to separate organic and sulphate signals. Data for the analysis of the size-resolved chemical composition within PIKA were not recorded during the sampling period and therefore the standard AMS analysis toolkit, Squirrel, was used with unit mass resolution. In order to account for fragmentation table issues related to the incorrect assignment of organic and sulfate species, the size-resolved mass concentrations for each species were scaled by the ratio of the mass concentrations reported by the PIKA analysis to the integrated mass concentrations reported by Squirrel. The size-resolved composition revealed that inorganic ammonium and sulphate species made up a greater contribution of larger particles than in smaller particles (Figure S1). The composition of particles between 100 nm and 200 nm (aerodynamic diameter) was therefore used in this study as this size range is more representative of aerosols at the CCN activation diameter. This is further discussed in section 3.3.

2.2 Analysis

Total particle number concentrations (PNc) were calculated by integrating the size distributions measured by the SMPS. The activation ratio of BBA as CCN at 0.5% supersaturation was calculated by dividing the CCNc by the PNc. Apparent activation diameters were calculated by a step-wise integration of the particle size distribution from the maximum size bin towards the lower size bins until the total number of particles exceeded the total number of CCN, as per:

$$CCNc = \int_{Activation\ diameter}^{Upper\ diameter} dN/dlogD_p . dD_p \qquad \text{Equation 1}$$

where CCNc is the total cloud condensation nuclei concentration, N is the particle number concentration for each size bin, D_p is the particle diameter, the upper diameter is the largest size measured by the SMPS (650 nm) and the activation diameter is the size at which the particles activate to cloud droplets. To calculate the precise activation diameter, a linear fit ($R^2 > 0.98$) between the cumulative particle number concentrations and the diameter was applied across 11 size bins centered on the bin in which the

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activation diameter falls. The uncertainty in the activation diameters was calculated assuming a maximum uncertainty in the CCN concentrations of ±10% and was typically of the order of 7 nm.

The apparent activation diameters were then used to calculate the average effective hygroscopicity parameter, κ, for each SMPS scan following κ-Kohler theory (Petters and Kreidenweis, 2007;Petters et al., 2009). According to this theory, the supersaturation required to achieve a particular droplet diameter for any given particle can be determined using:

$$S(D) = \frac{D^3 - D_d^3}{D^3 - D_d^3(1-\kappa)} \exp\left(\frac{4\sigma_{s/a} M_w}{RT\rho_w D}\right) \qquad \text{Equation 2}$$

where S is the supersaturation, D is the droplet diameter, D_d is the dry particle diameter, κ is the hygroscopicity parameter, $\sigma_{s/a}$ is the surface tension of the interface between the solution and air (typically 0.072 Jm^{-2} as pure water is assumed), M_w is the molecular weight of water, R is the universal gas constant, T is the temperature (taken as 308 K ± 3 K in this study) and ρ_w is the density of water. For a range of D_d values, κ and D values were iteratively varied until the maximum of the κ-Kohler curve was equal to 0.5%, the supersaturation used in the CCNC. A relationship was then found between κ and D_d for the range of 45 nm up to 160 nm (Figure S2). This relationship was then applied to the calculated activation diameters over the sampling period to calculate the BBA κ values. The uncertainty in the activation diameter of 7 nm led to a uncertainties in κ of ~0.05 for activation diameters between 60 nm and 80 nm, ~0.01 for activation diameters between 80 nm and less than 0.01 for activation diameters above 100 nm.

The value of κ derived from the CCNC and SMPS is the average for all particle sizes. If there is not a uniform composition, this value cannot necessarily be applied to all sizes of BBA. All H-TDMA data were inverted using the TDMAinv algorithm (Gysel et al., 2009) and HGF distributions were kelvin-corrected for comparison between 50 and 150 nm particles at 90 % relative humidity. Equation 2 was then also applied to the kelvin corrected HGF distributions, thereby providing distributions of κ. This also provides an insight into the mixing state of the BBA, which cannot be determined from the CCNC and SMPS measurements in this study.

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When the surface tension of pure water is assumed, κ is regarded as the "effective hygroscopicity parameter", which accounts for changes in water activity due to the solute as well as any surface tension effects (Petters and Kreidenweis, 2007;Rose et al., 2010;Pöschl et al., 2009). The effective hygroscopicity parameter is therefore an indication of all compositional effects of an aerosol particle on water uptake. To distinguish the potential effects of surface tension, values of 0.052 J m^{-2} and 0.0683 J m^{-2} were also applied. Mircea et al. (2005) suggest that the surface tension at the liquid-air interface of a particle depends on the concentration of carbon. The value 0.052 J m^{-2} represents a lower limit while a surface tension of 0.0683 J m^{-2} has been observed for prescribed biomass burning particulate matter in wooded areas in the USA (Asa-Awuku et al., 2008). The impact of surface tension is discussed further in Section 3.5.

