AUGUST 2026

KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL

Kimberley Land Council, Australia

INNOVATIVE FINANCING CASE STUDIES

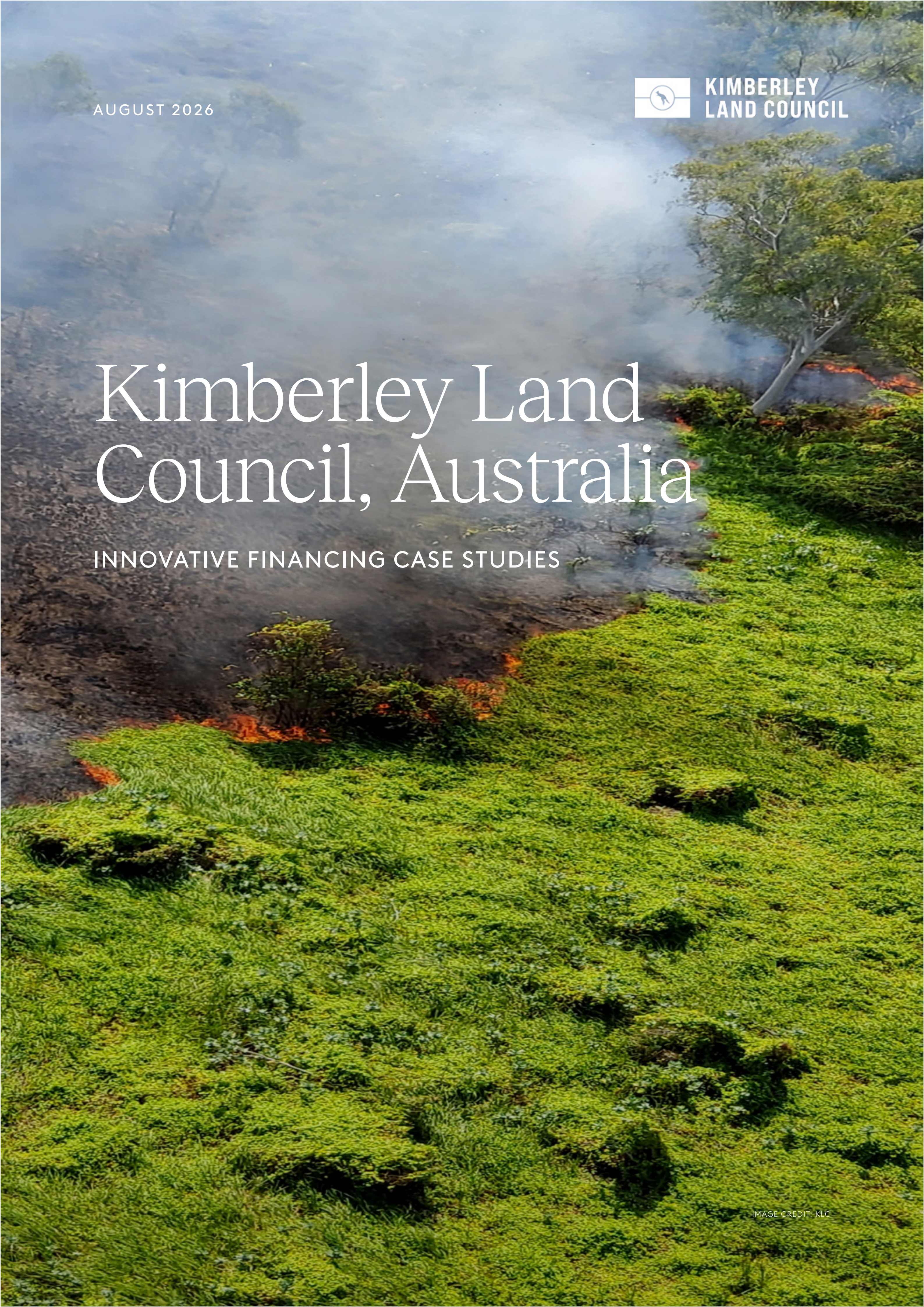


IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

Contents

CASE STUDY IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Innovative Financing Case Studies

Each of the case studies in this series describes a conservation finance mechanism in action. Before diving into a case study, look for the **Key Readiness Factors** - these are conditions or resources you should ideally have in place to successfully implement that model - and the **Best Fit Contexts** suggesting where or when the model is most appropriate. Use these pointers to gauge if a mechanism aligns with your community's situation.

The intent of sharing these financing case studies is to offer an in-depth look into the essential but often unseen inner workings – the "engine room" – of community-led conservation finance mechanisms. While other resources typically highlight funding sources or the ultimate distribution of funds, this series illuminates the critical governance, administration, and management processes at the heart of conservation financing. The case studies demonstrate how robust internal structures can prevent conflict, streamline administration, and ultimately drive enduring environmental and community outcomes.

