

Which of the following best describes your situation?

[REDACTED]

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or industry body?

Yes

Who are you responding on behalf of?

[REDACTED]

How would you like to respond?

a. Answer discussion paper questions via the online survey

What are the opportunities to reduce emissions and build carbon stores in agriculture and the land? What are the main barriers to action?

Opportunities Much of Australia's land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) emissions are the result of the dispossession of Indigenous people and the loss of carbon sequestered above and below ground from an interruption to traditional cultural activities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experts at caring for country and should be supported by the Australian Government to exercise their native title rights to manage country and reduce/avoid emissions. By getting back country through the native title process, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can continue to re-establish practices which sequester carbon and avoid emissions from unsustainable LULUCF activities. This is evidenced by the significant contribution to emissions reduction made by projects on land owned and/or managed by Traditional Owners (whether through native title or state and territory frameworks that recognise Traditional Owners' rights), including the more than eight million tonnes (CO₂e) of greenhouse gas emissions avoided through fire management. There are significant opportunities to extend the

eligibility of fire management activities under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme to areas with between 400mm and 600mm annual average rainfall. There already exists a strong evidence base and sufficient information to incorporate this area into existing savanna fire management ACCU Scheme methods. Resourcing the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water to incorporate this work into SavCAM would incentivise fire management and suppression in areas where there is limited funding. We note that this work could be extended further into arid areas, significantly increasing sequestration and emissions avoidance resulting from improved fire management. To date, ACCU Scheme projects other than savanna fire management have been focused around the pastoral estate, including areas with non-exclusive possession native title determinations or claims. There is significant confusion among pastoralists, carbon service providers and native title holders about the intersection of non-exclusive native title rights to undertake activities on native title land and therefore whether projects can be registered on native title land without making legal right agreements with native title holders. We believe there are significant opportunities to mitigate commercial and scheme integrity risks by clarifying this in a way which encourages partnerships between native title holders and others who have a title or interest in the land.

Barriers [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Unfortunately, early dry season fire management is becoming increasingly costly due to public liability insurance costs. This makes it increasingly difficult for Indigenous ranger groups to undertake burning to protect life and property and reduce emissions on country. As fire conditions worsen due to climate change, there is a risk that private insurance companies will no longer provide coverage for this early dry season fire management. [REDACTED] suggests the Australian Government looks at ways to ensure ongoing fire management remains possible in light of these insurance costs. Savanna fire management projects registered under the ACCU Scheme are at risk of seeing the emission reductions that have been achieved significantly impacted by climate change. Early dry season fire management is becoming more difficult due to shorter windows for undertaking burning. Fire suppression is becoming increasingly difficult due to the extent and intensity of late dry season fires. More research is needed to predict the impacts of changing fire regimes, and new fire management techniques to adapt to changing fire regimes within new and existing ACCU Scheme projects to ensure that emissions can be avoided (and sequestration protected) into the future. The Agriculture and Land Sector Plan must acknowledge and address the tension that can exist between differing Commonwealth and state agriculture and land priorities. While aspirations at a Commonwealth level are welcome, when these are not supported at a state level it can be extremely difficult to enact successful and effective change. The Agriculture and Land Sector Plan must specify how states will contribute to and support the plan, and how any new developments will contribute to, rather than negate, the sector's efforts to reduce emissions and add to carbon stores. The plan should also include the measures the Commonwealth will take to address any inconsistencies where States are undertaking LULUCF activities which are contrary to the objectives of the plan. Another potential barrier is the lack of sector-based emissions reduction targets and interim (pre-2050) emissions reduction targets, which may result in a lack of sufficient mitigation action. Setting targets for all sectors of the economy, including the agriculture and LULUCF sector, will set clear expectations about the scale and pace of change required and help drive the necessary emissions reductions. To mirror the Government's Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth), sector-based targets for 2030 should be developed at a minimum, alongside a tangible longer-term mitigation pathway including further interim targets through to 2050. References <https://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/ERF/project-and-contracts-registers/project-register> accessed 10 June 2023 Cameron Yates, Jay Evans, Roland Vernooij, Tom Eames, Ed Muir, Jarrad Holmes, Andrew Edwards, Jeremy Russell-Smith. (2023). Incentivizing sustainable fire management in Australia's northern arid spinifex grasslands. *Journal of Environmental Management*. Vol 344. <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/indigenous-science/managing-country/ngadju-kala> accessed 8 December 2023

How can we progress emission reduction efforts whilst also building resilience and adapting to climate change?

