

# **Caring for Country**

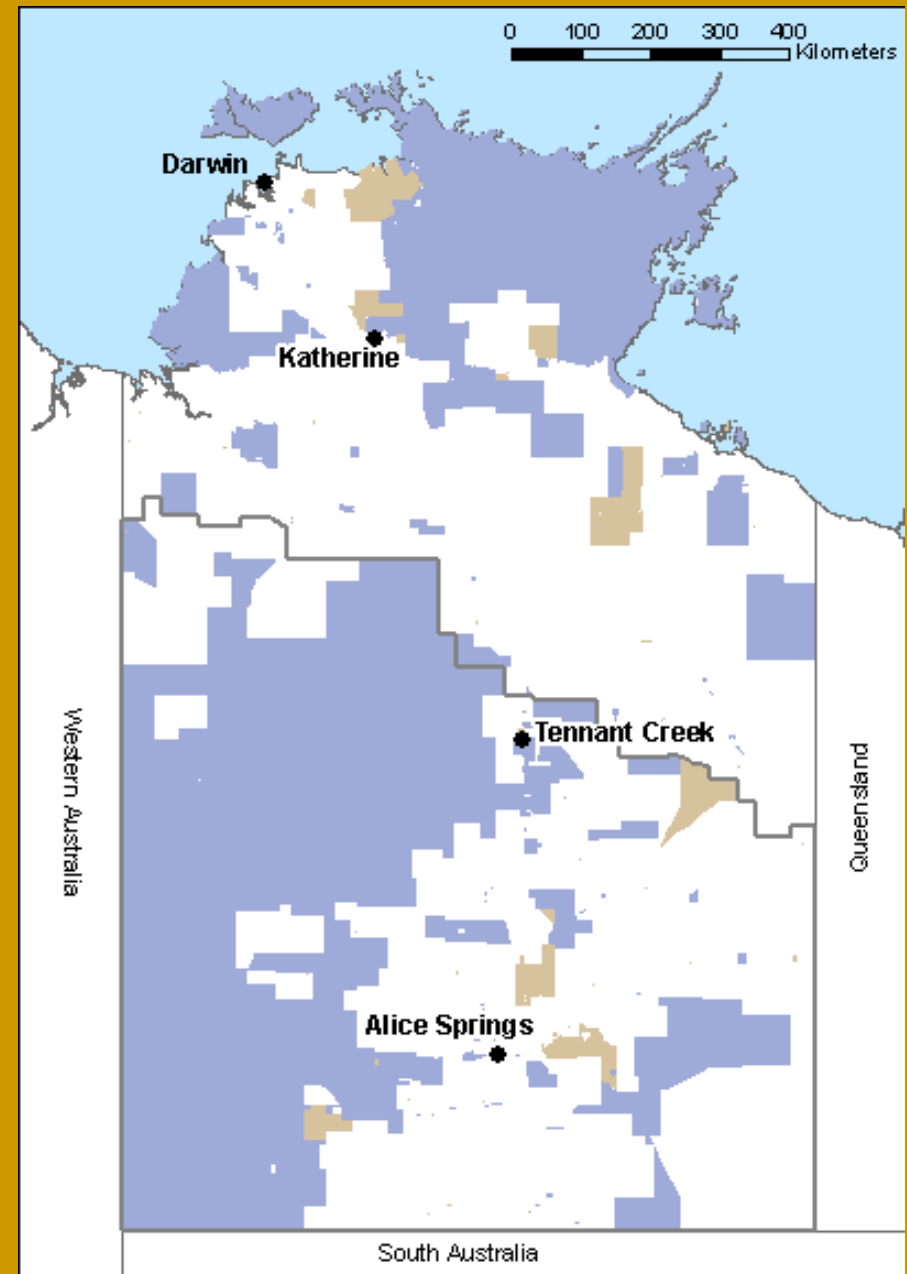
## **An Overview of Aboriginal Land Management in the Top End of the Northern Territory**

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# Northern Territory Aboriginal Lands & Population

- 28.5% of NT pop. of approx 200,000
- 72 % of pop resides outside major centres
- Population is young and fast growing
- Own 42% of NT land mass of 1,350,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- 85 % of the NT coastline is in Aboriginal ownership



