ICIN Indigenous Carbon Industry Network

Potential for the Carbon Market to Contribute to Economic Recovery of the Northern Territory

Anna Boustead, Coordinator ICIN

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 200 people
- Currently joint funded by Australian, NT, WA and QLD Governments with additional support from The Nature Conservancy.
- Employs part-time 0.8 Coordinator hosted by Warddeken Land Management.

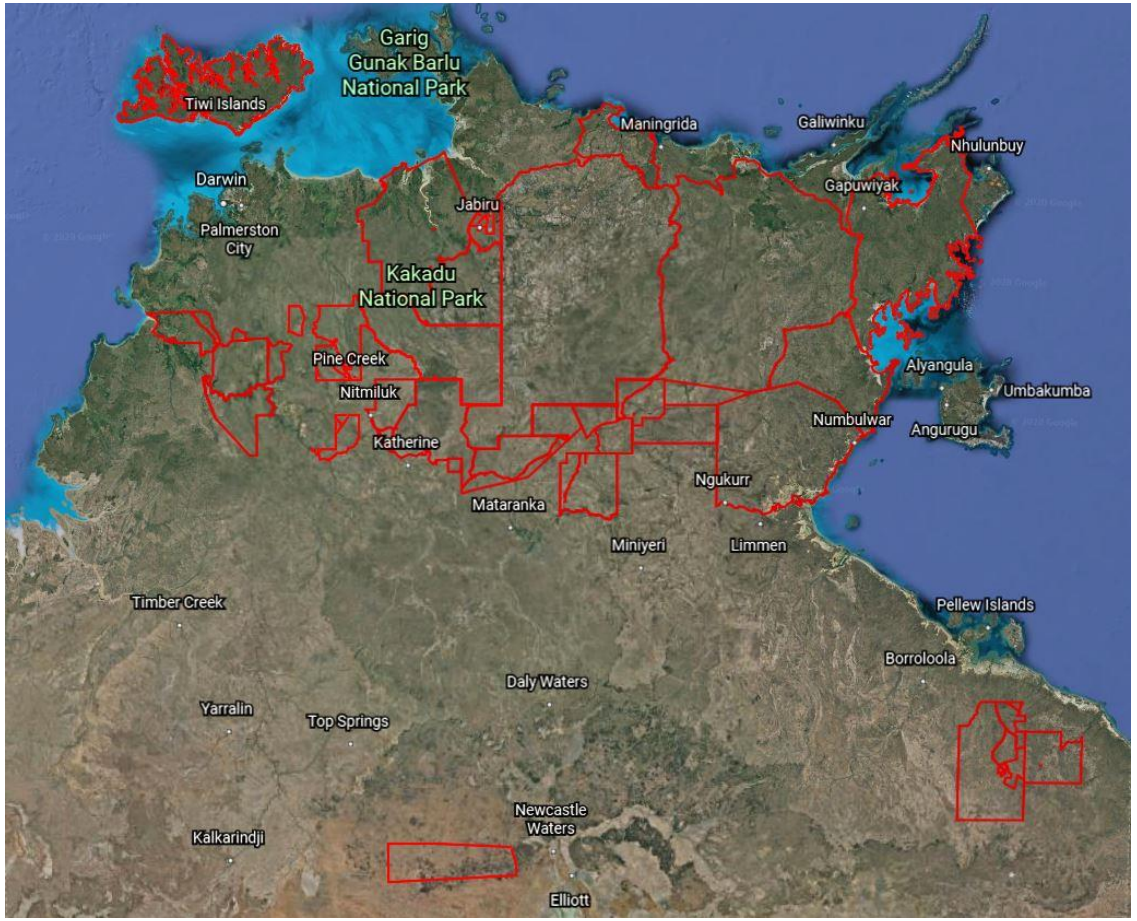
More photos, presentations and reports can be found at:

Northern Territory Carbon Industry – projects and methods

- Around 5 million tonnes of greenhouse gases abated since 2012
- **1 Waste** project (Darwin Landfill methane capture project)
- **4 Agriculture** - beef cattle herd management (ILSC, CPC, AACo)
- **3 Energy Efficiency** (Upgraded street lighting, Gove power station, Woolworths supermarkets)
- **23 Savanna Carbon Farming projects** (including 14 Indigenous-owned carbon 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)

