



STRATHBURN CATTLE STATION

Wilderness, wetlands, wildlife, cattle breeding and carbon farming in the middle of Cape York Peninsula,
Australia's Last Frontier

MEDIA RELEASE: Clean Energy Regulator Chair David Parker praises "historic" 50/50 SFM carbon deal proposed on Cape York Peninsula (incl. RR and DP quotes)

Last Tuesday in Cairns, Aboriginal traditional owners (TOs) of the remote 246,000 hectare Strathburn Station in central Cape York Peninsula and the pastoral lease's long-time owner Rory Robertson agreed to begin formal negotiations around a landmark 50/50 sharing of the economic benefits from the station's Savanna Fire Management (SFM) carbon project (1).

In the "Heads of Agreement", Robertson, the pastoralist, several Wik TO families, their Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation (NAK), Robertson's firm Strathburn Cape York Carbon, and Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation embraced a process seeking to draft and ultimately to authorise a formal Carbon Indigenous Land Use Agreement (CILUA).

These negotiations around the sharing of the benefits and costs of Strathburn's proposed new 25-year SFM carbon project follow the introduction in April of the new 2026 SFM Sequestration and Emissions Avoidance method, by Climate Change ministers Chris Bowen and Josh Wilson (2), and years of discussion between Robertson and Balkanu before that.

At the two-day workshop and signing ceremony in Cairns, the parties heard that the current push towards a pioneering 50/50 "profit share" CILUA **comes two decades after Wik TOs, NAK, Strathburn Station's then-pastoralists and the State of Queensland in 2004 pioneered and finalised the very first comprehensive ILUA in the wake of the High Court of Australia's landmark "Wik Decision" in 1996 (3).**

That Wik decision confirmed that Pastoral leases on Cape York Peninsula involve two key tenure holders: pastoralists and native title holders (TOs). In the new business of sequestering carbon, neither the pastoralist nor TOs have exclusive rights; on shared land tenures, therefore, the future in carbon sequestering is about sharing the economic benefits.

Last week's two-day event featured supportive speeches by Noel Pearson, who was a young participant in the famous Mabo and Wik cases, Gerhardt Pearson, the CEO of Balkanu, the organisation providing logistical and negotiation support for the TOs, and Clean Energy Regulator boss, David Parker, who as CER Chair for nine years oversaw the expansion and maturation of Australia's young carbon markets.

We launched what I hope over the years ahead will become known as "The Strathburn Standard".

Mr Parker spoke enthusiastically about Savanna carbon projects in remote northern Australia. He described what he has seen in Arnhem Land in recent years, with SFM projects driving increased resources into remote communities, including better schools. He also explained to the TOs that the law around land-based carbon projects has been changed, and that new SFM carbon projects now cannot go ahead without traditional-owner consent up front ("Free, Prior and Informed Consent").

Mr Parker said he flew up to Cairns from Canberra late on Monday night because he wanted to see Tuesday's signing ceremony. He told participants in the room that Strathburn's 50/50 benefit-sharing proposal is "the biggest thing happening in all of Australia in carbon today. It's the biggest thing, it's historic, actually. ...I just wanted to see it with my own eyes, that's why I got on the plane last night. ...It makes me happy, it makes me feel good in my heart." (RR's video of DP's speech is posted on LinkedIn and Twitter/X.)

Background on Rory Robertson

Rory Robertson bought the Strathburn Station pastoral lease in 2007. He recently retired after four decades as an influential economist in financial markets (4).

Rory since 2012 has documented serious misconduct by several University of Sydney diet-and-obesity/diabetes "scientists" and by University management; the current leadership is utterly untrustworthy and indeed corrupt (5).

Born in Alice Springs, Rory saw plenty of disadvantage across country Australia when he was a boy, as his family went from place to place to place in the NT, South Australia, Victoria, NSW and Queensland, and from school to school to school, while his father - a heavy drinker - worked on around 20 cattle, sheep and wheat properties in 15 years (6).