# Land Claims

- Land won back seen as economically (pastoralism) marginal
- Unlike New Zealand or Canada, no compensation provided for the loss of, or degradation to, land and sea country
- Left traditional owners with no resources to manage land, develop businesses or 'fix-up' country

- Aboriginal lands and waters are some of the most biologically diverse and intact in Australia.
- Support important biological values including:  
nationally and internationally significant wetlands  
migratory seabird and shorebird habitats  
marine turtle nesting sites, rare, threatened and endemic species.
- Many of these values are either very poorly represented or not represented at all in the Northern Territory's park system.
- Of the 23 bioregions represented in the Northern Territory, about 1/3 occur predominantly on Aboriginal land (NT Masterplan 2005:59).

Caring for Country Programme is a Traditional Owner Initiative formalised in 1994

Northern Land Council supported and set up the Caring for Country Unit to:

- undertake consultations;
- implement participatory planning;
- Build capacity;
- source funding; and
- broker training and partnerships

# Aims of Caring for Country

## Sustainable Management of Natural Resources on Aboriginal Land and Seas

- **Fire** - wildfires destroy biodiversity and property across tenures. Aboriginal traditional fires are early, local and cool.
- **Weeds** – containment and eradication. *“weeds cost [Australia] about \$4 billion a year in lost production and control”* (NHT 2005).
- **Feral Animals** – containment and use. Manage various populations, stop the damage to country and ensure disease is not spread.
- **Wildlife Use** – sustainable use of native wildlife. Develop business on local resources and protect habitats.

# Aims of Caring for Country

## **Creating an Economic Base.**

Providing employment opportunities

- Fee for service work
- Emerging 'mainstream' industries - pastoralism / tourism
- Emerging 'sunrise' industries – wildlife (plants and animals)

## **Capacity Building**

- Aboriginal people investing in their own land
- Transfer of knowledge, both traditional and science-based
- Accredited training
- Developing partnerships

# **Aims of Caring for Country**

## **Protect the Land and the Sea - security**

- Border protection – Monitor foreign fishing vessels and prevent their biological threats
- Illegal fishing – reporting illegal commercial fishing activities
- Quarantine – monitor feral animal populations for diseases
- Manage sacred sites

