



**ICIN** Indigenous  
Carbon  
Industry  
Network

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## Indigenous Carbon Industry Update

North Australia Savanna Fire Forum  
February 2021

# What is the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network?



Initiated by Indigenous carbon businesses at 2018 Savanna Fire Forum



Filling a critical gap in industry coordination



Supported by an Interim Steering Committee of 8 Indigenous land and sea management organisations engaged in the carbon industry.



Including 34 Indigenous organisations across north Australia



Broader network including 500 people



Currently joint funded by Australian, NT, WA and QLD Governments with additional support from The Nature Conservancy.



Employs part-time 0.8 Coordinator and 0.6 Communications Officer hosted by Warddeken Land Management.

# Our Purpose

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*Our purpose is to enable and empower Indigenous carbon producers and Traditional Owners of carbon projects to benefit from carbon markets through their land and sea management practices by supporting an active network of Indigenous carbon businesses and supporting agencies.*

We aim to do this by

- Facilitating active, equitable and informed engagement by member organisations through supporting good communication and transparent decision-making processes.
- Acting as a trusted and independent point of contact for the Indigenous carbon industry by connecting member organisations with external agencies.
- Enabling Indigenous voices to be better represented in the carbon industry by supporting Indigenous people to tell their story.
- Building the capacity of Indigenous people to better engage in the carbon industry through supporting knowledge sharing.
- Promoting best-practice standards for Indigenous engagement enabling fair business agreements and Indigenous empowerment.
- Advocating for policy settings which support a strong and growing Indigenous carbon industry that is maximising benefits to Indigenous communities.