[REDACTED] acknowledges the inclusion of Indigenous people throughout the discussion paper, particularly the need to incorporate their knowledge, rights, involvement and perspectives in planning for a net zero future. Indigenous people's inclusion in the Agriculture and Land Sector Plan will be integral to the successful decarbonisation of the sector and it is essential that this includes practical and meaningful strategies that support their ability to contribute to emissions reduction goals. Typically, Indigenous land management activities that are based on traditional cultural practice are consistent with or complementary to emissions reduction. The plan should therefore include key targets that aim to achieve not only an increase the participation of First Nations people within the sector, but an increase

in the Indigenous estate overall through ongoing determination of native title, increased areas of land managed by Indigenous people, such as Indigenous Protected Areas, and support for Indigenous-led and -owned agriculture projects and initiatives. This may be achieved in part by adopting and integrating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the principle of free prior and informed consent throughout the plan. The participation of Indigenous people within the sector should also be supported by appropriate resourcing from government, and the plan should include concrete measures that will be taken to increase Indigenous participation and expansion of the Indigenous estate. [REDACTED] supports the recommendation of the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network for the crucial role of Indigenous people to be supported through targeted in-person engagement, as well as coordination and recognition of the many related programs and consultations currently on foot, all requiring input from under-resourced and at-capacity Indigenous organisations. Please refer to the [REDACTED] later comments regarding the need for increased funding for PBCs to facilitate increased Traditional Owner involvement in land management activities.

Are there initiatives or innovative programs underway that could be applied or expanded on at a national scale?

As noted earlier, Indigenous land management can and should play a central role in driving emissions reductions in the LULUCF sector. Indigenous ranger programs and the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program are key initiatives that warrant expansion and increased support from government. Indigenous rangers undertake cultural and natural resource projects throughout the Kimberley using a combination of traditional cultural knowledge, western science and modern technologies. Activities carried out by rangers improve and enhance biodiversity, carbon sequestration and cultural values. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] welcomes the Commonwealth Government's planned expansion of the Indigenous Ranger Program and notes that significant infrastructure and capital works will be required for the program to grow. Without adequate housing and facilities for ranger teams to operate from, ranger teams will have limited capacity to undertake emissions reduction activities. We also note that remote communities are still largely operating on diesel generators. Specific funding for Rangers to support community-scale renewable energy projects as well as small-scale projects to power ranger bases will ensure Indigenous Ranger activities are low-cost and result in minimal emissions. Further, the IPA program is a successful initiative that has seen Traditional Owner groups across Australia deliver improved conservation outcomes. IPAs recognise Aboriginal people as land owners and managers and support them to look after biodiversity hotspots and highly sensitive areas they want to see protected. As the need for carbon sequestration and emissions reduction becomes more urgent, IPAs can be a vehicle to support relevant activities, including fire management. We note the [REDACTED] submission to the Climate Change Authority's Setting, tracking and achieving Australia's emissions reduction targets consultation which notes that expansion of the Indigenous conservation estate is a leading indicator of land-sector emissions reductions. A world-first renewable energy project in the Kimberley also provides an innovative new model for Aboriginal ownership in low-carbon projects that could be adopted nationally. The East Kimberley Clean Energy Project will create Australia's first 100 per cent renewable energy hydrogen and ammonia production hub. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. In a powerful new model, the three Aboriginal organisations in the partnership are project owners rather than simply stakeholders, with each of the four partners owning an equal share in the partnership company. This partnership model will support project delivery, with cultural heritage, native title, environmental, engineering and approvals integrated in project development activities. For the agriculture and LULUCF sector, the (low) emissions from the manufacturing of the ammonia through the East Kimberley Clean Energy Project will be considered scope 3 emissions, which the KLC understands will not be directly addressed in the Agriculture and Land Sector Plan (noting, however, that the project will provide significant broader benefits for the agricultural sector in the Kimberley). However, the innovative project model supports Australia's decarbonisation while empowering and benefiting Traditional Owners, and has the potential to be replicated in other areas. One strategy that would help to expand the Indigenous estate is for the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) to obtain land on behalf of Traditional Owners, and divest the control of that land to the Traditional Owners or the native title prescribed body corporate (PBC). The ILSC may also be able to provide the PBC with financial support for undertaking emissions reduction or sequestration projects on the land. The East Kimberley Clean Energy Project model could also be utilised for other green energy projects on native title land.