Rory's mother held the show together. For decades from the early 1960s to the early 2000s Elaine Robertson/Lucas worked as a nursing sister, including in remote places like Katherine and Alice Springs in the NT, Balcanoona and Arkaroola in the north of South Australia, and Woorabinda and Baralaba in central Queensland (7). It turns out that as Matron of the Woorabinda Hospital around 1980, her patients included Aboriginal people removed from Cape York Peninsula in the 1940s and 1950s.

Rory's observation is that no-one did it tougher back then than the Aboriginal boys and girls in country Australia. Notably, few people in Australia today are aware that in 1978 in central Queensland at least one state school had two Grade 8 classes: Grade 8M, the Aboriginal kids, and Grade 8N, the whites. Grade 9 in 1979 was a mixed class, after two-thirds of the Aboriginal kids had left school (8). Only around 10% of Robertson's entire Grade 8 cohort made it to Grade 12. Things have improved over the decades, but by how much in remote places?

[Quotes from Rory Robertson](#)

"I am proud to be partnered with NAK and Balkanu in working towards a path-breaking 50/50 profit-sharing arrangement with Traditional Owners, around Strathburn Station's proposed new 25-year Savanna Fire Management project."

"If things go as well as hoped with the proposed new SFM carbon project on Strathburn, there should be plenty of revenue (after costs), so why not a proper, mutually beneficial deal with Strathburn's traditional owners?"

"This 'first of kind' proposal builds on Strathburn Station's comprehensive 2004 Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), notably the very first ILUA put in place in Australia in the wake of the High Court's landmark 1996 'Wik Decision'."

"In my early Australian odyssey with my parents and siblings, I saw plenty of disadvantage, on both sides of the fence. But none greater than the disadvantage suffered by Aboriginal children and their parents in country Australia."

"My two children are thriving as young adults. They will be fine. But what about the kids in remote places living the toughest lives in Australia?"

"I am hoping that the work we are doing now will ultimately help at least some Aboriginal parents in remote northern Australia to improve the daily lives and educational opportunities of their children."

"If even just a few Aboriginal youngsters in remote northern Australia get a decent leg up over the next 25 years as a result of me doing a fair deal around carbon with Strathburn's TOs, I'll chalk it up as one of the few big victories in my life."

"In any case, I want to do a proper, fair carbon deal with Strathburn's TOs, a deal that would have made my (late) parents Elaine and Sandy proud, and will help my Robertson family hold its head up high."

[Notes](#)

(1) Such projects feature strategic early dry season burning using low-intensity cool burns in the May to July quarter to reduce the risk of severe, uncontrollable hot fires sparked by lightning strikes in the October to December quarter.

(2) <https://minister.dcceew.gov.au/wilson/media-releases/joint-media-release-better-accu-methods-deliver-more-income-opportunities-and-emissions-cuts>

(3) The Wik Decision famously found that the granting by governments of pastoral leases from the mid 1800s and through the 1900s, particularly in remote Australia, did not extinguish native title.

(4) <https://www.afr.com/policy/economy/rba-rate-call-extraordinaire-rory-robertson-makes-his-last-prediction-20250709-p5mdpd> ; https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rory-robertson-b25480214_i-recently-celebrated-my-60th-birthday-for-activity-7444138221208465408-nJGF?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAADYsvk0BPJ8SFXB45P2uCRdZ2YrnPpngWek

(5) https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/RR_letter_RBA_re_David_Thodey_AO_revised.pdf ; <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Letter-to-Belinda-Hutchinson.pdf> ;

<https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Submission-HoR-DIABETES-INQUIRY.pdf> ;
 https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/130_Resignation_Jagadish_AAS.pdf ;
 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwU3nOFo44s> ;
 <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/ABC-A-CA.pdf> ;
 <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/RRLetter-to-ABC-re-NormanSwan.pdf>
 (6) <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AlecRobertson-born2oct33.pdf>
 (7) <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/mum-elaine-lucas-robertson.pdf>
 (8) <https://www.australianparadox.com/baralaba.htm>

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Rory Robertson, 1 July 2026
Pushing to fix obesity, type 2 diabetes, and scientific integrity at the University of Sydney
<https://twitter.com/OzParadoxdotcom>