The overall hygroscopicity of any given particle can be determined by the volume fraction and hygroscopicity of each constituent under the Zdanovskii, Stokes and Robinson assumption (Chen et al., 1973;Stokes and Robinson, 1966):

$$\kappa = \sum_i \varepsilon_i \kappa_i \qquad \text{Equation 3}$$

where κ is the overall hygroscopicity and ε_i and κ_i are the volume fractions and hygroscopicities of each constituent, respectively. A modelled κ was constructed to determine the influence of diurnal changes in organic and inorganic volume fractions, where $\kappa_{total} = \varepsilon_{org}\kappa_{org} + \varepsilon_{EC}\kappa_{EC} + \varepsilon_{inorganic}\kappa_{inorganic}$, following the ZSR assumption. The 12-hour PM_1 BAM filters sampled from 07:00 until 19:00 (day) and from 19:00 until 07:00 (night) each day showed no difference in the ratio of EC to (OC + EC), and therefore a constant mass fraction (EC/(EC + OC) of 10% was applied. ε_{org}, ε_{EC} and $\varepsilon_{inorganic}$ were calculated using the size-resolved mass concentrations reported by the cToF-AMS and assumed densities of 1.4 g cm^{-3}(Levin et al., 2014), 1.8 g cm^{-3} (Bond and Bergstrom, 2006) and 1.8 g cm^{-3} (Levin et al., 2014), respectively. $\kappa_{inorganic}$ and κ_{EC} were taken as 0.60 (Bougiatioti et al., 2016) and 0 (Petters and Kreidenweis, 2007), respectively. A night (18:00 until 07:00) and day value of κ_{org} were varied in the applied model in order to investigate any potential changes in organic hygroscopicity due to photochemistry.

CCN concentrations were calculated in order to test prediction of CCN concentrations using aerosol composition and size distribution in this region. Activation diameters were derived from various hygroscopicity parameters and, again using Equation 1, the

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size distribution was integrated step-wise from the upper size limited measured in the SMPS until the activation diameter was reached. The same process used to calculate the precise activation diameters earlier was used to calculate the precise CCN concentrations. This process was carried out for the modelled hygroscopicity from the size-resolved cToF-AMS data, the measured hygroscopicity distribution from the H-TDMA as well as various constant hygroscopicity values. The constant values selected were 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3 and a day and night value of 0.071 and 0.035, respectively. 0.05 represents the campaign average effective hygroscopicity. The day and night values represent the campaign average values obtained from the SMPS-CCNC measurements. The values of 0.1 and 0.2 represent commonly observed hygroscopicities for BBA in other regions and in laboratory measurements Engelhart et al. (2012). The global mean values of κ have been estimated to be 0.27 ± 0.21 for continental aerosols (Pringle et al., 2010). It has been suggested that it is suitable to assume this continental average ($\kappa \sim 0.3$) to make first order predictions of CCN activity (Rose et al., 2011). Modelling CCN concentrations using these methods and assumed hygroscopicity values will verify whether such values are suitable in predicting CCN activity in regions like northern Australia.

In order to investigate the CCN activity of BBA, four days of unpolluted and coastal conditions (19/06/2014 - 22/06/2014) were removed from the majority of the analysis. Furthermore, the SMPS was only operational from 04/06/2014. Analysis of CCNc, PNc, activation ratios, median particle diameters, apparent activation diameters and the average effective hygroscopicity parameters are therefore only presented for data collected after this date.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 BBA contribution to CCN

Figure 1 shows the CCN concentrations (SS 0.5%) measured at the ATARS over the campaign sampling period in June 2014 as well as the frequency of fires that were observed via satellite hotspots each day within 20 km and 50 km of the station. Air mass back trajectories were typically from the southeast, as were the location of the fires (Mallet et al., 2016). The period between the 19th and 23rd of June was characterized by relatively low CCN concentrations due to air originating from the coastal waters of eastern Australia, which passed over minimal continental area before

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arriving at the ATARS. As already mentioned, these dates were subsequently excluded from the data analysis as the focus of this study was on the impact of BBA on CCN. The highest PNc and CCN concentrations were associated with large BB events. PNc concentrations of up to 400000 cm^{-3} and CCN concentrations of up to 18000 CCN cm^{-3} were observed during these periods.