COOL SEASON BURN ON NYALIGA COUNTRY. IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

CASE STUDY

Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Australia

SAVANNA FIRE MANAGEMENT — EMISSIONS AVOIDANCE

KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL

LOCATION

Kimberley region, Western Australia

In the Kimberley region of Western Australia, the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has helped Traditional Owners transform cultural fire practices into a recognised carbon business. Seven Indigenous-led projects are now registered under Australia's national carbon program (the ACCU scheme).

By carrying out strategic fire management in the cool season, they reduce the frequency and extent of intense wildfires in the hot season. These projects have reduced greenhouse gas emissions and have stored carbon in the landscape. Since they began, these Kimberley projects have generated more than 1.7 million Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). These credits are sold, and the income is reinvested back into fire management, ranger jobs, and community priorities.

The KLC plays a coordinating role, helping communities with everything from feasibility studies and training to governance, planning, and project registration. The KLC takes no profits from these projects, they all flow back to the applicable Aboriginal corporations.

Key Readiness Factors

- **Tenure & Legal Right:** Communities must have a legal right to carry out fire management on their land and to receive the carbon credits generated under the scheme. The land must fall into vegetation and rainfall categories set out by the carbon method. Sequestration projects may entail a 25- or 100-year permanence obligation.
- **FPIC & Governance:** Free, Prior and Informed Consent should be a continuous, well-resourced process. In Australian carbon projects, this includes consultation and securing consent from communities and landholders involved in the project.
- **Operational Capacity:** Ranger groups must be able to conduct cool season burns, apply for fire permits, and create and maintain records of cool season fire management.
- **Financial Realism:** These projects usually break even, with most of the money reinvested in keeping the fire program going. They are strongest when aligned with community goals for looking after country, rather than as profit-driven enterprises.
- **Biophysical Eligibility:** The land must fall into vegetation and rainfall categories set out by the carbon method.

Best Fit Contexts

- **Savanna landscapes** where fire management is already culturally important (trained ranger groups, eligible vegetation and community appetite for right-way fire practices).
- **Regions with clear land rights title and functioning governance** able to negotiate legal rights, stakeholder consent and oversee transparent benefit sharing.
- **Communities comfortable reinvesting carbon revenue** into long-term land management rather than expecting large surpluses.

Mechanism Overview

Savanna fire management projects in the Kimberley can follow two pathways under the ACCU Scheme:

1. Emissions Avoidance:

- These projects cut greenhouse gases by reducing the frequency and intensity of wildfires in the hot season through cool season fire management.
- Credits are issued each year based on rewarding the difference between historical emissions and emissions in each year of cool season fire management.

2. Sequestration & Emissions Avoidance:

- In addition to reducing emissions, improved fire regimes can result in increased tree density and density in the landscape and store carbon as a result.
- To count this stored carbon, the project must commit to a "permanence obligation" (25 years to 100 years) – meaning the land must be managed to maintain that carbon for the chosen period.
- This makes sequestration projects potentially more valuable, but also higher risk because they bind the community to long-term obligations that can affect future land use decisions.
- Long-term permanence requires rigorous financial and governance planning to ensure that funds and management capacity are sustained over decades. A well-structured financial framework can secure the ongoing maintenance of carbon stores while creating enduring regional economies and intergenerational benefits.
- For investors, permanence under the sequestration model provides an opportunity to participate in stable, long-duration carbon assets backed by transparent governance and measurable environmental outcomes, enhancing both the integrity and longevity of carbon credit portfolios.

In the Kimberley region, the KLC provides technical services and capacity building for cool season fire management (on the ground and aerial), and actively facilitates planning, registration and operation of Indigenous savanna burning carbon projects. Rangers implement right-way fire, creating fine-scale mosaics that reduce hot season wildfire risk while protecting biodiversity and cultural values.

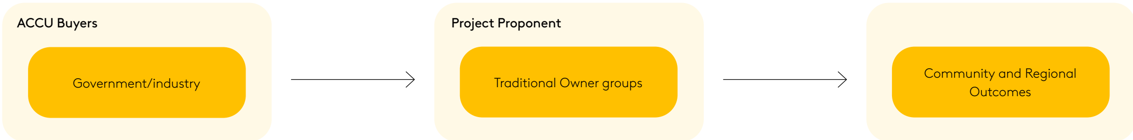
KLC INDIGENOUS RANGERS FIRE TRAINING DAY. IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

How it works

1. **Planning:** The KLC supports communities through checking that their land is eligible (vegetation, rainfall, tenure) and securing consent from all relevant parties.
2. **Eligibility:** In Australia, before a carbon project can be registered, everyone who has a legal interest in the land must give their consent. These people or organisations are called Eligible Interest Holders (EIHs). Depending on the land, EIHs might include:
   - Traditional Owners and their prescribed bodies corporate (PBCs).
   - Pastoral leaseholders who run cattle or other operations on the land.
   - Banks or mortgage holders with financial claims over the land.
   - Government agencies with legal responsibilities in the area.
3. **Registration:** Projects are registered with the Clean Energy Regulator (the Regulator). If the project also stores carbon (not just reduces emissions), it comes with a long-term commitment of 25 - 100 years.
4. **Fire Management:** Rangers carry out cool season burns (under the ACCU scheme rules, the cut-off date is before 31 July each year), create firebreak mosaics, and keep records (maps, flight logs, etc.).
5. **Credits Issued:** The regulator compares current emissions with historical levels and issues carbon credits (ACCUs) for the improvements.
6. **Revenue & Reinvestment:** ACCUs are sold to government (via auction) or private buyers. Income is allocated by community governance bodies to fire operations, jobs, training, governance, economic and community development.