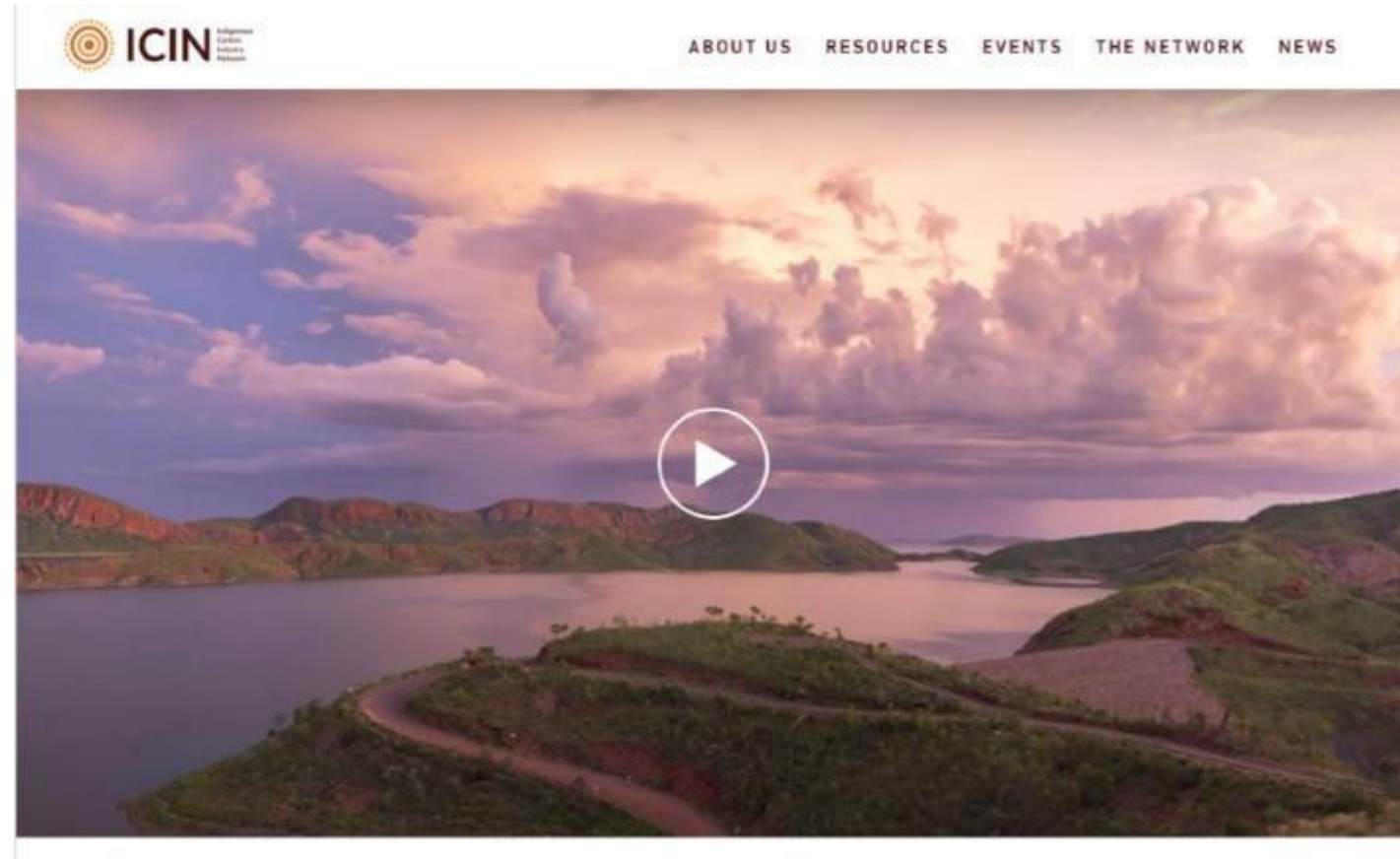


# ICIN Knowledge Portal

Launched  
**August 2020**

[www.icin.org.au](http://www.icin.org.au)

Thank you to The Nature Conservancy for funding this project and Carbon Market Institute for supporting the launch.





More photos, presentations and reports can be found at:





# What is the Indigenous Carbon Industry?

- A major emerging industry rapidly expanded from the successful West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement (WALFA) project (2006) to 30 projects across north Australia today
- Traditional Landowners and Indigenous ranger groups undertake early dry season burning to limit the extent of destructive late dry season wildfire
- Scientists worked together in partnership with Indigenous land managers to develop the methodology for measuring the savanna burning carbon abatement
- Registered Eligible Offsets Projects can earn and sell Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) through the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) Act
- Buyers of ACCUs include the Australian Government via the Emissions Reduction Fund or to voluntary buyers seeking to offset their carbon emissions
- Indigenous carbon credits attract a substantial premium on the voluntary market due to the multiple benefits they deliver to the environment and communities as part of their savanna carbon farming projects.



# Indigenous Carbon Industry – current projects and methods

- **Agriculture** - Beef cattle herd management (ILSC, CPC, AACo)
- **Vegetation** - Human-Induced Regeneration (2 Indigenous-owned projects)
- **Savanna Carbon Farming projects** (30 Indigenous-owned projects)

Two types of savanna carbon farming methods (2018)

- **Emissions Avoidance methods** (accounts for emissions avoided from hot late dry season fires compared with early dry season burning)

- **Sequestration + Emissions Avoidance method** (accounts for carbon permanently stored in logs/sticks on ground not burned as well as emissions avoided)

Nearly all savanna burning projects are currently registered under Emissions Avoidance methods (2015/2018)





## Current state of the Indigenous Carbon industry

- Over 32 Indigenous-owned and operated savanna fire projects
- Enabling improved Indigenous fire management over 17.9 million ha of north Australian savanna
- Abating around 6 million tonnes of emissions since 2012\*
- Generating around \$90 million in carbon credits units since 2012\*\*, or around \$20 million each year\*\*\*
- Around 8% of Australia's total carbon credit units are produced by Indigenous carbon businesses (across all methods)
- 73% of carbon credits produced by the savanna fire emissions avoidance method are generated by Indigenous carbon businesses.
- Indigenous organisations report an increase in their capacity to care for country, culture and communities as a result of their engagement in the carbon industry.
- Provides hundreds of jobs on country for Indigenous land managers
- Generating social, cultural and environmental benefits of global significance.
- Indigenous carbon credits attract a significant premium above the market price in recognition of these benefits.