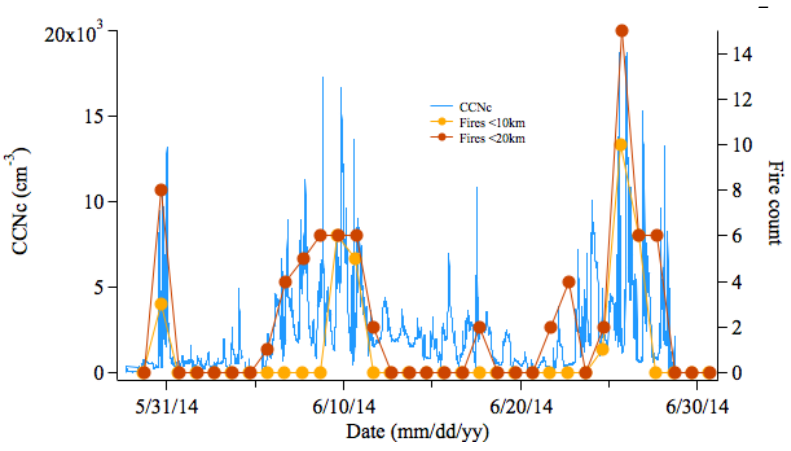

Figure 1 The time series of a) total cloud condensation nuclei concentrations (CCN) at 0.5% supersaturation and b) the total number of fires satellite-observed fires within 20 km (red) and 50 km (green) of the sampling location.

Although the PNc and CCN concentrations were highest during BBA events, these periods were characterized by the lowest hygroscopicity and activation ratios (ratio of CCNc to PNc as low as 4%). This is further discussed in Section 3.3. Activation ratios typically varied between 30% and 80%, corresponding to CCN concentrations between 1500 cm^{-3} and 6000 cm^{-3}. This contrasts observed activation ratios of over 80% in BBA from dry season savannah fires in tropical southern Africa during the SAFARI 2000 campaign (Ross et al., 2003), despite lower supersaturations of ~0.3%. The size distributions of BBA observed during SAFIRED had a count median diameter of 107 nm ± 25 nm, while the median diameters were typically above 150 nm in the SAFARI 2000 campaign, which could explain the lower activation ratios observed here. The size distributions observed in this study were typically smaller than those observed in aged and regional BBA on other continents (Reid et al., 2005). When particles are smaller, the critical diameter for cloud droplet formation becomes more important. It is therefore crucial to investigate the impact of composition on the activation diameter, and thus CCN concentrations.

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3.2 Diurnal trends in BBA

Diurnal patterns in the BBA PNc, CCNc, size and activation ratio and activation diameter are shown in Figure 2. For most of the campaign, particle size distributions were unimodal and therefore the median and mode of these distributions are used here to represent the particle size. The highest concentrations of CCN were observed during the night when they were also the most variable (Figure 2a). This is likely a result of prescribed burns occurring later in the day or evening as well as a lower inversion layer during the night. Interestingly, the activation ratio also follows a distinct diurnal trend with ~40% ± 20% of BBA acting as CCN at 0.5% supersaturation during the night and ~60% ± 20% during the day (Figure 2b). Smaller particles were typically seen during the day than during the night (Figure 2c), indicating that it was the change in the particle activation diameter (Figure 2d) that was responsible for this increase in daytime activation ratios.