## **Bridging the gap between science and traditional knowledge**

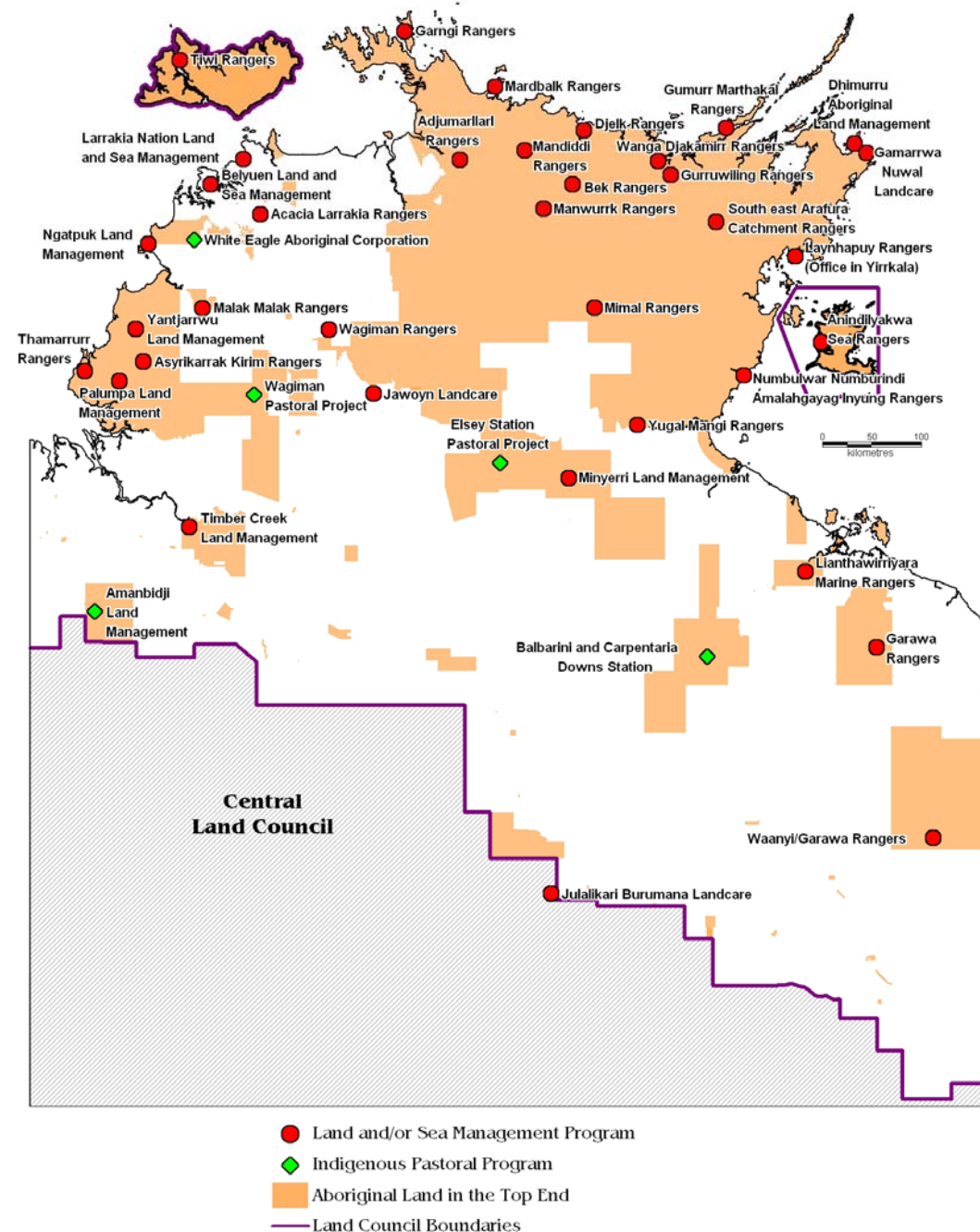
- Developing partnerships
- Valuing and using traditional knowledge along with science
- Promoting learning on country



2008

# NLC Aboriginal Land & Sea Management Programmes and Indigenous Pastoral Projects (IPP) in the Top End

- 35 land & sea programmes
- 4 IPP
- 400 people employed



# How Land and Sea Management Programmes Are Developed

- Traditional Owner request/support
- Intensive consultation (ALRA reflecting indigenous governance)
  - *Using participatory planning*
  - *At a place set by the community*
- Suitable host agency (Working on Country/CDEP/Ranger Base)
- Traditional owners as 'rangers'
- CFCU provides planning, facilitation and coordination
- CFCU brokers training and resourcing.





# Caring for Country: Policy that Works

## 1. Listen to and act on the instructions from Aboriginal land owners (Aboriginal Land Rights Act)

-using participatory planning practices

priorities locally identified, owned and addressed





# Caring for Country: Policy that Works

## 2 The Land Needs its People

Develop the capacity of the people to look after country  
(**empowering** + cost effective)

**versus**

External agencies looking after country on behalf of people  
(**disempowering** + costly economically and socially)



# Caring for Country: Policy that Works

## 3 Respect and apply traditional Aboriginal knowledge and modern science-based knowledge.

- Two tool box approach





# Caring for Country: Policy that Works

**4 Promote the intrinsic and economic value of ecologically and culturally intact landscapes.**

- for customary and commercial uses of their country.



# Caring for Country: Policy that Works

**5 Promote and facilitate partnerships and collaborations**  
to achieve positive land, sea management and social outcomes