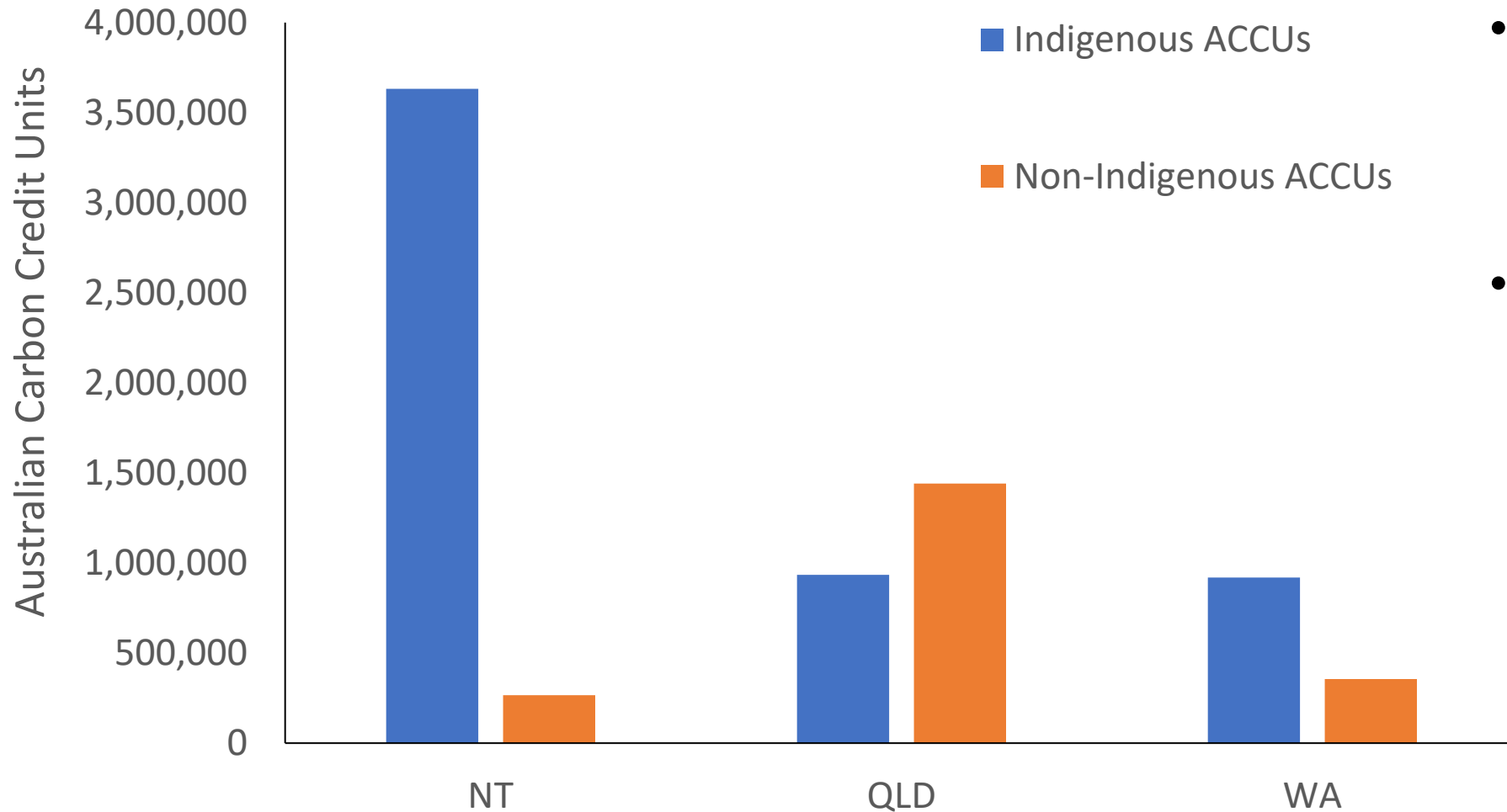
\* Source: Clean Energy Regulator Project Register, September 21 2020

\*\* Based on an estimated total average price of \$14.81/tonne since 2012, which is the mean of the average Emissions Reduction Fund price (\$12.19) and the highest spot price (\$17.50).