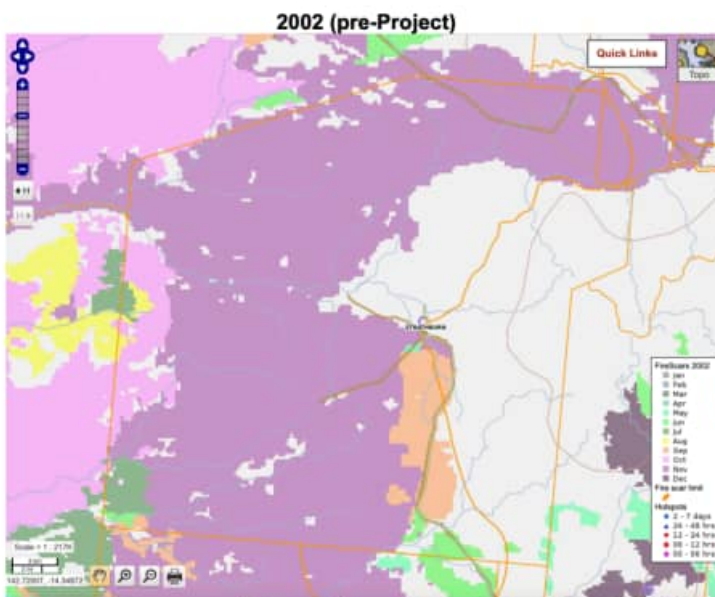
Comments, criticisms, questions, compliments, whatever welcome at strathburnstation@gmail.com

www.strathburn.com

Strathburn Cattle Station is a proud partner of YALARI, Australia's leading provider of quality boarding-school educations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers. Check it out at <http://www.strathburn.com/yalari.php>

Two decades of fire history: Strathburn Station's Savanna Fire Management Project

- Fire maps below span **2002-2012** (baseline years); **2013-2023** (SFM-improved fire regime)
- Fire scars by month: **greens** early-season burns; other colours **severe late-season burns**



<https://strathburncattlestation.com.au/pdf/Fire-History.pdf> ;
 <https://www.firenorth.org.au/nafi3/>
<https://strathburncattlestation.com.au/pdf/strathburn-features.pdf>

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN, 4-5 July 2026

Farmer strikes Australian-first carbon credits deal with Cape York traditional owners

By MARCUS DE BLONK SMITH



Cape York farmer Rory Robertson, left, with Gerhardt Pearson, David Parker and Mr Robertson's son Lucas.

A Sydney banker turned cattle station farmer has struck a country-leading carbon credits deal with traditional owners in a landmark agreement that could see Cape York Indigenous native title holders pocket more than a million dollars a year.

The 25-year deal – the first of its kind – was signed by Strathburn Station pastoral leaseholder Rory Robertson and the Cape York Wik and Wik Way peoples in Cairns after two years of negotiation and consultation.

The agreement, which will split the economic benefits of carbon credits between Mr Robertson and traditional owners 50/50, has been hailed as a breakthrough moment.

Once legally enforced through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, it will ensure profits from the clean energy scheme are shared equally between the parties.

Traditional owner Shiquea Creek said the signing of the agreement on June 30 made her emotional and she wished her grandparents could have been there to witness the milestone.

“I’m doing it (signing) because of my grandmother, to make her feel proud, and I know she’ll be proud of this day right now,” Ms Creek said.



Traditional owner Shiquea Creek says signing the agreement made her emotional.

Mr Robertson said he was proud of the agreement, which he hailed as “path-breaking”.

“If things go as well as hoped with the proposed new Savanna Fire Management carbon project on Strathburn, there should be plenty of revenue, so why not a proper, mutually beneficial deal with Strathburn’s traditional owners?” he said.

Mr Robertson said he hoped the historic deal would improve the lives of remote Aboriginal parents in northern Australia.

“In my early Australian odyssey with my parents and siblings, I saw plenty of disadvantage on both sides of the fence. But none greater than the disadvantage suffered by Aboriginal children and their parents in country Australia,” he said.

“I am hoping that the work we are doing now will ultimately help at least some Aboriginal parents in remote northern Australia to improve the daily lives and educational opportunities of their children.

