



Kimberley Land Council

MEDIA RELEASE

November 16, 2017

KLC exports Indigenous fire management to the world

The Kimberley Land Council has been named as a leading project partner in a new international savanna fire management project which will see Australia's knowledge of Indigenous fire management exported to the world.

Announced today at COP 23 (Conference of the Parties) in Bonn, the project is the result of national and international recognition of the knowledge of Australia's first people in reducing carbon emissions through right-way fire.

The ground-breaking project will see the implementation of savanna burning at a series of pilot sites in Botswana, southern Africa.

With funding of \$3.87 million over four years, the project will help deliver savanna carbon abatement methodology suitable to the Botswana landscape, as well as facilitate Indigenous knowledge exchange between Kimberley Aboriginal people and communities in Botswana.

Kimberley Land Council Chief Executive Officer Nolan Hunter is in Bonn with Project Leader Sam Johnston to launch the initiative together with Minister for the Environment and Energy Josh Frydenberg.

Mr Hunter said the project highlighted the valuable role Indigenous people play in looking after country, as well as assisting a global community approach committed to action on wildfire and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

"Every year wildfires make news headlines across the world," Mr Hunter said. "They are a major threat to human lives, biodiversity, property, and economies.

"But Indigenous people in Australia have developed a solution to this threat and Kimberley Aboriginal people are leading the way."

Combining ancient knowledge with modern science and technology, Indigenous rangers burn early, keep fuel loads down and reduce destructive wildfires. This leads to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and provides carbon market opportunities. It also delivers valuable jobs for poor and remote communities, while at the same time reinvigorating traditional culture.

"The Kimberley Ranger Network is delivering world's best practice," Mr Hunter said. "Indigenous rangers across Australia are making a significant contribution towards Australia's conservation, biodiversity and environmental outcomes."

First used in Australia in 2006, Indigenous fire management is now practised right across northern Australia. There are 75 projects registered across northern Australia worth over \$100 million and employing more than 400 Indigenous rangers.

“Together with the Australian Government we have been exploring the feasibility of exporting Australia’s ground breaking savanna burning methodology to Asia, Africa and Latin America,” Mr Hunter said.

“We found widespread interest as this methodology could deliver the types of outcomes seen in Australia, such as market based mitigation and adaptation, as well as economic and social benefits for communities in fire prone landscapes around the world.”

According to Mr Hunter, today’s announcement is further reinforcement of the importance of the Paris Agreement, which recognises Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and its role in the Indigenous Peoples’ Platform under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

“This project is an opportunity for Kimberley Aboriginal people to share their knowledge, provide training and exchange expertise across the globe,” he said.

Project leader Sam Johnston said Botswana had been selected as the first pilot site due to its savanna landscape and fire regime.

“Wildfires are a dominant feature of southern African landscapes,” Mr Johnston said. “These fires produce significant greenhouse gas emissions, reduce agricultural productivity and damage ecosystems.

“Passing on the methods of Australia’s Indigenous community will give people in Botswana an opportunity to change the way they manage fire, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create opportunities for people living in remote communities.

“This will not only benefit Botswana, but the whole world.”

For more information about Indigenous fire management in the Kimberley, please visit www.klc.org.au