\*\*\* Based on current production at current spot price of \$16.90 /tonne plus 20% premium

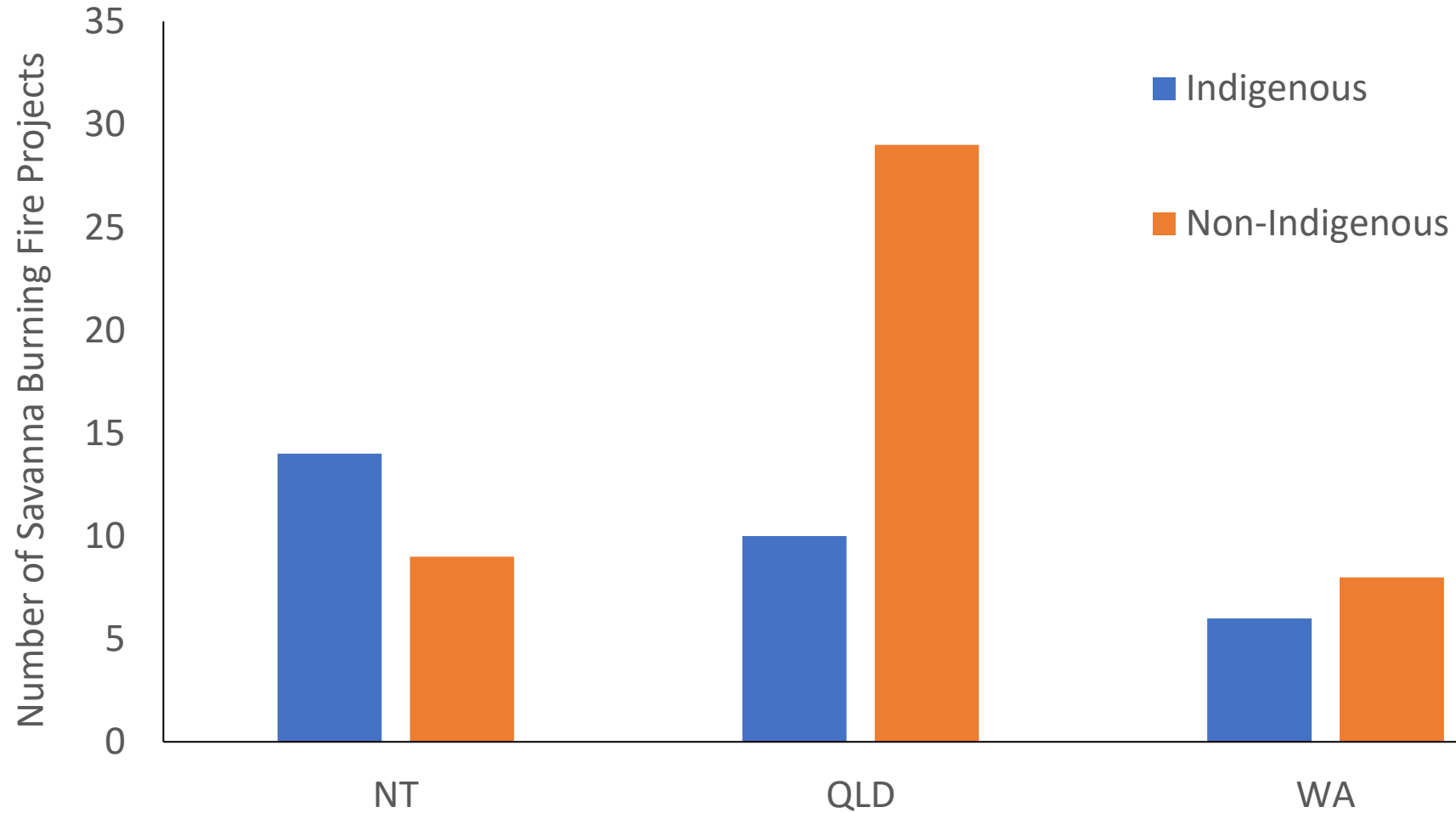


# Savanna ACCU issuance by state to date



- Over 7.5 million ACCUs issued to savanna burning methodology
- 73 % of ACCUs have been produced by Indigenous savanna burning projects

