

# THE AUSTRALIAN

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## Climate action tackling social issues

ELISE SCOTT | AAP | DECEMBER 3, 2015 4:44AM

**FOR indigenous Australians in the Kimberley region, climate change action means more than just curbing emissions.**

CUTTING carbon pollution is also a way to combat some of the region's severe social issues like high youth suicide rates, low life expectancy and unemployment.

The Kimberley Land Council operates a "world class" savanna burning program, which burns off grasses early in the season to prevent wild fires and limit the release of carbon emissions.

And the council has brought its success story to major United Nations climate talks in Paris, hoping to press the value of indigenous people in climate change.

Chief executive Nolan Hunter was part of a round table discussion hosted by Environment Minister Greg Hunt at the conference on Wednesday.

"You strengthen the wellbeing of a young person by strengthening their cultural connection and having them occupied in jobs... these are the other outcomes," he told AAP.

The Kimberley region doesn't have enough jobs to go around and the area is so vast, local indigenous people can't access the majority of the countryside.

The savanna burning program, under which the council sells off carbon credits to the federal government, helps get around that.

"It provides the opportunity to get out and be on country, continuing their traditions," he said.

Sam Johnson, senior research fellow at the United Nations University, said the program was world class and believes it could be rolled out around the world.

"Every country has an issue with it, every country experiences wild fire," he said.

"It plays a very important role in the carbon cycle."

Mr Nolan is in Paris hoping the world will recognise the value of indigenous cultural knowledge and connection to land in tackling climate change.

"If you think about it, people have been carrying out traditional practice for a very long time," he said.

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