**Northern  
Territory  
Government**



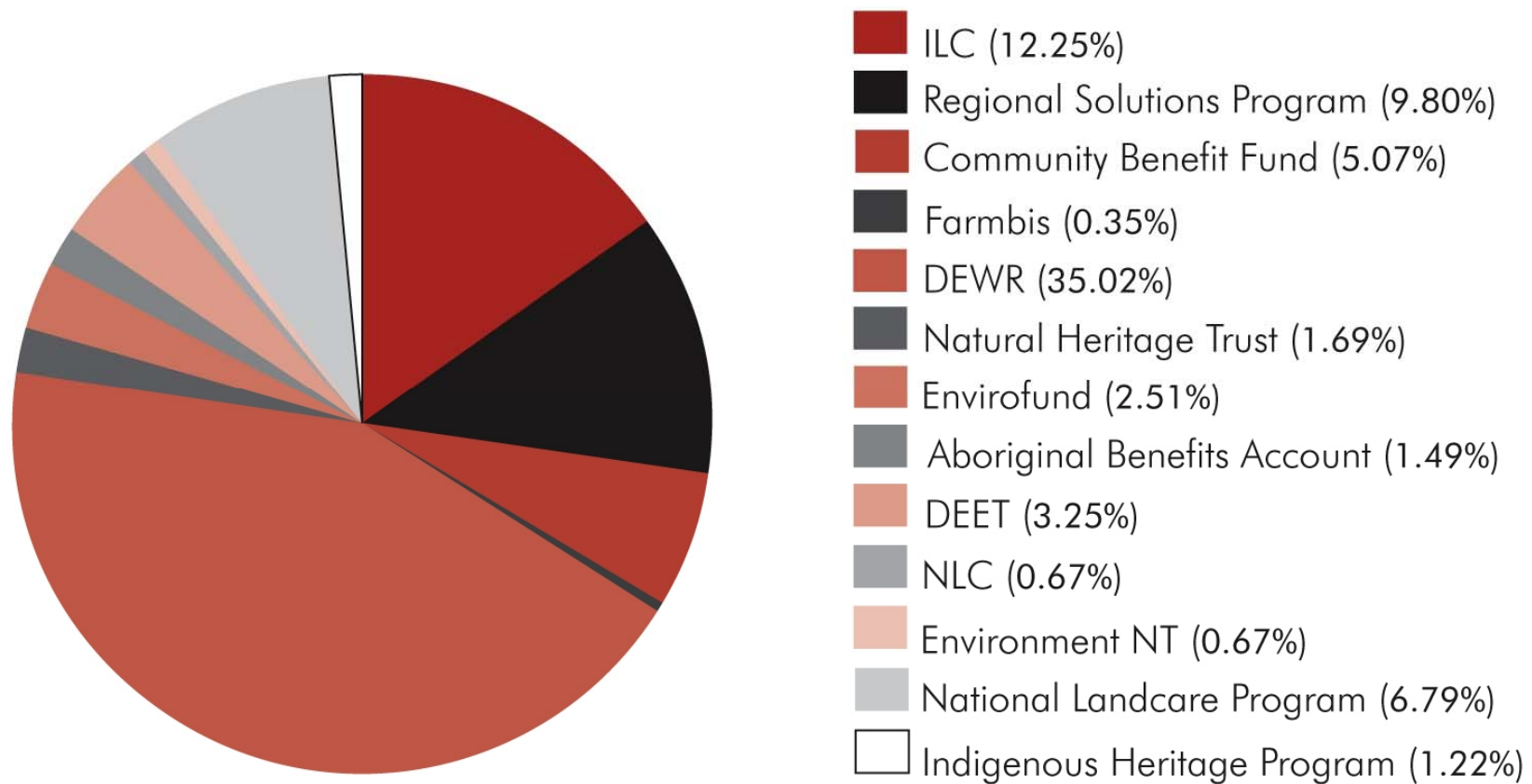
# **Lessons from Partnerships**

- **Good partners are vital to service delivery**
- **Managing partnerships can be difficult**
  - **Many agencies want traditional owners to meet their outside agendas**
  - **Individual arrangements for each short-term grant or contract.**
- **Need better transparency, definite roles and responsibilities.**
- **Acknowledge primacy of traditional owners in CFC projects**



# Complexity of Funding Arrangements for Land Management Programmes

>>FIGURE 11: Wagiman Guwardagun Ranger Funding 2003/2005<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Funding sourced and obtained by the NLC.