# Savanna fire projects by state to date





# Additional Benefits

- Enables improved fire management outcomes across vast landscapes where access by road is limited.
- Unique in that it generates multiple environmental, cultural and social benefits as well as significantly abating greenhouse gas emissions.
- Provides meaningful training and employment opportunities on country in very remote areas where jobs are scarce.
- Enhances opportunities to access country, intergenerational exchange of traditional knowledge and practices.
- Empowers land managers by providing an independent source of income.
- Improved biodiversity outcomes of global significance.
- The economic value of these additional 'co-benefits' are becoming more formally recognised through different evaluation frameworks (Aboriginal Carbon Foundation Core Benefits Verification Framework, Biodiversity credits, Healthy Country Plans)



# Key Areas for Investment of Revenue from Carbon Projects

Source: ICIN survey of member organisations, August 2019





# Carbon projects directly increase the capacity of Indigenous land management organisations

In the recent ICIN survey, all 17 participating organisations reported an increase in capacity as a result of their engagement in the carbon industry, through:

- **Better equipped ranger groups**  
(More rangers employed, better access to training, new infrastructure)
- **Better governance outcomes**  
(Increased confidence through ownership of the project and greater engagement of Traditional Owners in local decision-making processes)
- **Organisational growth**  
(More staff, new infrastructure)
- **Investment in community infrastructure** (roads, outstations)
- **Increased financial sustainability** due to raising an independent source of income
- **New partnerships** with other supporting agencies





## Capacity building

- The Indigenous carbon industry supports knowledge sharing through events, ranger exchanges, workshops and networks such as ICIN.



# 7. Policy Submissions

ICIN worked with its members in the relevant states/territories to research and develop policy submissions in response to the following (click hyperlink to access):

## Northern Territory

- [Environment Protection Bill 2019](#) : [Final Review Report Here](#)
- [Climate Change Response](#)
- Environmental Offsets Framework (workshop)
- Gamba Grass Management Plan
- Territory Economic Reconstruction Committee