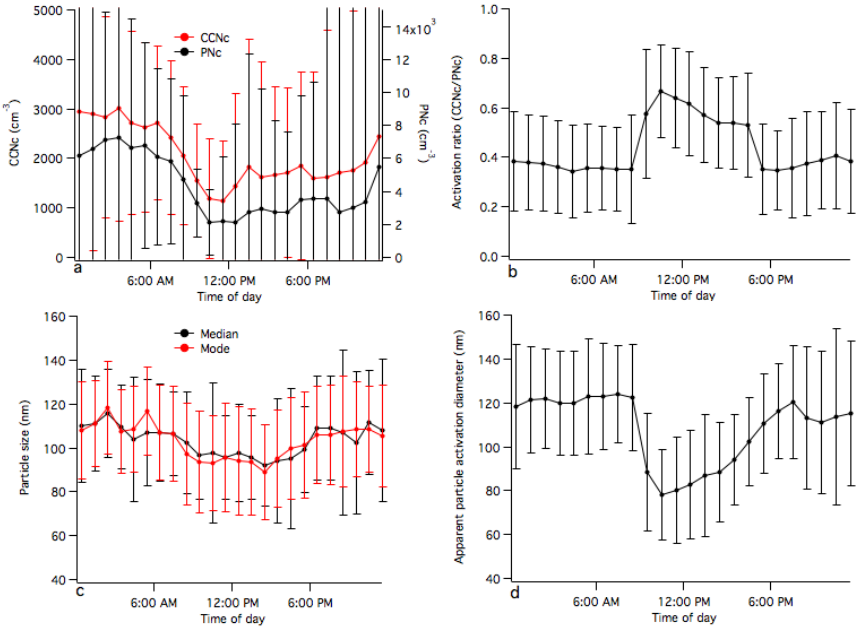

Figure 2 The diurnal trends of a) the total cloud condensation nuclei concentration (CCNc) and particle number concentration (PNc), b) the activation ratio at 0.5% supersaturation, c) the median and mode of the particle size distribution and d) the apparent activation diameter. All reported values are the median of the hourly averaged data for the sampling period and the error bars represent the standard deviation.

The hygroscopicity of BBA derived from the size-resolved AMS, CCNC/SMPS and the H-TDMA followed a distinct diurnal trend (Figure 4). The CCNC-derived

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hygroscopicity (Figure 4a) during the night time (defined as 18:00 until 07:00 local time) was generally very stable and constant over the sampling period at 0.03 ± 0.03. Daytime hygroscopicity (07:00 until 18:00) was typically higher with much more variability at 0.07 ± 0.05. H-TDMA-derived hygroscopicities for 150 nm diameter particles (Figure 4d) agreed very well with these values, although a much higher variability was observed around noon. The hygroscopicity distributions of 50 nm diameter particles followed a similar trend but were, interestingly, slightly higher than the 150 nm distributions. The variability in hygroscopicity for 50 nm diameter particles is much greater than for 150 nm particles, due to lower concentrations at 50 nm. Hygroscopicity distributions for both 50 nm and 150 nm aerosols during the night indicate a strong internal mixture of very weak hygroscopic BBA, and during the day an increase and broadening of the hygroscopicity mode, suggesting an external mixture of slightly more hygroscopic particles. The size-resolved AMS hygroscopicity values were calculated assuming κ_{org} of 0.02 and 0.08 during the night and day, respectively. The organic volume fraction was invariable (see section 3.3), therefore the increase and decrease at sunrise and sunset, respectively, is driven by the choice of night and day organic hygroscopicity values. These values were selected as they gave the best agreement between the modelled and measured CCN concentrations, which is discussed further in Section 3.4.

Literature on the diurnal variability of BBA hygroscopicity is rare. Diurnal and afternoon averages of κ for BBA in the Amazonian dry season have been reported as 0.048 and 0.072, respectively (Gacita et al., 2016; Rissler et al., 2006; Vestin et al., 2007), consistent with the results presented here. A short study (Fedele, 2015) carried out in 2010 at the ATARS also reported κ values in the early dry season over a period of two weeks. They showed κ values mostly between 0.05 and 0.1 for supersaturations of 0.38%, 0.68% and 0.96%, with the higher values generally occurring during the day. They directly measured the critical diameter and used an approximation presented in Petters and Kreidenweis (2007) to calculate κ. This approximation is more appropriate for κ values over 0.2, which means that the reported values between 0.05 and 0.1 were slightly overestimated and would likely be more in line with the BBA hygroscopicity observed in this study. Although a detailed chemical analysis was not done during that study, these similar values of κ suggest that these observations could be representative of early dry season fires in this region.

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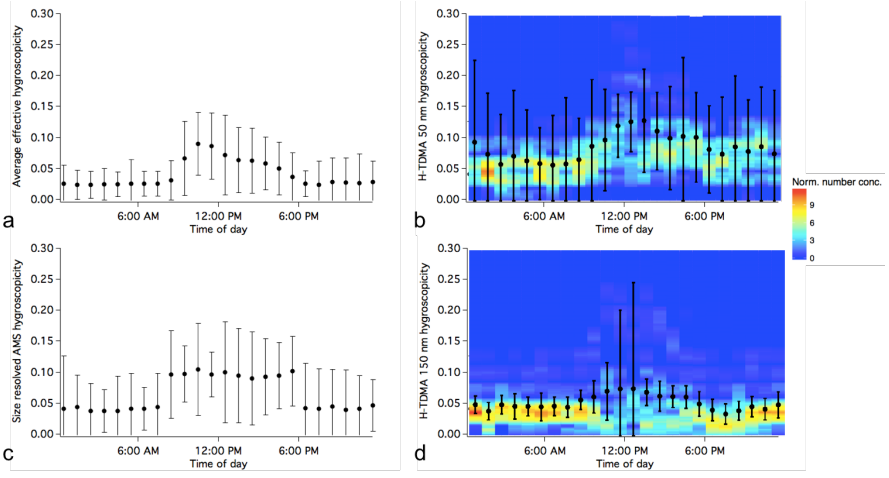