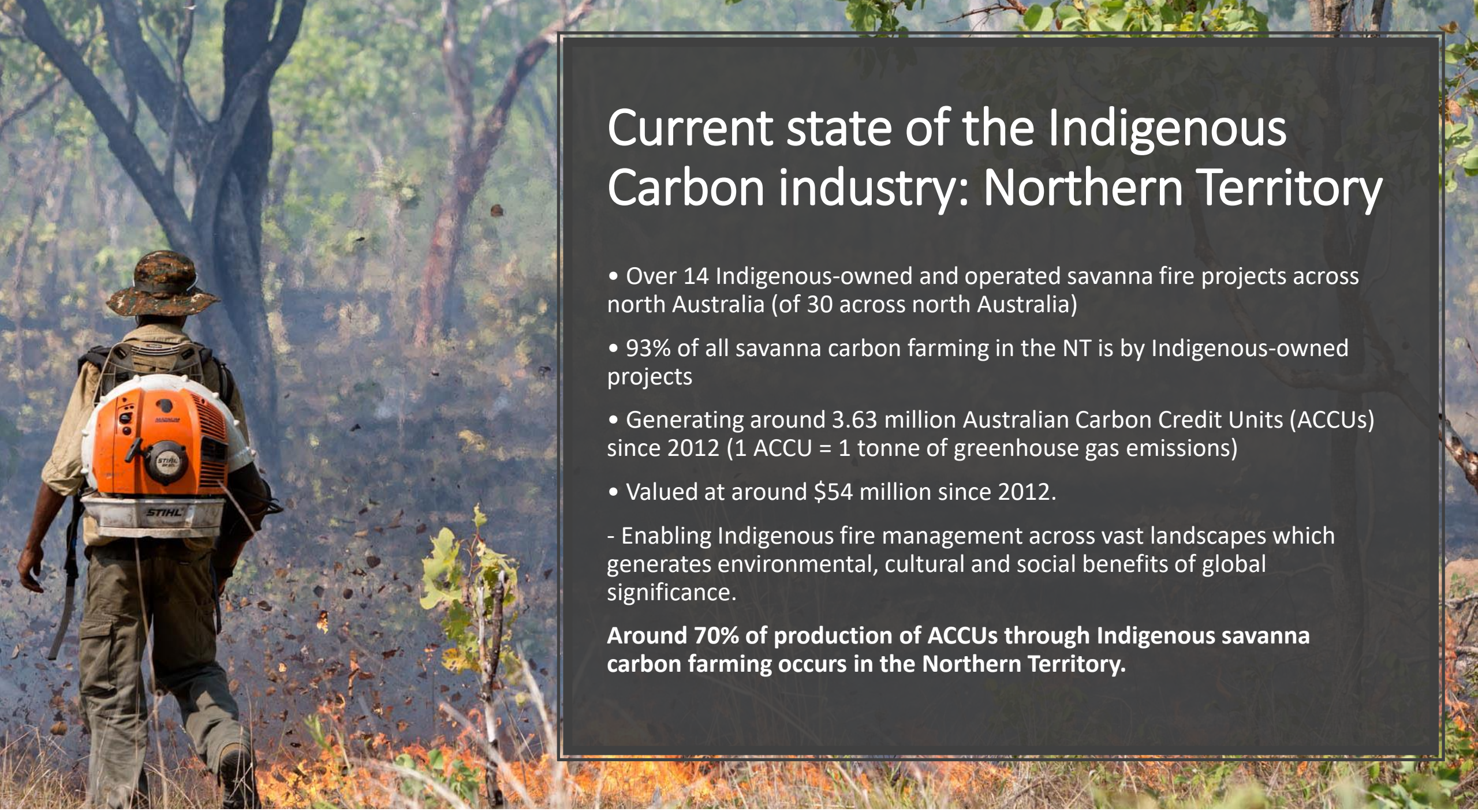
All NT savanna carbon farming projects are currently registered under Emissions Avoidance methods (2015/2018)



Source: Australian Government Clean Energy Regulator - Emissions Reduction Fund Project Register

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.