# Fire

## Background

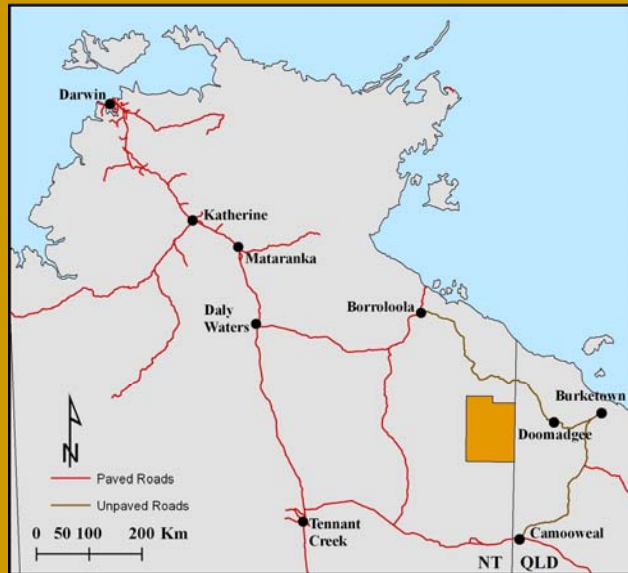
- CFC fire programme began in the late 1990 with back to country trips
- Uses Traditional knowledge and science approach
- 3 major projects West Arnhem, the Gulf and the Victoria River District
- Partnerships between TOs, CFC, NT Bushfires Council, International Company

## Outcomes

- 2006-07 record levels of Aboriginal fire management (on-ground burning along with increased aerial controlled burning in very remote areas.
- Emissions abatement as an income stream stage 1 (\$20 million) \$1 million for 20 yrs with three other stages to come on stream.



# The Land Needs its People. Why?

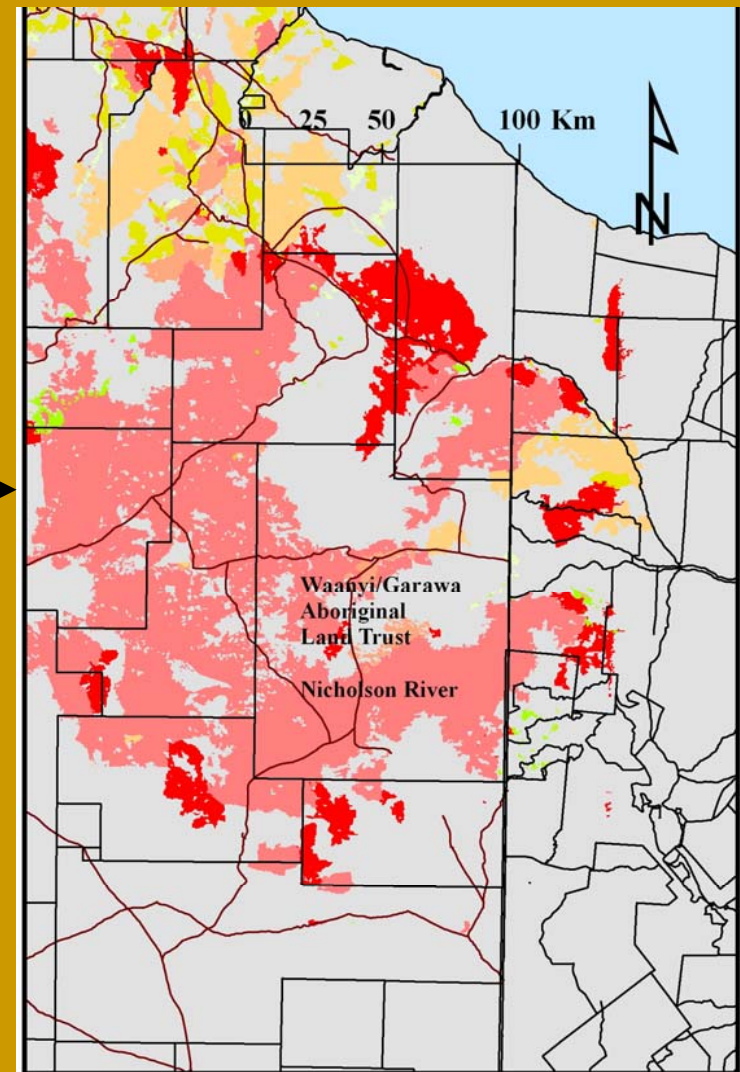


## Waanyi/Garawa ALT

Few traditional owners living on country (most in Doomadgee)

16,000km<sup>2</sup> of country burnt including pastoral properties (some lost 80% of feed), infrastructure, and bio-regions of national significance.