Figure 3 The diurnal trends of a) the CCNC-derived effective hygroscopicity parameter, b) the H-TDMA derived kelvin-corrected hygroscopicity distributions of 50 nm particles, c) the AMS-derived hygroscopicity parameter for aerodynamic diameters between 100 nm and 200 nm, assuming κ_{org} of 0.02 and 0.08 during the night and day, respectively and d) the H-TDMA derived kelvin corrected hygroscopicity distributions of 150 nm particles. The black dots on b) and d) represent the hourly median hygroscopicity values and the error bars represent the standard deviation

3.3 BBA composition

The activation ratio as a function of the effective hygroscopicity parameter, κ, as calculated from equations 1 and 2, with colors indicating the median particle mobility diameter, is displayed in Figure 3. This figure clearly demonstrates that both the size and composition of the BBA can have a significant effect on CCN activation. For example, with a constant particle size increases the CCN activation ratio from below 20% to above 80%. For a constant κ of 0.05 and an increase in the particle median diameter from 60 nm up to 140 nm, the CCN activation ratio increases by approximately 50%. The effect of composition appears to have less of an influence at higher hygroscopicities, with the size being the determining factor in CCN activation above a κ of 0.1. For very weakly hygroscopic ($\kappa < 0.05$) BBA, the sensitivity of particle size was less prominent, with an activation ratio increase of ~0.3% nm^{-1}, compared to a ~0.7% nm^{-1} increase when $\kappa > 0.05$. These findings support the idea that cloud droplet number concentrations are sensitive to composition at low hygroscopicities (Reutter et al., 2009). Neglecting the effect of BBA composition in this case would lead to difficulties in appropriately quantifying CCN activation.

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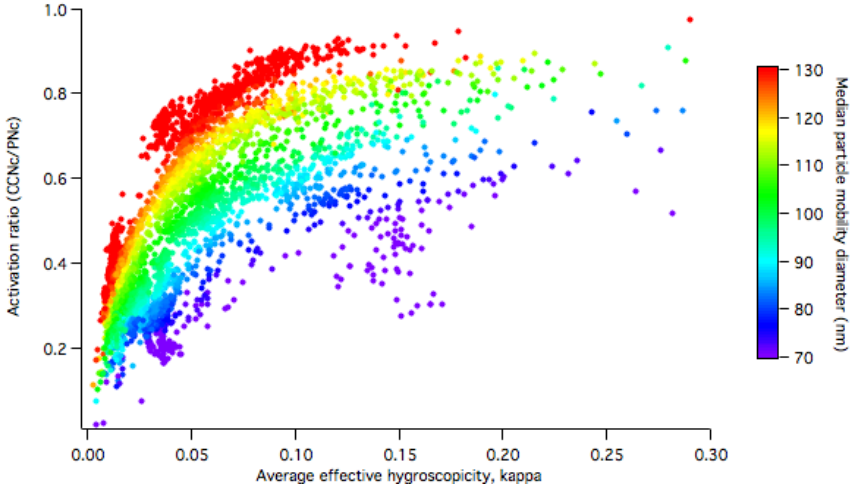

Figure 4 The activation ratio (CCNc/PNc) as a function of the effective hygroscopicity parameter, κ. The colours represent the median particle mobility diameter.

In order to understand the underlying causes of the variations in the hygroscopicity, the size-resolved chemical composition was investigated. For bulk PM_1 composition, there was a distinct increase in the inorganic mass fractions during the day due to an enrichment of ammonium and sulphate species. The size-resolved composition, however, revealed that these inorganic species were more present on larger particles and had a $d_{aerodynamic}$ mode at approximately 350 nm, while organics had a mode at approximately 250 nm. This observation is consistent with other studies that show that smaller particles are more enriched with organics (Levin et al., 2014;Rose et al., 2011;Gunthe et al., 2009). As the influence of composition on CCN activation is irrelevant at larger sizes, it is important to investigate the composition at smaller sizes where the aerosol number is highest and the composition can affect the activation diameter. The size-resolved composition revealed that, within the aerodynamic diameter size range of 100 nm to 200 nm, organics were completely dominant and the organic volume fraction, ε_{org}, was invariable at approximately 90%. The total hygroscopicity of BBA observed in this study was therefore predominantly influenced by the organic hygroscopicity, κ_{org}. The increase in the observed hygroscopicity and the inferred κ_{org} is likely a result of the photochemical oxidation of the organics. The aging of biomass burning aerosol is discussed in further depth in Milic et al. (2016).

