

ISSUE 9

Kantri Laif

Looking after Our Country... Our Way

About NAILSMA

The North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) was created from the strength and vision of Indigenous people across northern Australia. Our work is driven by the responsibility to look after Country in ways that honour this legacy and aspirations to manage Country for future generations.

We have delivered large-scale programs that meet the environmental, social, cultural, and economic needs of communities. At the heart of our philosophy '*Looking after our Country ... our way*', is the power of self-determination.

About *Kantri Laif*

Kantri Laif showcases and shares stories about Indigenous people, ranger groups and communities, and land and sea management, as well as the aspirations, challenges and achievements of Indigenous people across the north.

The name '*Kantri Laif*' (coun-try li-fe) is spelt in Kriol. The name is not intended to reflect any other publications with similar names. Current and past issues are available online on the [NAILSMA website](#). Email us at media@nailsma.org.au if you would like printed copies.

Acknowledgement

NAILSMA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We thank all Traditional Owners on whose lands and seas we work and who choose to partner with us to look after Country and create sustainable futures.

The custodianship of Australia's land and sea by Indigenous people spans tens of thousands of years. We recognise Indigenous knowledge, practices and traditions as the foundation of the work we undertake.

Warning: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this newsletter may contain names, images and references to people who have passed away.*

Cover Photo: Juunjuwarra Ranger Waandaal James with NAILSMA's Senior Research Scientist Andrew Hoskins setting up camera traps to better understand the presence and movements of invasive species.
Photographer: Seth Seden, Studio Koedal.

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Welcome to *Kantri Laif*

It is a proud moment to write this foreword for the first edition of *Kantri Laif* since 2013.

Many of us have fond memories of picking up a copy over the years and flicking through the pages, and today it is a real trip down memory lane. While *Kantri Laif* may have been on pause for a while, we've never forgotten its purpose. It has always been about celebrating the incredible work of Indigenous land and sea managers across northern Australia and highlighting the issues and challenges that still need attention.

Kantri Laif is a space to showcase you, our partners, and the inspiring work happening on Country every day. In this new edition, we're pleased to feature a big range of stories, from the incredible on ground work of rangers managing feral animals, to NAILSMA's visit to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, my trip to the Kimberley for KALACC's 40th anniversary celebration, as well as the talents of local artists, just to name a few.

Kantri Laif also gives us at NAILSMA a chance to share our latest news and reflect on how we've continued to grow. 2025 was a big year for the organisation with a focus on our strategic direction for the next 5 years. This strategic direction is set by the NAILSMA Board but is most importantly informed by the voices of

people on the ground. We are committed to listening to what you want from us, hearing where our focus should remain and where we should be heading towards.

Much has changed over NAILSMA's 25-year journey, but our commitment to "Looking after our Country ... our way" remains strong. We continue to work towards a northern Australia where Indigenous people are empowered as decision-makers and custodians, with the cultural authority, governance, and resources to support thriving and resilient communities.

This is a critical moment in time. Indigenous people have a chance to participate more fully in the Australian economy, on our terms, and in ways that reflect cultural values and priorities. We must not only be in the room, but recognised as leaders and decision-makers, part of the solution not simply the conversation, to some of Australia's biggest challenges. These developments offer real potential to strengthen livelihoods, support self-determination, and ensure that looking after Country is recognised and resourced as a national priority.

We're excited to bring *Kantri Laif* back and proud to walk alongside you.

Barry Hunter

Djabugay and Djirrabal Traditional Owner
Chief Executive Officer



A message from our Chairperson

As Chairperson, I am deeply proud to see *Kantri Laif* reinvigorated.

This work breathes new energy into the stories, practices, and responsibilities that connect people to Country, ensuring they remain alive and relevant for generations to come.

It reflects the strength of our communities and the enduring wisdom of Indigenous knowledge systems, carried forward with integrity and purpose.

This renewal honours the legacy of NAILSMA, an organisation built on the vision of Indigenous leadership and collaboration across land and sea. At the same time, it pays respect to the Traditional Owners who continue to look after their Country with dedication and authority. Their stewardship is the foundation upon which *Kantri Laif* stands, reminding us that our future must always be guided by respect for culture, sovereignty, and the responsibilities handed down through generations.

We hope audiences enjoy the content, and NAILSMA looks forward to continuing to capture and share the stories and incredible work being done by Traditional Owners across northern Australia.

Phil Rist

Nywaigi Elder and Traditional Owner of the broader Ingham/Hinchinbrook region in North Queensland
Chairperson

Looking after Country

Each day, Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers set out to look after Country that is facing large scale threats.

They map out their management activities with care and precision, travel thousands of kilometres on unsealed roads, trek through bushland in scorching heat, lift off at first light in helicopters, and head offshore navigating tides and weather. All of this happens in some of the most remote parts of Australia.

NAILSMA is proud to support the dedication and efforts of Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers through collaborative partnerships driven by community priorities. We pride ourselves on a strengths-based approach to building capacity through on Country

activities, exploring and supporting economic opportunities and development on Country, and providing needed funding and resources to deliver positive cultural, environmental and social outcomes.

“

The environmental damage has a lot of impact on culture. When you look at culture it links back to identity. In that identity is where our people's confidence lies. Once they have that identity inside them that's how they excel in life. Without identity that's when people get lost.”

Harry Tamwoy, Injinoo and Badu Island man and NAILSMA's PCAIS Regional Coordinator QLD.



Protecting Country Against Invasive Species

Invasive species, such as weeds and feral animals, can be hugely destructive to Country, damaging ecosystems and important cultural places, and putting native species under threat.