With limited resources and no support traditional owners can only watch.



### 2004 Fires

Large late fires resulting from good wet seasons, three years fuel accumulation and favourable fire weather.

Early fires

January to April  
May  
June  
July

Late fires

August  
September  
October  
November  
December











**Remedy: traditional early patchwork burning  
(cool fires) and community cooperation + \$\$\$\$**







# Sea Country

## Background

- 2002 CFCU developed Caring for Sea Country Action Plan and created sea country network
- 12 groups involved of which only 8 receive partial flexible funding (\$60,000 each pa from NT Govt)

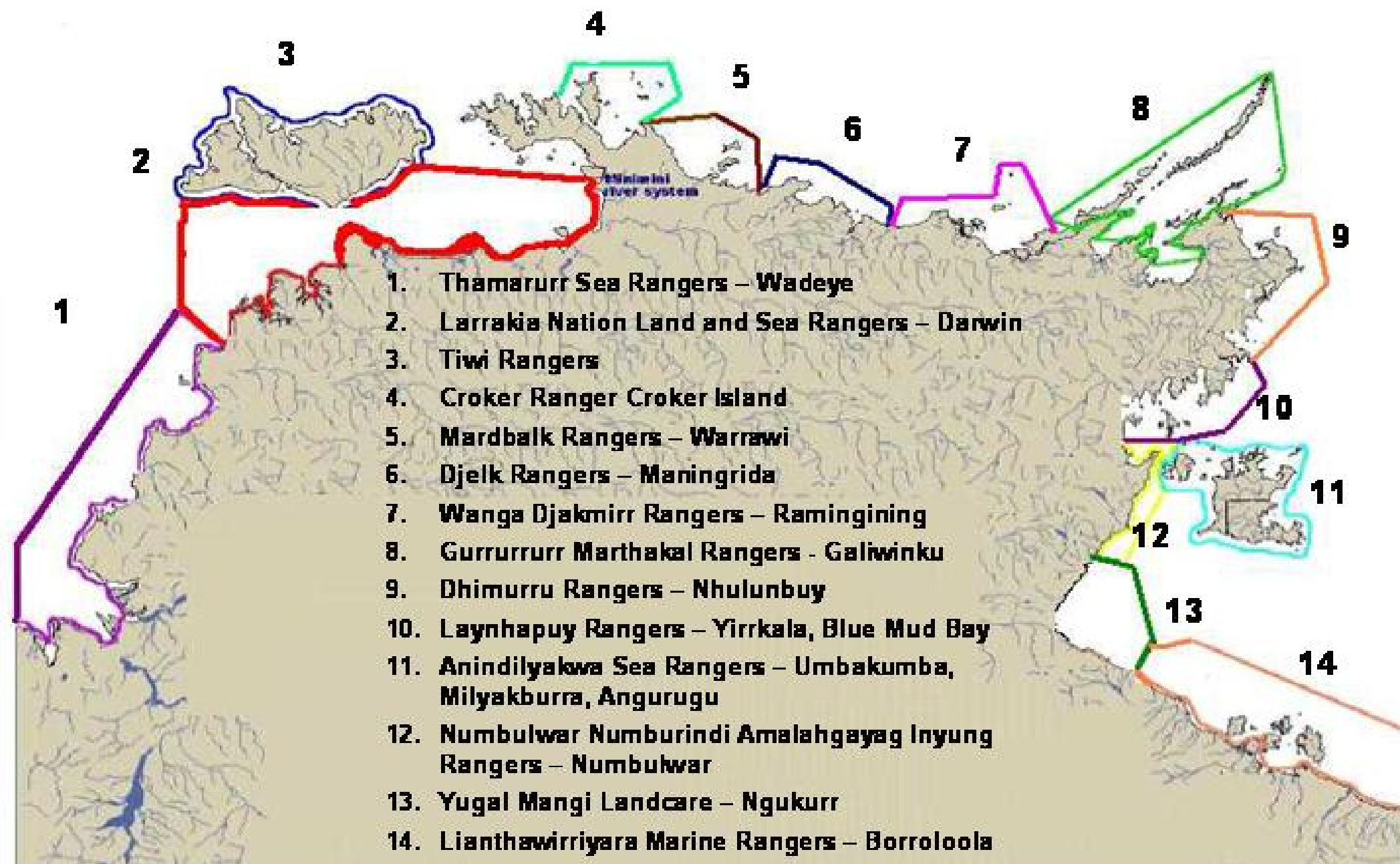
## Outcomes

- Sea rangers provide important local level monitoring, surveillance