Current state of the Indigenous Carbon industry: Northern Territory

• Over 14 Indigenous-owned and operated savanna fire projects across north Australia (of 30 across north Australia)

• 93% of all savanna carbon farming in the NT is by Indigenous-owned projects

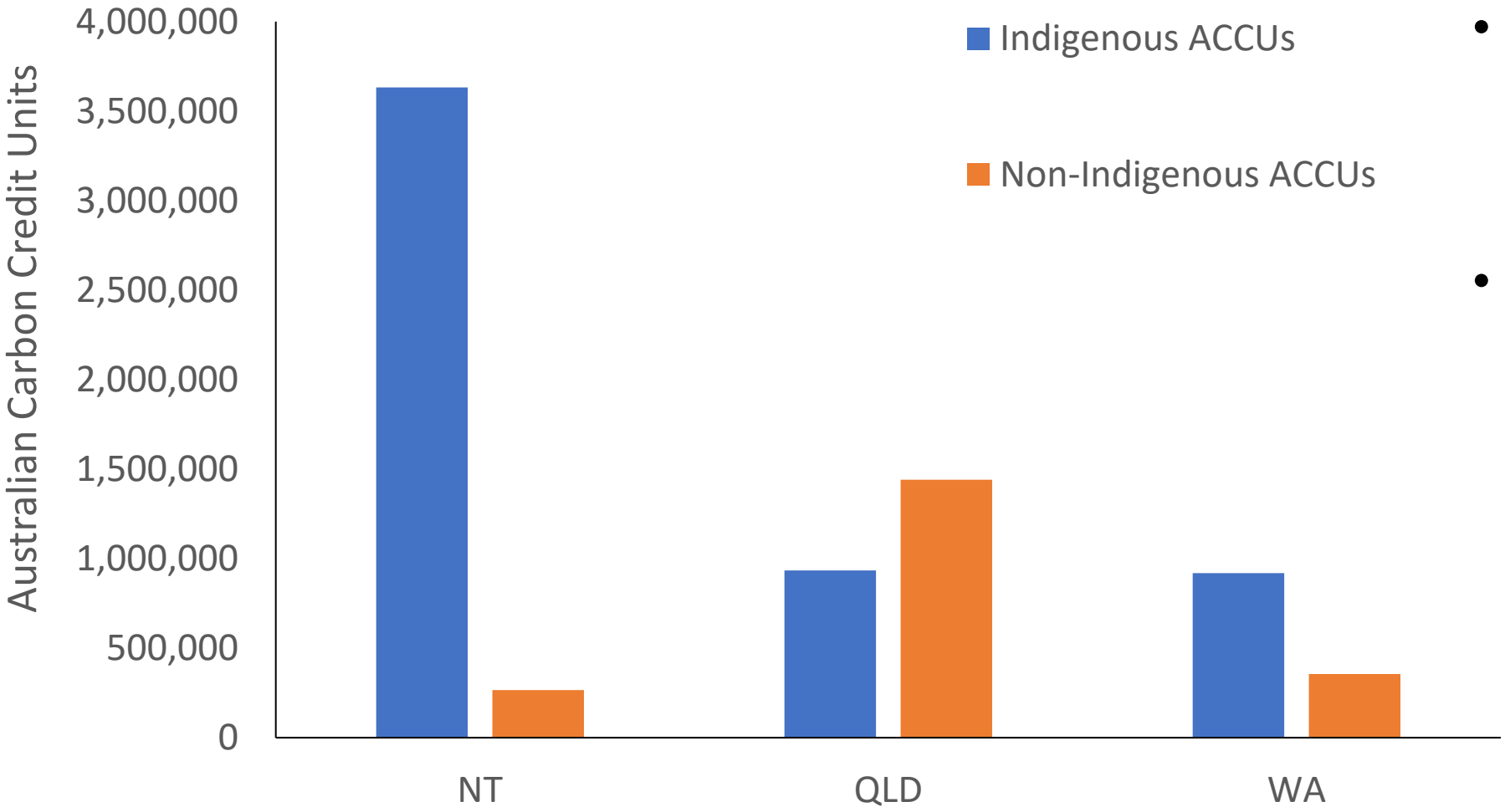
• Generating around 3.63 million Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) since 2012 (1 ACCU = 1 tonne of greenhouse gas emissions)

• Valued at around $54 million since 2012.