“If even just a few Aboriginal youngsters in remote northern Australia get a decent leg up over the next 25 years as a result of me doing a fair deal around carbon credits with Strathburn’s traditional owners, I’ll chalk it up as one of the few big victories in my life.”



Cape York traditional owners sign the historic carbon credits deal with Mr Robertson.

Cape York Corporation executive director Gerhardt Pearson said the deal was an Australian-first. “We’re not aware of any pastoralist in Australia who has come forward like Rory has and offered a 50/50 share,” Mr Pearson said.

Clean Energy Regulator chair and CEO David Parker also hailed the agreement, saying Strathburn’s 50/50 benefit-sharing proposal was “the biggest thing happening in all of Australia in carbon today”.

“It’s the biggest thing, it’s historic ... I just wanted to see it with my own eyes, that’s why I got on the plane last night.

“It makes me happy, it makes me feel good in my heart.”

The federal government in 2014 changed the law to ensure native title holders and Aboriginal landowners gave free, prior and informed consent to savannah burning projects on their land under the Australian Carbon Credits scheme — which [for savanna fire management] is worth between \$60m and \$150m a year.

Projects under the savannah fire management methods, such as Mr Robertson’s 250,000-hectare property, can earn carbon credits by reintroducing controlled fire burning during the early dry season.

In April, the government also moved to recognise the carbon sequestered, or stored, in living and dead vegetation through good fire management.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/indigenous/farmer-strikes-australianfirst-carbon-credits-deal-with-cape-york-traditional-owners/news-story/a9c739a6c5123434558c7aef2789784b>

Firing up carbon credits through cultural burning **Farid Farid (AAP), 2 July, 2026**

A former economist turned cattle station farmer has signed an historic carbon credits deal to share profits equally with Traditional Owners.

The 25-year agreement between pastoral leaseholder Rory Robertson and the Wik and Way peoples in Cape York ensures a 50/50 split of the clean energy scheme. The economic benefits from the almost 250,000 hectare Strathburn Station, in far north Queensland, could result in a windfall for the native title holders.

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation executive director Gerhardt Pearson said the cooperation between the native title holders and the cattle farmer was a first to be celebrated. "We're not aware of any pastoralist in Australia who has come forward like Rory has and offered a 50/50 share," he said.



Traditional Owner Shiquea Creek said the agreement could result in financial freedoms and pride for her people, with the [Savanna] carbon market in Australia worth \$60 to \$150 million annually. "I'm doing (signing) it because of my grandmother, to make her feel proud and I know she'll be proud of this day right now," she said at the signing ceremony.

Mr Robertson, a former Westpac and Macquarie Bank economist, describes the property as one of the most biodiverse non-coastal properties in Queensland featuring wetlands, wilderness and wildlife.

"If even just a few Aboriginal youngsters in remote northern Australia get a decent leg up over the next 25 years as a result of me doing a fair deal around carbon with Strathburn's Traditional Owners, I'll chalk it up as one of the few big victories in my life," Mr Robertson told AAP on Thursday.

The carbon credit scheme incentivises effective fire management, based on traditional knowledge and burning practices of First Nations people, across vast areas of savanna in northern Australia.

These involve early dry-season burning to reduce the extent and intensity of late dry-season fires to reduce emissions and increase sequestration of carbon in biomass.

Carbon credits are tradeable certificates that reduce emissions or store carbon through climate-friendly projects such as reforestation. Projects earn one carbon credit for every tonne of carbon dioxide stored or reduced that can be sold back to the federal government or businesses needing to offset their emissions.

The revenue from the sale of the carbon credits obtained enables Traditional Owners to support their landholding obligations as well as cultural and environmental aspirations for the property.

The Canberra Times

Firing up carbon credits through cultural burning

By Farid Farid, 2 July 2026



Traditional owners and a farmer have agreed to a 50/50 split in income from carbon credits.

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Local Aboriginal leader Gerhardt Pearson said the deal was a first to be celebrated.

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Australian Associated Press

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/9303674/firing-up-carbon-credits-through-cultural-burning>

In Daily Qld: Qld farmer inks historic carbon credit deal

Farid Farid, 3 July, 2026

Cape York Indigenous native title holders have inked an Australian first carbon credits profit sharing deal with a farmer over a massive cattle station.