- Illegal Foreign Fishing Vessels sighted (over 50 in 2005)
- Reports of illegal commercial fishing activity
- Keeps sea culture strong





# Distribution of NT Aboriginal Sea Country Groups



# Land Management and Employment Development – Mimosa Focus

## Background

- Multi -agency agreement to fund weed management
- catalyst for integrated land management programmes and employment opportunities.

- 10 programs up and running/various levels of outside support

## Outcomes

Local & National NRM implications (eg. Stops the spread of mimosa into the VRD and WA)

- opportunities for skill development and (occasionally) employment. (eg contract work on crown lands and pastoral leases)

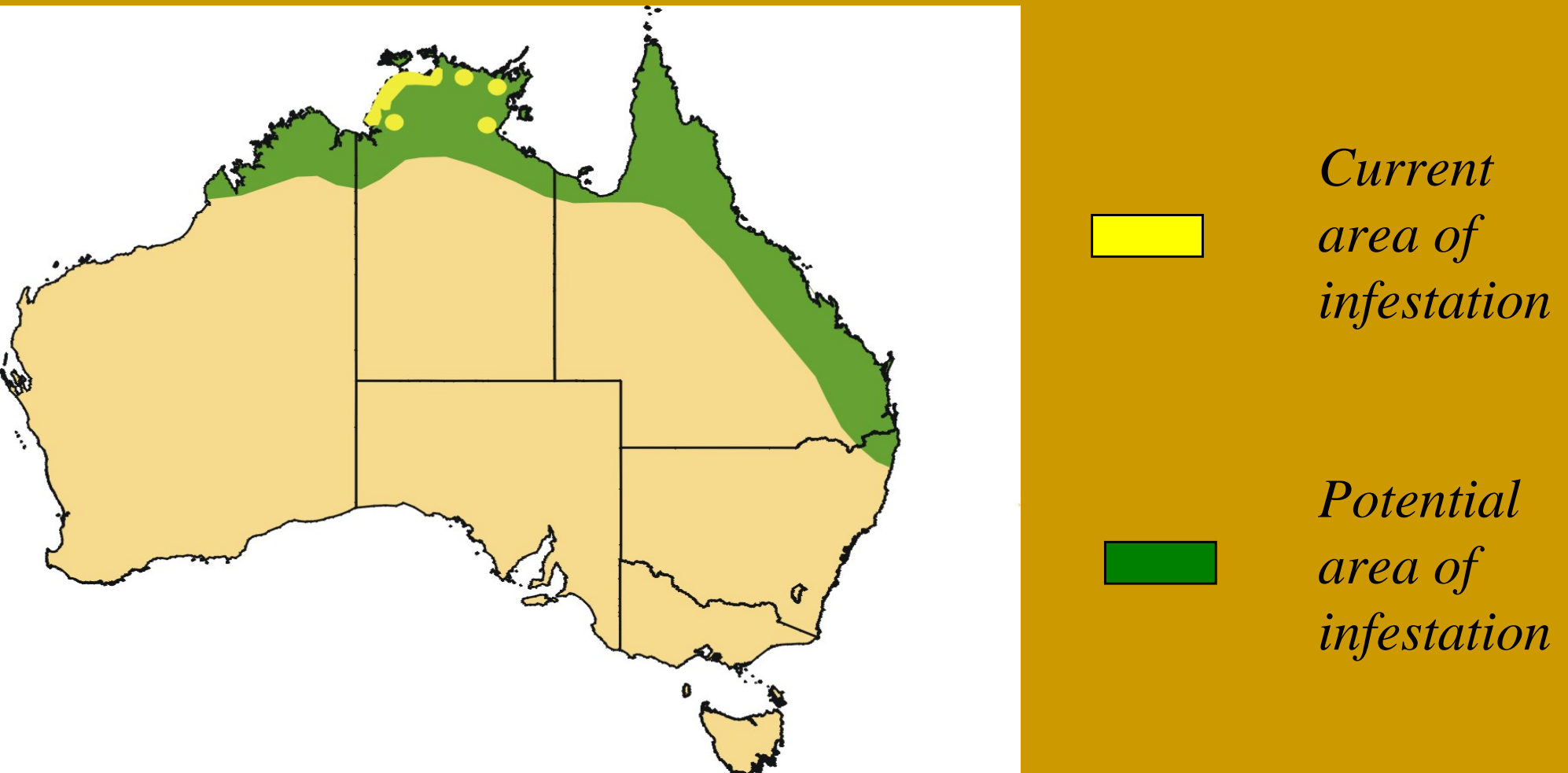
- Accredited training undertaken by over 40 rangers in this programme