## Western Australia

- Climate Change Strategy

## Australia

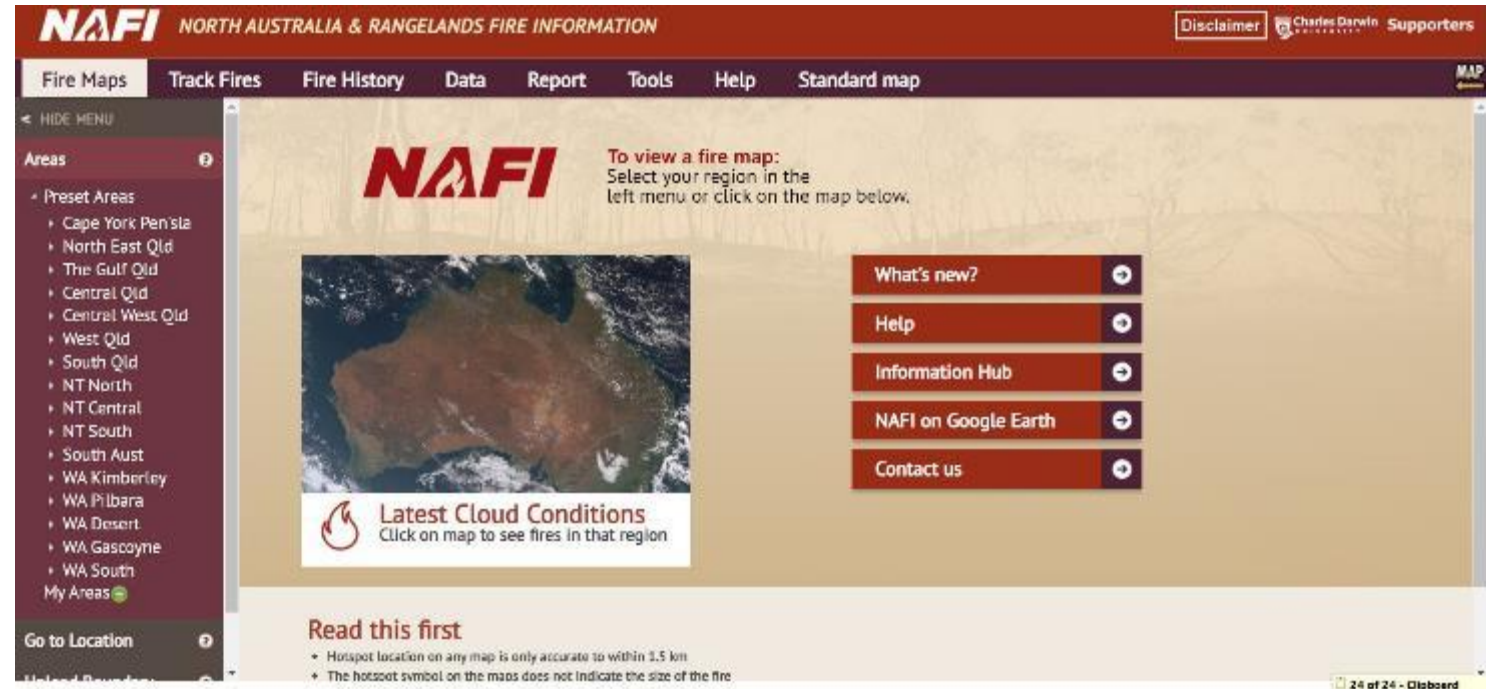
- [Inquiry into the Faunal Extinction Crisis](#)
- [Joint Standing Committee on Northern Development \(44\)](#)
- [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#)
- Emissions Reduction Fund Review (Climate Change Authority) (meeting)
- Technology Investment Roadmap to a Low Emissions Economy (workshop)
- Climate Market Institute: Code of Conduct Review



ICIN Presentation to Northern Territory Parliament Committee  
re: NT Environment Protection Bill  
(pictured above, CEO ALFA NT, Jennifer Ansell and Acting Coordinator  
ICIN, Eric Lede)

# North Australia Fire Information (NAFI) Service

- ICIN is part of a working group aiming to see NAFI ([www.firenorth.org.au](http://www.firenorth.org.au)) resourced in the long-term.
- In May, ICIN coordinated [22 organisations to sign a letter](#) directed to the Minister for Environment, Sussan Ley, seeking assurance of the long-term funding of the NAFI Fire North website and hotspot tracking tool, which our members rely upon to inform their fire management planning as well as fire suppression.
- This brought together representatives from a wide range of sectors.
- In response, in June the Australian Government agreed to fund NAFI in the 2020/21 year. Long-term funding needs will be assessed as an output of the Bushfires Royal Commission.





## Savanna carbon farming drives better fire management outcomes

**“North Australian fire management is now recognized as world’s best practice.”**

“Our research shows that the area of hot, late dry season fires across north Australia has halved over the past fifteen years and the area of all fires has dropped by a quarter. This shift has been driven by early dry season burning undertaken by land managers and comes despite worsening fire weather conditions brought by climate change.”

*Rohan Fisher, Darwin Centre for Bushfire Research, speaking at the 2020 North Australian Savanna Fire Forum.*