While it is likely that most of the BBA observed during the SAFIRED campaign had undergone some form of aging (physical or chemical), two events provided insight into

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the characteristics of extremely fresh BBA and are described in Mallet et al. (2016). During mid-afternoon on the 25th June, grass and shrub fires were blazing ~1 km southeast of the ATARS site. Wind directions during this period were very unstable and frequently altering between southeasterly and northeasterly. This resulted in the sampled air mass frequently changing from the "fresh" plume and more background like conditions over the course of approximately 4 hours. During this time, CCN concentrations varied frequently between ~2000 cm^{-3} and ~14000 cm^{-3}. The activation ratio, median particle size, activation diameter and hygroscopicity varied between 20% and 60%, 80 nm and 110 nm, 130 nm and 80 nm and 0.02 and 0.08 respectively (see Figure 5). These fires continued to blaze into the evening, slowly advancing to within 1 km south of the ATARS site. Due to northeasterly winds, the air mass from this fire wasn't observed until approximately 10 pm that night when winds became southerly. For the next four hours, CCN concentrations peaked at ~18000 cm^{-3}, despite the activation ratio dropping to 4%. The average effective hygroscopicity during this event dropped to 0.003 and slowly increased over the period of the fire to ~0.02. This led to a decrease in the apparent activation diameter from 250 nm to 150 nm, subsequently increasing the CCN activation ratio to 25%. Whether this is a result of a change in the burning conditions, fuel load or a combination of both is unclear. These events demonstrate the importance of BB as a source of CCN, despite the relatively hydrophobic nature of BBA. Furthermore, in the absence of photochemical aging, the slight variation in BBA hygroscopicity during the night fire demonstrates the variability of CCN activation, even over the course of an individual fire.

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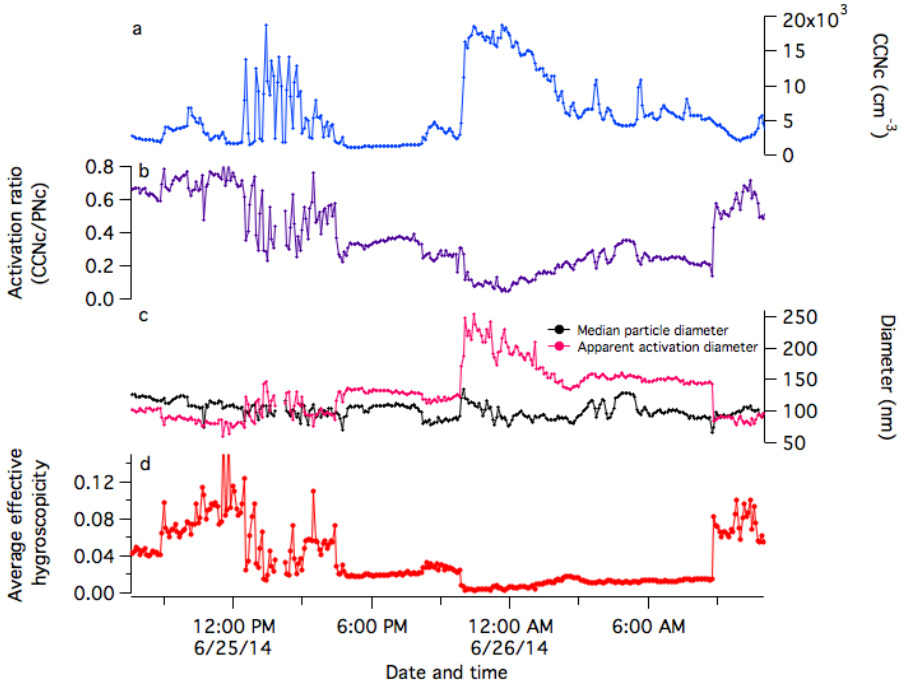

Figure 5 The CCNc, activation ratio, median particle diameter, apparent activation diameter and average effective hygroscopicity parameter during two periods with close proximity (<1 km) fires.