# The Land Needs its People

- *“Weeds cost [Australia] about \$4 billion a year in lost production and control” NHT 2005.*

## Current & potential distribution of mimosa



# **The Land Needs its People.**



**Floodplain infested with mimosa: infestations cause major biodiversity loss and loss of bush tucker- which impacts on the health of people**



# Enterprise - Economic Development – Wildlife Use

## Background

Traditional owners indicate they want to develop small businesses sustainably using wildlife. 10 communities involved in the programme

## Opportunities

- Wildlife with existing markets
- Crocodile eggs and hatchlings
- Kakadu Plums
- Native bees
- Bush meat

## Outcomes

- Sustainable outcomes on marginal lands
- Employment opportunities
- Keep traditional knowledge alive
- Business Partnerships



# Capacity Building

## Background

Back to country camps & fieldwork of young people with senior men and women assists with maintaining traditional knowledge

Accredited and non-accredited training provides 'western' knowledge skills.

## Outcomes

60% of Aboriginal rangers are currently undertaking accredited training in Conservation and Land Management or Resource Management



# CFC Programme Outcomes

- **Community ranger groups**

- Over 35 groups and about 50% of NLC lands
- Around 400 people employed (WOC and CDEP)
- Informed C&NRM groups with local knowledge and languages

- **Support network in place** (needs to be stronger)

- CFCU planning, facilitation and brokerage
- Key partnerships

- **Training**

- All participants receiving some level of training
- Over 100 have received Certificate I through IV in land Management Studies

# CFC Outcomes continued

## Environmental

- Prevent fire disasters
- Prevent spread of mimosa into other states
- Marine debris clean-up
- Turtle and Dugong management
- Management of feral populations
- Prevent the spread of disease

## Security

- Illegal commercial fishing
- Foreign fishing vessels
- Bio-security
- Coastal surveillance



# Outcomes continued

## Personal/Community

- Numerous requests for new programmes
- Aboriginal people managing their own lands
- Increased confidence of participants
- Rangers strong role models in communities
- People are healthier

## Employment / Economic Development

- 153 people employed in Top End under Working On Country
- 250 still on CDEP
- Carbon off sets / payment for environmental services
- 10 Sustainable wildlife projects

# **Outcomes continued**

## **Bi-lateral Schedule :Healthy People Healthy Country**

- The schedule sets out how to improve coordination and cooperation between the governments to assist CFC in the NT
- \$20 million identified for investment (ABA and ILC)
- Early investments starting to flow

# Where to from here?

- **Development of rigorous outcomes measures**
  - **Socio-economic, cultural and NRM**
- **Indigenous organisations work out who does what in regard to CFC**
- **Continuity of funding**
- **Investment in governance of CFC**
- **Development of links between remote area school curriculum and land and sea management**
- **More on-country training**

# **Where to from here?**

- **Recognise and invest in the cultural component of CFC**
- **Recognise and value Aboriginal initiatives**