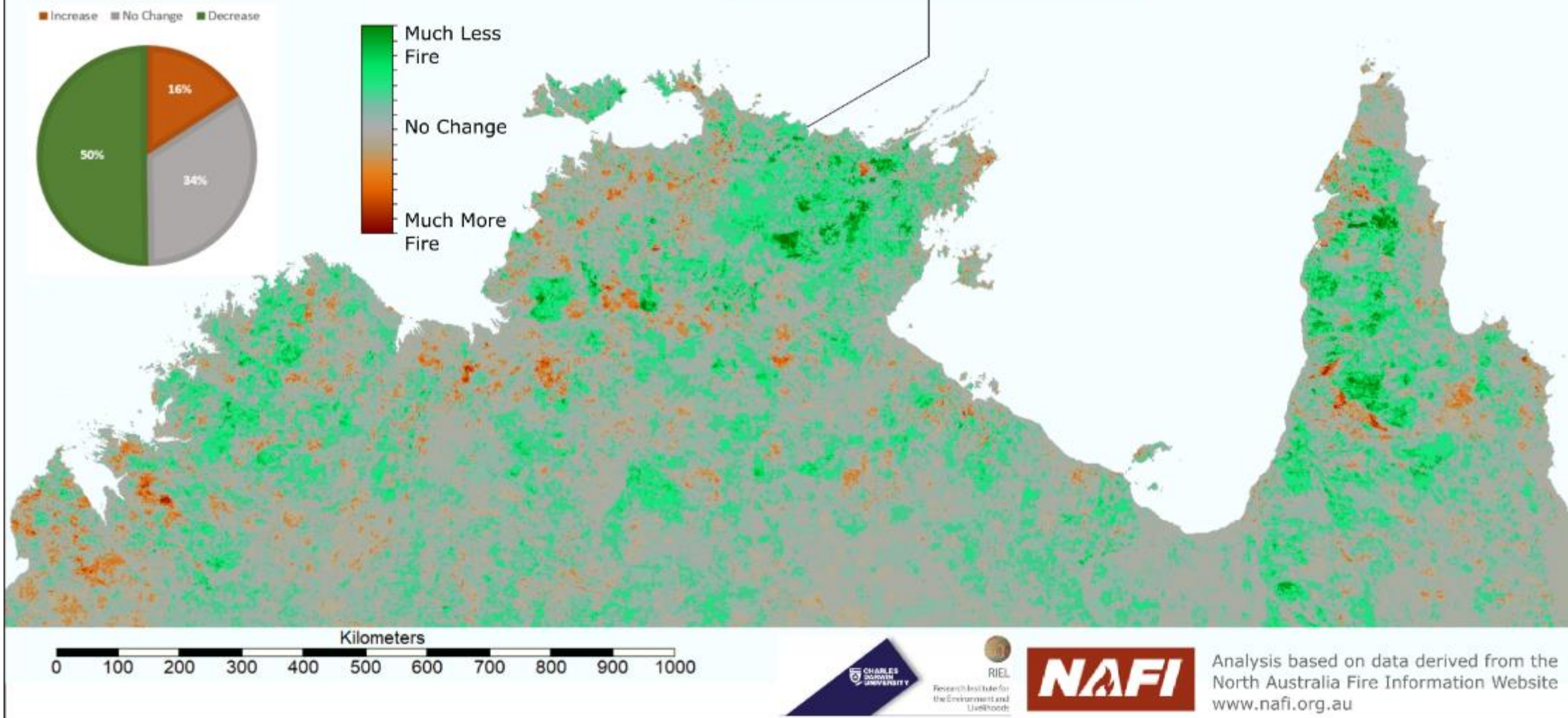


## North Australia fire management

A comparison of average fire frequency between 2000-2006 and 2013-2019

**361,400km<sup>2</sup>** the area with a reduced number of late dry season fires.

**340,400 km<sup>2</sup>** the area with a reduced number of all fire.





# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Crisis: Impact on the industry