The hygroscopicity of fresh and aged BBA has been studied extensively in laboratory smog chambers. Some studies have shown that the photochemical oxidation of organics in BBA leads to an increase in hygroscopicity (Carrico et al., 2010;Petters et al., 2009) while others suggest that the hygroscopicity converges from highly ($\kappa = 0.6$) or weakly ($\kappa = 0.06$) hygroscopic values to a value of approximately 0.2 ± 0.1 (Engelhart et al., 2012). The observation of the close proximity fire event on the evening of the 25th of June (Figure 5), as well as the diurnal trends in the calculated hygroscopicity parameter (Figure 3), indicate that the composition of BBA during the night is characteristic of very weakly hygroscopic fresh BBA. The increase in the hygroscopicity throughout the day is due to the photochemical oxidation of organics. The high frequency of fires during the early dry season in north Australia likely results in the "regional haze" predominantly being composed of relatively fresh BBA with a very low hygroscopicity. The aging processes were observed to increase the hygroscopicity to ~0.08 ± 0.05, which is the lower estimate of value suggested by Engelhart et al. (2012) and smaller than other studies investigating BBA (Bougiatioti et al., 2016). Whether the hygroscopicity would converge to higher values in the absence of frequent fires or as

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the smoke travels away from the continent is something that needs to be explored in future measurements.

3.4 Validation of modelled CCN

Detailed temporal-spatial measurements of CCN concentrations are difficult and therefore assumptions must be made about the size-resolved composition and water uptake for similar regions and sources. Many studies have attempted closure between composition, size and CCN concentrations in order to assess the validity of these assumptions (Rose et al., 2010). These studies typically agree that for most environments, where hygroscopicities are moderate, the size distribution and number concentration of particles are the determining factor of CCN concentrations (Dusek et al., 2006). Gacita et al. (2016) however, showed that for Amazonian BBA (with measured $\kappa = 0.04$), applying an assumed κ of 0.20 resulted in a 26.6% to 54.3% overestimation of CCN concentrations. They suggest that κ values recommended for continental and BBA are too high to describe CCN behavior of Amazonian BBA. This is also the case for the SAFIRED campaign.

Figure 6 shows the normalised frequency distributions of the ratio of modelled and measured CCN concentrations for five different compositional scenarios, taking into account the time-dependent size distributions. For a constant hygroscopicity of 0.20, daytime concentrations were overestimated by 15% to 40% while night concentrations were overestimated by well over 100%. A similar case is observed for hygroscopicities of 0.10 and 0.30. For an assumed constant κ of 0.05, which represents the campaign average, the modelled CCN concentrations slightly underestimate the measured CCN concentrations during the day by less than 10%, but overestimate the night CCN by 65%. Using the day and night campaign averages of 0.071 and 0.035, respectively, improved the night time concentration to an overestimation of approximately 50%. Using the time dependent size-resolved AMS composition and assigning and κ_{org} as 0.08 and 0.02 for day and night, respectively, also provides a good agreement between the estimated and measured daytime CCN concentrations, but again overestimates the night concentrations by 70%. H-TDMA hygroscopicity distributions showed that the night was predominantly characterised by an internal mixture, suggesting that the disagreement between modeled and measured CCN is due to is due to variability in fuel

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or burning conditions of the fires and/or night time aging. The modelled CCN concentrations from both the 50 nm and 150 nm H-TDMA were within 10% during the day, but there were also overestimations of between 45% and 70% respectively. The time resolution of the H-TDMA limited the number of CCN model calculations that could be done, which introduced more potential bias for individual periods where the agreement between the measured and modelled CCN was worse (or better). The difficulty in sufficiently modelling night time CCN concentrations highlights the need for further composition measurements of fresh BBA in this region.

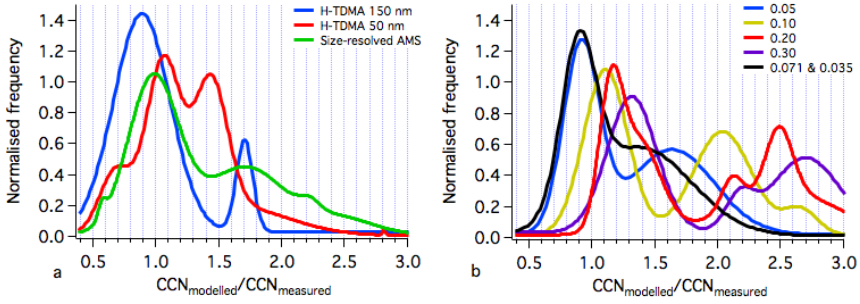

Figure 6 The normalised probability density functions for the frequency of the ratio of the modelled and measured CCN concentrations based on a) the 150 nm and 50 nm H-TDMA derived hygroscopicities and size-resolved cToF-AMS composition and b) the campaign average hygroscopicity, κ =0.05, typical BB hygroscopicities of 0.1 and 0.2, the continental average hygroscopicity of 0.3 and the day and night average effective hygroscopicity values of 0.071 and 0.035, respectively.