How can the Australian Government bring together existing effort and new initiatives into one coordinated plan?

There is a critical need for representative organisations that can synthesise policy and practice at scale. We note that the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network, Indigenous land management organisations [REDACTED] and regional associations like the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) lack core funding to coordinate Indigenous solutions to climate change at a regional and national level. This is symptomatic of a failure to recognise that Indigenous people are responsible for managing over 50 per cent of Australia's National Reserve, through the Indigenous protected Area (IPA) program, and are stewards for a significant proportion of Australia's remaining landscapes and biodiversity. Therefore at least half of any land sector solutions to climate change will come from Indigenous land management. We note for example that the Australian Government's recent Carbon Farming Outreach Program grants were "\$17.5 million over 3 years to deliver training and advice to farmers to integrate low emission technologies and practices into their farming operations and land management practices." We recommend the Australian Government look at how it can similarly support Indigenous land and sea managers. This should include funding for policy development through existing regional and national land management organisations and explicitly recognise the unique and important contribution that Indigenous land management will make to climate change mitigation in Australia.

What are the most important options to be further adopted or supported, looking in the short and the longer-term?

Short term to long term, [REDACTED] supports the following recommendations from the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network's submission to the Agriculture and Land Sector Plan: 1. Committing to accurate (i.e. pre-existing) baselines for existing savanna fire management projects which transition to the 2024 Savanna Fire Management method. a. If vegetation growth resulting from existing savanna fire management projects is not credited by the Australian Government, we believe there will be a significant reversal of sequestration of when projects reach the end of their emissions avoidance crediting periods in around 15 years and no longer have income to support fire programs. 2. Expanding the geographic scope of ACCU Scheme methods to cover Indigenous managed land. a. Expanding eligible areas for fire management methods would increase the total area of First Nations owned or managed land covered by the method by more than 50 per cent. 3. Supporting the proposed Avoiding disturbance of soils and vegetation and rehabilitating soils and vegetation of coastal wetlands influenced by non-native ungulates method and updating Australia's greenhouse gas reporting approach to recognise that feral ungulates are a significant source of anthropogenic methane emissions. 4. Providing start-up funding for First Nations landowners to implement carbon projects. Creating legislative frameworks for renewable energy and nature-based solutions which encourage partnerships between landholders who have rights through native title determinations and other related landholders will unlock latent abatement opportunities on conditional registered ACCU Scheme projects and de-risk emissions reduction projects on the Indigenous estate. Please also refer to [REDACTED] other responses in this submission.

What are the practical solutions to increase uptake?

[REDACTED]. It appears unlikely that existing project proponents will decide to permanently sequester carbon in vegetation if the Australian Government continues with its proposed approach to sequestration baselines for transitioning projects under the 2024 SFM Method (as set out in Australian Government communications dated 26 October 2023). The KLC is aware of significant demand from native title holders to participate in reducing land-sector emissions through the ACCU Scheme; however, most native title holders are stymied by the lack of geographically suitable methods. Extending the eligible area for the 2024 SFM Method would result in significant uptake not only in the Kimberley but throughout the Indigenous estate. While the ACCU Scheme and methods for land-sector emissions reduction are generally well known amongst Indigenous land managers in the Kimberley, these groups lack start-up funding for emissions reduction projects. While there is significant potential for economic development in Indigenous

communities through the ACCU Scheme, there is unlikely to be significant uptake without start-up funding for carbon projects.

How do you see the agriculture and land sectors contributing over the medium and longer-term? What are the opportunities to deliver emission reductions in parallel with wider goals?

As noted in other responses, Indigenous land management can and should play a central role in driving emissions reductions in the land-use sector. The initiatives and examples mentioned already – such as Indigenous ranger programs, IPAs, adjustments to ACCU Scheme eligible activities, and innovative Aboriginal-led project development models – can all contribute significantly towards emissions reductions alongside a range of other goals and benefits. These additional benefits include the enhancement of biodiversity, protection of cultural heritage, increased Aboriginal employment and upskilling, and Aboriginal economic development.