- The Coronavirus crisis affected different regions across the north in different ways.
- Fire management planning together with Traditional Owners for their savanna carbon projects had already taken place before the social distancing rules came in.
- Early Dry Season burning went ahead in the Kimberley and Arnhem Land regions, although with greater aerial support and generally fewer people employed to manage fire while restrictions were in place. Savanna burning using aerial support on Cape York was delayed but this aligned with suitable burning conditions.
- The crisis demonstrated:
  - That government and local land council support for fire management to be considered an “essential activity” is key.
  - That timeliness of a crisis response by authorities is key, given that the window for Early Dry Season Burning is shrinking due to climate change impacts.
  - That groups with more infrastructure in place to support outstations and ranger stations had greater capacity to respond to isolation rules.
  - That groups with strong regional support and good relationships with neighbours had more capacity to share resources such as helicopters and planes (with quarantined pilots).
  - That generally, the Indigenous carbon industry is both highly adaptive and responsive to a crisis. As a result Early Dry Season Burning in 2020 is going well, although groups are prepared for another dry and hot Late Dry Season as predicted by the Bureau of Meteorology.
  - Building capacity for locally driven responses in a crisis through enabling economic opportunities in remote communities is critical.

## NT Indigenous rangers take to skies to care for country during coronavirus

By Chelsea Heaney

Posted 8 May 2020, updated 8 May 2020





# Carbon Methods Technical Workshop

Hosted by Darwin Centre for Bushfire  
Research  
Darwin, February 20, 2020

- Around 60 researchers, Indigenous carbon businesses and government representatives attended.
- Research results find that if taken up, improved accounting of carbon in the landscape by including Living Biomass could multiply the recognized carbon benefits from fire management by up to 5 times. However, it requires the current science to be reviewed so that the methods of measuring carbon are consistent and fit with international rules. There are a number of policy barriers which need to be addressed by governments and regulators before the method can be integrated into government policy.





# Territory NRM Conference November 2020, Darwin

- ICIN hosted the Indigenous Carbon Industry Showcase featuring presentations by the Coordinator, Thamarrurr Rangers (Uriah Crocombe, Mariah Daly and Jason Jimarin) and Yugul Mangi Rangers (Clarry Rogers and Jana Daniels)
- We also hosted a workshop attended by 50 Indigenous rangers from across the NT, Sharing Your Fire Story, with presentations by Larrakia elder Bilawara Lee, the Mimal women rangers and Thamarrurr rangers.



# Sharing Your Fire Story Workshop





# Methods – future opportunities

- Growing number of Indigenous-owned carbon projects
- Address policy barriers to uptake of 2018 savanna carbon farming sequestration method to double the carbon accounted for through the same activity.
- Up to 5 times more carbon accounted for in savanna carbon farming through Living Biomass methods in development through CDU Darwin Centre for Bushfire Research (through recruitment of seedlings and carbon in vegetation)
- Human-induced Regeneration (on cleared/grazed country)
- On sea country, “blue carbon” methods in development supported by Queensland Government Land Restoration Fund to account for carbon stored in mangroves and sea grasses
- Soil carbon methods to measure benefit of improved land management practices.
- Need to support more Indigenous groups to understand the opportunities and risks of engaging in the carbon market. (eg. huge growth of HIR projects in WA)
- Need to support greater recognition of Indigenous rights and interests in carbon.





New methodologies in development (standing dead wood, living biomass).



Better coordination and communication resources (ICIN).



Developing climate change policies delivering more certainty for the industry



Growing voluntary and compliance markets.



Growing 'willingness to pay' for carbon credits generated by Indigenous carbon businesses as recognition of co-benefits and demand increases.



Potential for trading mechanisms to deliver a price on carbon in response to emissions targets.



New training courses available to build capacity of fire managers and carbon farming practitioners (Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Skills Impact and CDU).

# Industry Growth



# Recognising the rights and interests of Indigenous people is critical

ICIN published the **Best Practice Guide to Seeking free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous communities for carbon projects** in February 2020.

ICIN strongly recommends that carbon proponents adopt this guide in accordance with the principles stated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which Australia has endorsed.

The guide is now recommended for referral within the Carbon Market Institute Code of Conduct as a result of the ICIN submission to the Independent Review of the Code.

The guide is also referred in advice targeted at new carbon proponents produced by the Carbon Market Institute, the Clean Energy Regulator, as well as the Queensland Government Land Restoration Fund and the Western Australian Government.







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North Australian Savanna Fire Forum

[www.savannafireforum.net](http://www.savannafireforum.net)



*Photos: David Hancock*