- Enabling Indigenous fire management across vast landscapes which generates environmental, cultural and social benefits of global significance.

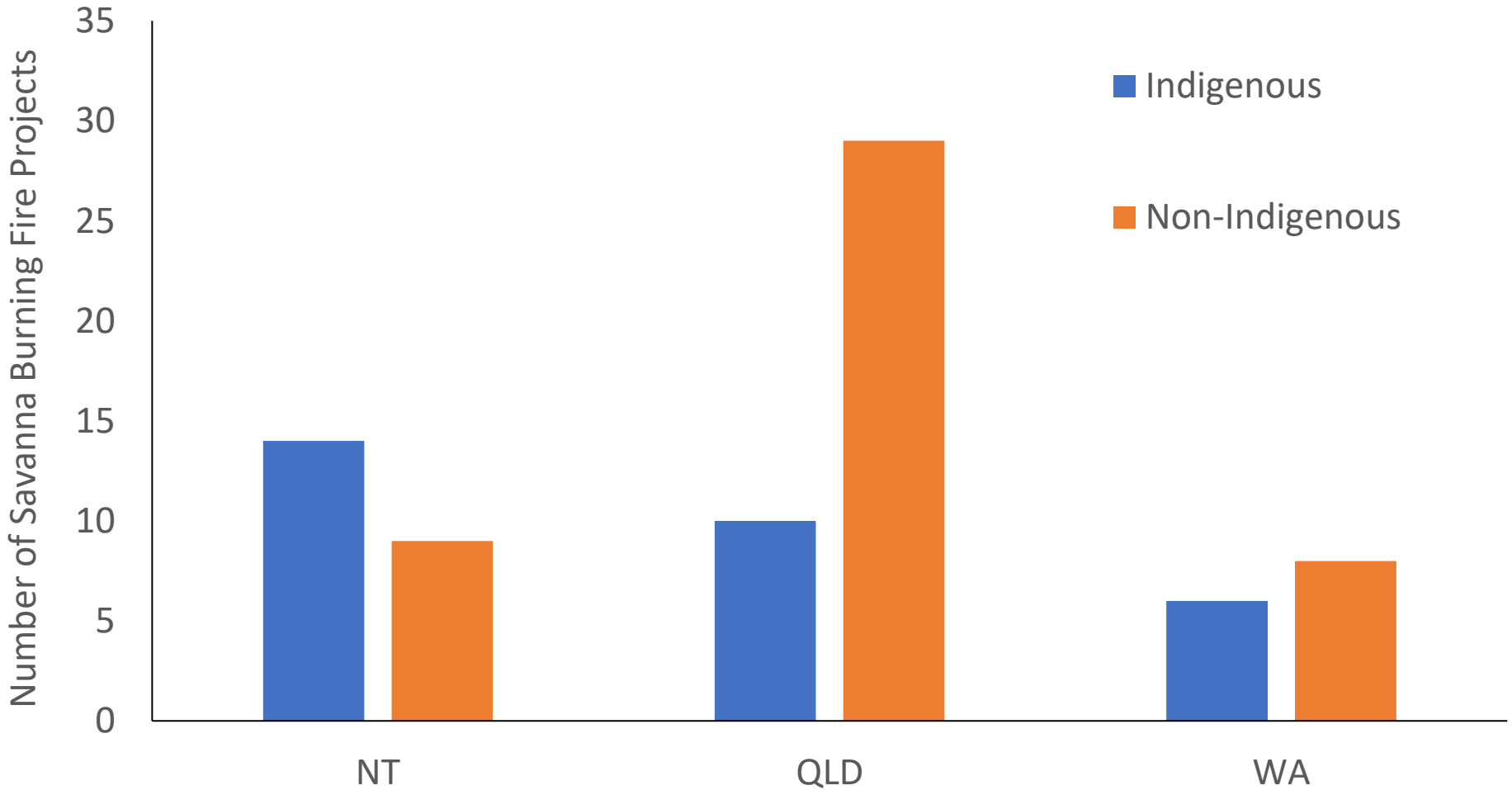
Around 70% of production of ACCUs through Indigenous savanna carbon farming occurs in the Northern Territory.

