

# Reporting Back - NT Fire Workshop & Group Discussions 10 - 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Protocols to guide the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in fire management and carbon abatement programs



Facilitated by Cathy Robinson & Marcus Barber (CSIRO)



National Environmental Science Programme

# *Building protocols from on-ground fire management activities and partnerships*

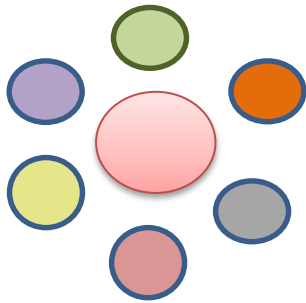
## Participants

David	Moore	Djelk Rangers
Ricky	Archer	Djelk Rangers
Jackie	Gould	Northern Institute (CDU)
Lisa	Roeger	Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation
Den	Ulamari	Jawoyn Association
Otto	Campion	Gurruwiling
Rowan	Focey	Aboriginal Carbon Fund
Stefan	Maier	Maitec
Fergus	McDonald	The Nature Conservancy
Anna	Belford	NLC
Paul	Bunbuyyu	NLC
Clynton	Spencer	Toowoomba Regional Council
James	Aitken	Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
Lizzie	Sullivan	Wagiman Traditional Owner
Charlie	Ramandjarri	Wanga Djakamirui
John	Daly	Fish River ILC
Christine	Ellis	Central Land Council
Josephine	Fgrant	Central Land Council
Jane	Blackwood	Central Land Council
Rodney	M	Fish River ILC
Stewart	B	Fish River ILC
Chad	M	Fish River ILC
Tom	A	Fish River ILC
Andrew	Drenen	Roper River Landcare and Mangaragi Rangers
Jasmin	Daly	Fish River ILC
Steve	Roeger	Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation
Margot	Sharp	Australian Govt Department of the Environment
Clayton	Namatjira	Central Land Council
Jon	Hodgetts	TNRM
Ben	Lewis	Fire Stick and Associates
Jeff	Richardson	EcOz Consultant
Peter	Latz	Desert Wildlife Services



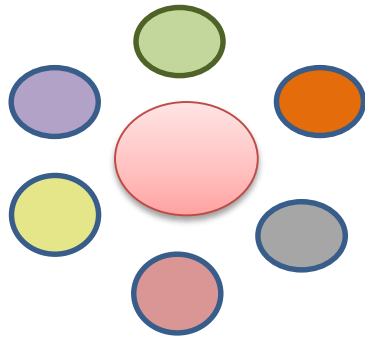
# Protocols to guide the incorporation of IFK in fire management and carbon abatement programs

Drawing on



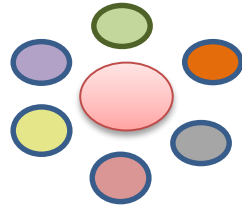
- Successes and challenges associated with the different approaches used to share IK with western science
- Different perspectives, experiences and lessons learned from the incorporation and translation of IK into fire management

# Protocols draw on a range of indigenous fire projects & partnerships



-  Savanna burning **carbon** projects: local, regional, PES agreements
-  Fire for matters of **environmental** significance: IPA, Park, NGO agreements, biodiversity
-  Fire to protect **assets**: e.g. buildings, fences, roads, sacred sites
-  Fire partnerships with **neighbours** (pastoralists, parks, local councils)
-  Fire partnerships **between Indigenous groups**
-  **Knowledge partnerships** to manage fire (with scientists, carbon offset providers, NGOs)

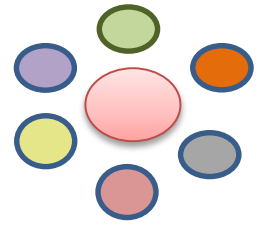
# Workshop program



- Types of knowledge used to manage fire
- Share lessons about fire projects
- Celebrate some fire project stories (Dhimurru, TNC)
- Share lessons about fire partnerships
  - Celebrate some fire partnership stories (Aboriginal Carbon Fund, Djelk Rangers)
- Developing protocols from on-ground activities and partnerships

Key points and 'quotes' from people are recorded below

# Fire types, uses and benefits



## Fire types and times

Fire can be 'wildlife', 'patchy', 'quiet', 'healthy', 'out of control', 'big and hot' and burning needs to 'respond to local places – it will be different in different parts of Australia'. Burning should be done at the right time (end of May to the end of August). 'Right time' can vary in different parts of the North and between year to year

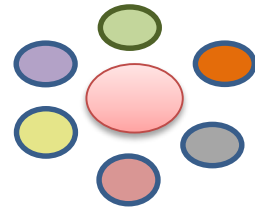
## Fire uses

- Fire is used as part of 'looking after country', 'to hunt', 'to get bush food', 'as people travel through the bush', 'clear a path ahead', 'protect sacred sites', 'manage weeds', 'as part of ceremony', 'for cooking', 'for carbon markets', to 'protect important birds and animals', 'to show you have been in country', 'to protect our homes from wildfires' 'a tool to improve country and make money'