INDIGENOUS RANGER CONDUCTING COOL SEASON BURN ON KIJA COUNTRY. IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

Money Flow Schematic



- **Employment & Training:** Local ranger jobs, training and development, equipment operations, and project administration.
- **Enterprise Development:** Support for Indigenous ranger enterprises, carbon project management services, and local procurement.
- **Cultural & Environmental Outcomes:** Funding for traditional fire practices, biodiversity monitoring, and Country management.
- **Community Infrastructure & Services:** Investment in vehicles, communications, and facilities that strengthen communities.
- **Long-term Funds / Future Economies:** Establishment of reserves or trust funds to meet permanence obligations, ensuring sustained management capacity and building intergenerational wealth.

KLC FIRE MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS. IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

Partners/Beneficiaries

- **Traditional Owner groups:** project proponents, on ground delivery.
- **Kimberley Land Council:** technical support, training, funding.
- **Clean Energy Regulator:** monitoring, verification and credit issuance.
- **Carbon credit buyers:** governments, industries, and voluntary market players.

Impacts/Outcomes

- **Climate:** More than 1.7 million carbon credits generated = 1.7 tonnes of avoided GHG emission since inception.
- **Land & Biodiversity:** Early burning reduces destructive late-season wildfires, protecting habitats and cultural sites.
- **Livelihoods & governance:** The projects support ranger jobs, strengthen community governance, and can spark other on-Country enterprises.
- **Leadership:** The Kimberley has become a reference point for Indigenous-led carbon projects in Australia and internationally.

Community Readiness Questions

- Is there a government-backed or voluntary carbon scheme that recognises savanna fire management as a valid method? (If not, what policies or partnerships would need to be developed before this could work in our context?)
- Does our land meet eligibility criteria?
- Do we have legal right and can we get consent?
- Can we reliably conduct early-season burns and meet reporting obligations?
- Do we have governance structures that can ensure decisions are made on time, and that benefits are shared?
- Is a project feasible and viable? What are our expectations for income generated by the project?

Key Risks to Consider

Risk	Mitigation
Community Engagement	Engage with stakeholders early in project planning and think more broadly about who should be involved in the project than just those who hold title to land (i.e. communities, neighbours, interests' groups). Follow principles of FPIC.
Market price volatility (price/volume, timing of sales)	Avoid relying on one buyer; use multiple sales channels.
Method eligibility (vegetation in eligible classes)	Engage technical experts to design an eligible project
Operational delivery risk (extreme weather, access constraints)	Plan ahead and, if needed, share capacity with neighbours.
Compliance (time to meet mapping, audit & reporting requirements)	Keep a clear calendar for reporting and audits.
Governance and consent (permanence obligations increase long-term risk/ commitments)	Ensure long-term commitments are fully understood, agreed, and planned for.

Checklist

- ○ **Purpose & Scope**
    - Be clear about your goals: Is the project mainly about caring for country, creating jobs, earning carbon income, or all three?
    - Decide early how fire management links to your wider community and conservation plans.
- ○ **Governance & Decision-Making**
    - Write down who makes decisions, who signs contracts, and how revenue will be shared.
    - Make sure appropriate Traditional Owners have a say and the process is transparent.
- ○ **Financing & Start-Up Support**
    - Identify where early money will come from (e.g. government grants, philanthropy, concessional loans).
    - Budget for equipment, training, and running costs in the first few years.
- ○ **Capacity & Skills**
    - Ensure ranger groups or fire crews are trained in cool season burning, mapping, safety, and record-keeping.
    - Build skills in book-keeping, reporting, and contract management so the project can meet compliance rules.
- ○ **Monitoring & Learning (MRV)**
    - Track fire activity, carbon credits generated, revenue, and environmental outcomes.
    - Use this information to adjust the project each year and improve results.

Further reading

- **KLC 2025** - Natural Capital Investments in the Kimberley
- **KLC 2021** - Eligible Interest Holder Consent for Carbon Projects
- **KLC 2019** - Savanna Burning: Introduction to Emissions Avoidance & Sequestration
- **KLC 2015** - Carbon Projects: Step By Step Guide for Indigenous Australia

COOL SEASON BURN ON BALANGGARRA COUNTRY. IMAGE CREDIT: KLC

COAST FUNDS

POLLINATION | Foundation

KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL

www.pollinationfoundation.org