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

Source: ICIN survey of member organisations, August 2019

- **Operational Costs** (management, administration, equipment, fuel, governance)
- **Employee costs** (wages, human resource management)
- **Planning** (Healthy Country or Fire Management)
- **Supporting Traditional Owners to access country**
- **Supporting intergenerational exchange of traditional knowledge** (cultural fire camps)
- **Infrastructure** (new ranger bases, road networks)
- **Community development** (community meetings, consultation)
- **Training and professional development of rangers**
- **Building relationships with external organisations** (including potential funders)
- **Project development**
- **Research Projects**

Carbon projects directly increase the capacity of Indigenous land management organisations

In the recent ICIN survey, <u>all 17</u> 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.

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.”

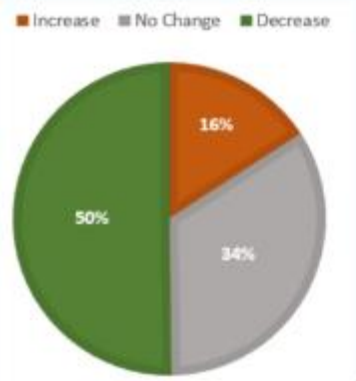
Rohan Fisher, Darwin Centre for Bushfire Research, speaking at the 2020 North Australian Savanna Fire Forum.

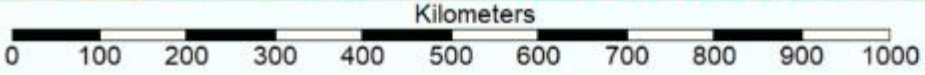
North Australia fire management

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

361,400km^2 the area with a reduced number of late dry season fires.

340,400 km^2 the area with a reduced number of all fire.





Analysis based on data derived from the North Australia Fire Information Website www.nafi.org.au

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.

Methods – future opportunities

- 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.

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

Growing the Indigenous Carbon Industry

- Clear, consistent government policy to cut emissions and grow the carbon market
- Support new carbon project development with start-up funding grants
- Remove barriers to uptake of new carbon methods to increase supply ACCUs
- Listen to advice from Indigenous carbon businesses, through ICIN
- Support our homegrown marketing strategy
- Increased long-term funding to support Indigenous ranger groups
- Recognition of native title rights and interests in carbon.
- Support for better control and management of fire weeds
- Increased funding to support R&D of new methods and NAFI Fire North service
- Engage our industry in broader policy discussions and industry engagements

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.

Learnings for the new economy

- Indigenous-led industries borne of genuine partnerships which recognise the immense value of Indigenous traditional knowledge and experience is vital.
- Recognition of the value of Indigenous land use and land rights enabling types of economic development which genuinely benefit local communities and the economy (rather than a ‘barrier’ to development)
- Recognising the full economic benefits of Indigenous land and sea management requires investment in R&D as well as taking into account the full costs/benefits of any development.
- Enabling policies are important.
- Link to strategies to ‘Close the Gap’ on Indigenous disadvantage and UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Be willing to think outside the square of mainstream industries.
- Collaboration across sectors is key
- Working to the unique strengths of the Northern Territory will generate win-win outcomes for remote Indigenous communities, the environment, the climate and the economy.

Thank You

ICIN Indigenous Carbon Industry Network

Contact
Coordinator, Anna Boustead
icin@warddeken.org.au
p. 0417 989 577

Facebook/IndigenousCarbonIndustryNetwork

North Australian Savanna Fire Forum
www.savannafireforum.net

Photos: David Hancock