## Fire benefits

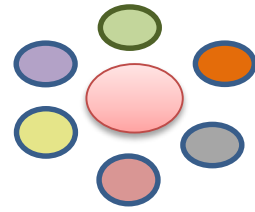
- Fire provides 'jobs for our people', a way to 'get out on country, share knowledge and make decisions about what we need to do for our community and lands', and is a 'key practice to keep landscapes healthy'

# Aboriginal fire knowledge



- **Fire knowledge** informs people about ‘how to burn country properly’, ‘watch country’ to see how it responds after fire, ‘listen to Elders, share experiences with rangers’ to make decisions about where, when and why burning should occur.
- **Fire knowledge is specific to Aboriginal people and country** - ‘some knowledge is shared between us all’ other fire knowledge is specific to women, men and Elders – ‘It is hard to say this is fire knowledge – it needs to be negotiated at that time ... at that place’.
- **Aboriginal fire knowledge ‘the right way’** is guided by Aboriginal law ‘you have to earn this knowledge through knowing law and knowing what to do’. It is also adapted based on ‘being on country’, ‘sharing experiences’, ‘listening to Elders’, ‘watching country’, ‘talking about where we burnt and how country responded’. Smoke from burning some places (eg vine thicket, some sacred places) can made you sick. So burn away from these areas
- **Fire knowledge is being lost** - some knowledge needed to burn country ‘the right way’ is getting lost due to ‘not being on country’, when communities ‘lose our confidence to burn’ and when burning has to accommodate ‘new rules for burning’ that are guided by programs and investors (eg fire for carbon) rather than ‘burning driven by what communities want’.

# Scientific & local fire knowledge



## Scientific knowledge of fire is important

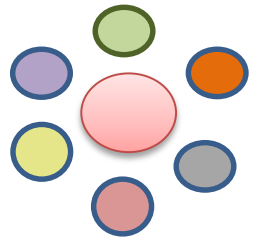
- scientific knowledge of fire is a big part of how Australian people think about fire
- science has shown how the landscape, plants, and animals respond to fire
- science has driven and supported the new carbon business

## Local and neighbour knowledge is important

- knowledge of fire also comes from people who have lived in the area for a long time
- people working in cattle and other businesses have learned about how to use fire for that purpose – managing animals and property boundaries
- this knowledge is a part of contemporary fire knowledge



# Fire knowledge partnerships



**Fire Knowledge partners** include scientists, neighbours and community groups.

**Fire knowledge partnerships involve** 'sharing knowledge' and 'respect' in order to manage 'country today'.

These are partnerships between elders, rangers, neighbours, scientists and fire management investors (eg Landcare, TNC, biodiversity and carbon market investors)

**Fire knowledge partnerships are needed to manage changes on country**

-Indigenous country requires constant care,

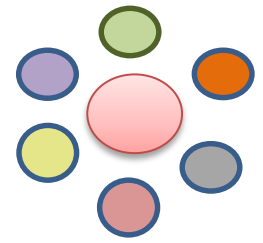
-Places that have not been burnt for a long time require a careful approach,

-Make sure fire doesn't burn neighbouring properties

– 'gamba grass creates hot burns'

an adaptive and collaborative approach to fire knowledge is needed to guide new fire management activities (eg fire for threatened species management)

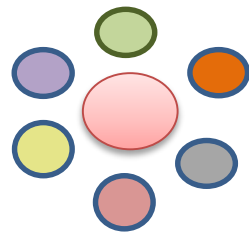
# Knowledge sharing approaches



## Knowledge sharing is aided by:

- ‘getting fire practitioners together out on country to share lessons and experiences’
- ‘satellite maps help show you what is happening across the North’
- ‘paper maps are better than computer screens’ during aerial burns as they are easy to read for navigating around country’,
- photos help ‘monitor where we have burned and how country has changed’,
- ‘science stories’ are trusted by ‘scientists who work with us and are willing to share knowledge’
- “Getting Traditional Owners together regularly with Rangers is key to ensure fire is managed the proper way”
- “Workshops are a good way for us to learn for us all to learn from different groups all working with fire and trying to ensure carbon projects succeed”

# Fire management challenges



## Managing fire for different purposes

- Fire for carbon, for hunting, for threatened species can be different. Sometimes country needs to be unburnt for use in late season burning such as kangaroo fire drives

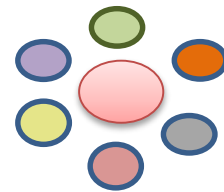
## Securing long-term resources

- These include resources for training, employment for fire officers, to share knowledge about good fire management practices with neighbouring groups, scientific and technical expertise to manage fire for different purposes