3.5 Effect of surface tension

The κ values reported in this study represent the effective hygroscopicity parameter, which accounts for all compositional effects on aerosol water uptake (i.e. solubility of components and the reduction in surface tension to their presence). This study has shown that the effective hygroscopicity parameter increases during daylight hours, speculating that this is caused by the photochemical oxidation of organics. Although surface tension measurements were not performed, using a value observed in a previous BB study of 0.0638 Jm^{-2} (Asa-Awuku et al., 2008) in the κ-Kohler equation shows only a slight decrease in hygroscopicity compared to using the surface tension of pure water (Figures S2 and S3). This suggests that it is the solubility, rather than the reduction of surface tension, of the organics and inorganics present in the BBA that is responsible for the water uptake. On the other hand, an assumed lower estimate surface tension of 0.052 Jm^{-2} (Mircea et al., 2005) during the day could explain the increase in CCN activation. Although models generally use the effective hygroscopicity parameter (Pringle et al., 2010) due to the ease of using a single parameter, a better understanding

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of the precise mechanisms that facilitate the uptake of water onto potential cloud droplets is needed (Noziere, 2016).

4 Conclusions

Measurements at ATARS showed a strong link between the frequency of early dry season fires and the concentrations of CCN, indicating that these fires are an important source of CCN in northern Australia. The aerosol size distribution was typically unimodal with a median diameter of 107 nm and the BBA was weakly hygroscopic and predominately internally mixed. These conditions meant that both the composition and size were important in determining the CCN activation of the BBA. A distinct diurnal trend in the ratio of activated cloud condensation nuclei at 0.5% supersaturation and particle number was observed, with ~40% ± 20% of BBA acting as CCN during the night and ~60% ± 20% during the day. This increase in CCN activity corresponded with an increase in the hygroscopicity from 0.04 ± 0.03 to 0.07 ± 0.05. This was likely due to the daytime photochemical oxidation of organic compounds within BBA. While not investigated in this study, this smoke has the potential to penetrate into the upper levels of the troposphere, particularly as the dry season progresses, and it also flows over the Timor Sea where change in cloud albedo and lifetime is likely to be sensitive to CCN concentration changes. In the case of northern Australian dry season fires, assuming typical continental hygroscopicities of 0.10, 0.20 and 0.30 led to CCN overestimates of 10% to 30% during the day and 100% to over 150% during the night. It is therefore important that the CCN activition can be better modelled.

BBA related CCN concentrations are likely to be further enhanced throughout the dry season as temperatures increase and there are more frequent fires. Long term monitoring or future measurements later in the dry season would allow a more detailed analysis into the seasonal relationship between fire frequency, intensity and CCN. Other aerosol-cloud interactions are likely to change as the season progresses. Higher solar radiation and relative humidity during the late dry season lead to the formation of pyro-cumulous clouds and higher rainfall in comparison to the early dry season (Bowman et al., 2007). Concurrent aircraft measurements would be required to investigate the penetration and evolution of smoke into upper levels of the troposphere. Characterising the presence of smoke within, below and above clouds is required to fully understand the vertical radiative effect of these fires. The south easterly trade

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winds carry this smoke over waters in the Indian and western Pacific oceans known as the tropical warm pool. Measurements in Indonesia or on a ship in the Timor Sea would therefore also be useful in determining the long-range transport and evolution of the smoke. Furthermore, a mobile sampling chamber positioned downwind of prescribed burns that occur in this region, both during the day and night, would be beneficial in understanding the variability of the composition of freshly emitted BBA.

Data availability

Data can be accessed upon request to the corresponding author (Branka Miljevic; b.miljevic@qut.edu.au)

Author contributions

Marc Mallet wrote the manuscript, designed and conducted experimental work and analysed and interpreted data. Luke Cravigan contributed to writing the manuscript, data analysis and data interpretation. Andelija Milic analysed data and reviewed the manuscript. Joel Alroe designed experimental work, analysed data and reviewed the manuscript, Zoran Ristovski designed experimental work and reviewed the manuscript. Jason Ward designed experimental work and conducted experimental work, Melita Keywood led the SAFIRED campaign and reviewed the manuscript, Leah Williams contributed to the experimental work and reviewed the manuscript, Paul Selleck designed experimental work and analysed data, Branka Miljevic designed and conducted experimental work and reviewed the manuscript.

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