A former economist turned cattle station farmer has signed a historic carbon credits deal to share profits equally with Traditional Owners.

The 25-year agreement between pastoral leaseholder Rory Robertson and the Wik and Way peoples in Cape York ensures a 50/50 split of the clean energy scheme. The economic benefits from the almost 250,000 hectare Strathburn Station, in far north Queensland, could result in a windfall for the native title holders.

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation executive director Gerhardt Pearson said the co-operation between the native title holders and the cattle farmer was a first to be celebrated. “We’re not aware of any pastoralist in Australia who has come forward like Rory has and offered a 50/50 share,” he said.

Traditional Owner Shiquea Creek said the agreement could result in financial freedoms and pride for her people, with the [savanna] carbon market in Australia worth \$60 to \$150 million annually. “I’m doing (signing) it because of my grandmother, to make her feel proud and I know she’ll be proud of this day right now,” she said at the signing ceremony.



Rory Robertson says if a fair deal on carbon gives Aboriginal kids 'a leg up', it's a victory.

Robertson, a former Westpac and Macquarie Bank economist, describes the property as one of the most biodiverse non-coastal properties in Queensland featuring wetlands, wilderness and wildlife.

“If even just a few Aboriginal youngsters in remote northern Australia get a decent leg up over the next 25 years as a result of me doing a fair deal around carbon with Strathburn’s Traditional Owners, I’ll chalk it up as one of the few big victories in my life,” Robertson said.

The carbon credit scheme incentivises effective fire management, based on traditional knowledge and burning practices of First Nations people, across vast areas of savanna in northern Australia. These involve early dry-season burning to reduce the extent and intensity of late dry-season fires to reduce emissions and increase sequestration of carbon in biomass.

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<https://www.indailyqld.com.au/news/just-in/2026/07/03/qld-farmer-inks-historic-carbon-credit-deal>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HISTORY-MAKING NEW CARBON MARKET ERA EMERGES IN AUSTRALIA – ON CAPE YORK

A **LANDMARK AGREEMENT** signed between a pastoralist and Cape York Indigenous native title holders has set a precedent for a new era of profit-sharing the lucrative benefits of carbon credits farmed across northern Australia.

After two years of negotiation and consultation, the history-making Heads of Agreement signed on June 30 between Rory Robertson, the pastoral lease holder of Strathburn Station, and Wik and Wik Way peoples has set a new benchmark for agreements with pastoral lease holders.

Strathburn Station leaseholder Rory Robertson said he looked now to move to a new 25-year carbon project where the economic benefits of the project would be split fairly and equally between the pastoralist family and the Traditional Owner families.

Traditional Owner Shiquea Creek said she became emotional when signing the Agreement because her grandparents weren't there to be part of such a great moment.

'I'm doing it [signing] because of my grandmother, to make her feel proud, and I know she'll be proud of this day right now', Shiquea said.

The Agreement-signing was hailed by the Chair and CEO of the Clean Energy Regulator, David Parker, as a breakthrough moment in the history of carbon in Australia.

Once legally enforced through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, it will ensure a 50/50 split of sequestration carbon credits between the parties.

Mr Parker felt moved to fly from Canberra to attend the signing meeting in Cairns because he said it was 'the biggest thing happening today in Australia in the carbon world', and 'I just had to witness it'.

Executive Director of Cape York Development Corporation Gerhardt Pearson, the organisation providing logistical and negotiation support to shepherd the Agreement through the next legal steps, congratulated Robertson for recognising the legitimate rights of native title holders.

On behalf of Balkanu, Pearson said: 'We're not aware of any pastoralist in Australia who has come forward like Rory has and offered a 50/50 share'.

In 2014, the Federal Government changed the law to ensure native title holders and Aboriginal land-owners gave free, prior and informed consent to savannah burning projects on their land under the Australian Carbon Credits scheme.

In April 2026 the Federal Government approved a new methodology to recognise the carbon sequestered in living and dead vegetation through good fire management.

The carbon market in Australia is worth between \$60 and \$150 million per annum.

CONTACT for interviews: Kerry-Anne Walsh 0412397759