How can the Australian Government better support agriculture and land sectors to:

a) drive innovation

b) build capacity

c) ensure the system enables emissions reductions

Please refer to [REDACTED] other responses in this submission.

What new initiatives could the Australian Government design that would support emissions reduction and carbon storage in agriculture and land and help ensure a productive, profitable, resilient and sustainable future for the sectors?

There is significant untapped capacity for emissions reductions through improved fire management. [REDACTED] believes the best way to achieve these reductions is by expanding eligibility areas for fire management methods under the ACCU Scheme. Savanna fire management ACCU Scheme projects are demonstrated to achieve high-integrity emissions reductions through improved fire management, as well as economic development for remote Indigenous communities. More broadly, increased funding and support for PBCs would go a long way towards increasing the capacity of Traditional Owners to take part more actively in land management, low-carbon economic development and partnerships with other stakeholders. PBCs are chronically underfunded, and many struggle to fulfil their basic corporate governance requirements with their limited resources. With Traditional Owners the largest landholding group in the Kimberley, increasing the capacity of these organisations has the potential to transform the future of land management in the region in a way that significantly contributes to our transition to a low-carbon economy.

A consistent and trusted approach for assessing and reporting emissions is often raised as a barrier to reducing emissions. Is there a role for the Australian Government in addressing this concern, and how can producers and land managers be supported?

Effective land-sector emissions reduction relies heavily on good data about landscapes (particularly vegetation cover and vegetation change). The Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) has been at the forefront of data collection to support land-sector emissions reduction since its inception. Despite this, there are limited EcoPlot sites on Indigenous-managed land – [REDACTED] understands there are only six on Indigenous managed land in the Kimberley

region. There are significant opportunities for the Australian Government to fund partnerships between Indigenous land managers and TERN to improve the quality of Australian landscape data. Fire is a key threatening process in the Australian landscape, and providing funding certainty to Northern Australian Fire Information (NAFI) and expanding its scope to cover more of Australia would contribute to our understanding of fire as a driver of climate change and how to address it. This would also pave the way for expanding fire management ACCU Scheme methods through better temporal and spatial fire history data. [REDACTED] also believes that there is an opportunity to empower Indigenous land management by recognising emissions reductions achieved on Indigenous land in Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts. We believe reporting on this would be a simple exercise which would highlight the value of Indigenous contributions to climate change.

What skills, knowledge and capabilities do you think producers and land managers need to implement change? What information and data would help them make decisions about emissions reductions and sustainable land management in the short and longer-term?

The success of savanna fire management carbon projects in the Kimberley shows that native title holders have the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve significant, high-integrity emissions reductions. Unfortunately, under-investment in the sector over the past decade has stalled new carbon project development as PBCs have lacked resources and staff to develop projects. Indigenous people have over 60,000 years' experience managing landscapes in Australia but need staff and resources to navigate modern administrative and commercial systems. This includes legal, commercial and ACCU Scheme specialist advice as well as logistical and facilitation support for decision-making and governance processes.

Do you have any additional views or feedback that you would like to include in your response?

As part of the Agriculture and Land Sector Plan, there should be a strong emphasis on the importance and value of preserving Australia's intact natural landscapes. In a world where too much of our natural environment has been sacrificed to unsustainable, emissions-intensive development, it is now more critical than ever that we preserve our natural spaces – that we maintain and grow our carbon sinks. The unique landscapes of the Kimberley are still largely undisturbed and are environmentally and culturally rich. The West Kimberley is National Heritage listed for its outstanding significance to Australia. However, the region has and continues to face development proposals – many of which are emissions intensive. Traditional Owners have expressed concerns about these proposals and must be closely involved in any decisions about development on country. These development proposals need to be carefully considered in light of the climate challenges we face and the need for rapid and widespread emissions reductions and carbon sequestration. There must be strong engagement between the Australian and state governments to ensure consistency of approach in the collective push towards net zero by 2050.

Is your response confidential?

No

Do you agree to your response being published on our website?

Yes

Please de-identify my response

Yes

I have read and understood the privacy notice and consent to the collection, use and disclosure of my personal information as outlined in the privacy notice.

Yes

Confirm that you have read and understand this declaration.

Yes