## Growing and sustaining Indigenous community capacity

- Resources and capacity of ranger groups has grown. We have “turned unmanaged fire into managed fire”. Fire management activities are generating income, getting people back on country, supporting more traditional burning. In many cases it has taken decades to reach this capacity but shows committed well-resourced communities can do it. But more

# Lessons from fire partnerships & activities



## **Indigenous carbon projects need to be designed and delivered using Indigenous knowledge**

- “Savanna burning carbon methodology is based on Indigenous fire knowledge (IFK) and practice”. Key is to ensure Indigenous knowledge designs and drives the process. “This is not just about only using [IFK] – we need to take on other knowledge but we can’t lose control of where, why and how we burn”. “The balance between science and TK is not where we want it to be”

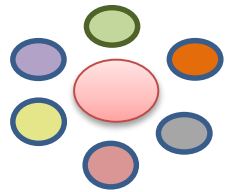
## **Hard to work with existing carbon market rules and methods.**

- The 1 August cut off is problematic in the CYP – Aurukun and Kowanyama. Standard needs to fit regional context “protocols are the same everywhere – encourage early burning to stop fighting fires late. But August 1 is too early.” “We don’t want to set up an incentive that makes us have to burn the country to the ground”. In the Nov 5 ERF, there were 15 bids, but only 2 contracts were successful. Voluntary market sales, we have been able to get ~\$16 per ton, while the government market is \$13.

## **Varied uncertain carbon enterprises.**

- Some interest in keeping carbon projects “run by the community and not through a broker”. Others suggested a “structure and pathway for a Indigenous carbon industry is needed.” Concern communities engaging in carbon markets “without doing proper budget that accounts for all the costs in keeping savanna burning projects viable”

# Lessons from fire partnerships & activities



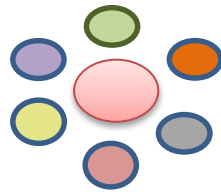
## **Balancing fire for carbon markets and Caring for Country**

Important to balance carbon projects with other fire management goals and activities. “When I go to my grave, I want to know that there are still bush rats.... I’m a greenie for my people”. Carbon burning is “intense”, “frequent” and can encourage “us to burn large tracts of country rather than smaller patch burning”. There is concern that communities will “rely on carbon to fund community on-country enterprises ... and we know this market is tight and uncertain”

## **Mixed fire management approaches important**

“Fire using helicopters may be efficient but it is also important Aboriginal people get out on country so we can adapt our fire management practices based on how country is responding to our burning”. Concern that carbon projects encourage groups to bring in contractors “who don’t know country”, “get the skills we should be building in our community” and technical expertise needed to broker carbon markets and ensure compliance with methodologies is very expensive

# Lessons from fire partnerships & activities



## Rangers turning into fire fighters

- A lot of community resources are needed to maintain fire projects and partnerships. Fire projects can “take up all our time leaving us with less time to do other work that is important for the community and for our partners”. Concern about the health of community members in helping with fire “we can’t put them on the fire line but we need to keep them informed so they can guide us to burn the proper way”. Health and safety is an issue “we could get a ranger killed trying to meet an ERF contract, fighting a fire to meet the mitigation. We never used to fight the fires, now we are spending all this money fighting them, turning the ranger group into a fire brigade.”

## Ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners critical and costly

- Ongoing engagement to ensure informed to ensure “fire is done the proper way and the community backs the rangers in their burning efforts” . “Sometimes the dollars are going against the TOs needs – dollars in the bank are the co-benefit, caring for country and passing on knowledge are the main game”.

# Celebrating fire management

*"We need to build flexible country relevant carbon economies"*

*"Different country needs different fire – this needs to be negotiated on the ground, led by Aboriginal communities"*

*"Sure carbon is a great way for us to get jobs but it is also important way to care for country"*

*"Early burning stops fighting fires later in the year"*

*"We have to make sure our homes, fences, power ... are all safe from wildlife by burning every year"*

*"I remember when I first saw a satellite map – amazing! We can work together to burn all Arnhem land the proper way"*

*"Our neighbours and us use the fence to talk about best way to burn these days – not to mark out boundaries"*

# Building protocols from on-ground experiences

**Concern about building national protocols** – “protocols should be local and driven by local communities” ; “each community is different, so is each fire strategy” and there is confusion about why national protocols are even needed”

**Key principles** to guide the intent of fire projects and partnerships identified and include

- Be negotiated with informed support and consent by Traditional Owners
- support Indigenous peoples’ knowledge interests and values
- be guided by the priorities and agendas of local Indigenous communities, both over the short and longer term.
- Enable on-ground fire activities that are driven by on-country activities by Traditional Owners
- Build local community capacity to develop and sustain on-country enterprises.



# Thank you

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