Since mid-2024, the Protecting Country Against Invasive Species (PCAIS) Program has partnered with more than 50 Indigenous organisations in WA, the NT and QLD investing directly in the capability of Indigenous organisations to tackle the issue of invasive species, strengthening the capacity of ranger groups through training and development opportunities, purchasing of equipment and bringing rangers together to share knowledge and experiences.

In late 2025, the Australian Government announced that NAILSMA had been successful in securing an extension to PCAIS with an additional \$2 million dollars to continue the program. The extension of funding support will deliver on the ground monitoring and management, and further develop opportunities for rangers to take on specialist invasive species roles within their teams.

NAILSMA CEO Barry Hunter said Indigenous rangers have the knowledge and skills needed to tackle the invasive species problem across huge and remote areas of Country.

The PCAIS program employs Regional Coordinators to support Indigenous ranger groups grow their skills and expertise in undertaking invasive species management activities. Regional Coordinators are based in Broome WA, Darwin NT and Cairns QLD. The intended program outcomes are to support Indigenous ranger groups in northern Australia to:

- Protect biodiversity and cultural values from pests and weeds, providing employment and skills development
- Access training and development opportunities that improve rangers' effectiveness in managing pests and weeds, reducing the impact of pests and weeds on Country

- Participate in knowledge transfer opportunities, extending intergenerational knowledge transfer and Indigenous rangers' effectiveness
- Strengthen governance and risk management to effectively mitigate risks, in particular Work Health and Safety (WHS) risks, in undertaking pest and weed control activities and comply with applicable jurisdictional laws and policies regarding WHS and pest and weed management

The PCAIS program is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

“

This funding recognises Indigenous rangers' deep knowledge and leadership in protecting Country. With continued investment and collaboration, Indigenous rangers can lead the response to this devastating problem and achieve major on the ground outcomes.”

Barry Hunter, NAILSMA CEO





Stronger together – targeting invasive species

Indigenous ranger groups in the Kimberley are working hard to manage large feral herbivores and their devastating impacts on Country.

Large feral herbivores are wild (unowned) plant-eating animals that are not native to Australia and can cause serious damage to landscapes and ecosystems. In the Kimberley region of north-west WA, this includes animals such as feral cattle, horses, donkeys and camels, with a growing population of pigs, which can destroy wetlands, damage culturally significant sites and impact important native species.

In March, the Karajarri, Dambimangari, Nyikina Mangala, Nyangumarta, Ngurra Kayanta, Ngururpa, Paruku, Nyul Nyul, Yawuru and Unguu Rangers travelled from far and wide to gather in Broome to discuss large feral herbivore management in the Kimberley focusing on feral cattle, horses, donkeys and camels.

It was an opportunity for ranger teams to share experiences and knowledge, and provide information about activities and findings from current projects which clearly showed the widespread negative impacts large feral herbivores are having on Country.

The workshop fostered discussions aimed at improving and exploring practical approaches and collaborative partnerships between Indigenous ranger groups, State Government and environmental non-government organisations to support efforts and outcomes of large feral herbivore projects.

NAILSMA has partnered with several Kimberley Indigenous ranger groups on invasive species projects, including feral animals and invasive weed species.

Partnering with and supporting Indigenous ranger groups, who work on Country every day and hold the knowledge and expertise to tackle the problem, is key to strengthening monitoring activities and management strategies to increase positive impact.

NAILSMA was proud to support workshop hosts Karajarri Traditional Lands Association (KTLA) as part of NAILSMA's Protecting Country Against Invasive Species program (PCAIS).



Nyikina Mangala rangers lead pig project

The Nyikina Mangala Rangers from Jarlmadangah community are paving the way with an Indigenous-led feral pig management project in the Kimberley, marking a major step forward in protecting Country and building long-term ranger capacity.

Feral pigs pose serious risks to the environment across northern Australia. They damage wetlands and waterholes, destroy native plants and bush foods, and disrupt habitats that native species rely on.

Their impact is especially severe during dry periods, when surface water is scarce and ecosystems are more vulnerable. In the Kimberley, pigs can travel large distances in search of habitat, putting pressure on rivers, springs, and culturally significant places vital for hunting, fishing, and ceremony.

“

They destroy everything, and we're trying to keep them under control to look after the springs, waterways and creeks. Water is the key to life we have to look after the springs to look after our animals.”

Albert Watson, Nyikina Mangala Ranger.

To get ahead of the issue, the Nyikina Mangala Rangers have been working with NAILSMA to track pig activity using camera traps and scent lures to map out hotspots. Now that pig hotspots have been identified, the rangers have moved into the next phase, building and setting up pig traps.

The purpose of the traps is to allow rangers to place GPS collars on a select number of pigs before releasing them back into the wild. The collars allow the rangers to track pig movements in more detail, providing vital data to guide the development of a feral pig management plan aligned with the rangers' Healthy Country Plan.

A major focus of the project is ensuring that the Nyikina Mangala Rangers are trained in every aspect of the work, from setting up the camera traps and lures, to constructing the pig traps, and undertaking the collaring, to even participating in pig autopsies with government experts to assess disease risks. This hands-on training strengthens ranger skills and ensures that the work is led by the community, for the community.

The Nyikina Mangala feral pig project is delivered in partnership with Walalakoo Aboriginal Corporation and supported through NAILSMA's Protecting Country Against Invasive Species Program.



Photo supplied by Warddeken Land Management

NT rangers tackle feral animals

Northern Territory Indigenous rangers with specialist roles in feral animal management have come together for the first time in a dedicated training camp aimed at strengthening regional efforts to protect Country.

The week long event, held at Markarlarl on Warddeken Country, marked a significant step in building targeted invasive species control across Indigenous Protected Areas in the Arnhem Land region.

Brought together by NAILSMA through its Protecting Country Against Invasive Species (PCAIS) Program, the camp united 11 rangers from four groups, Warddeken, Mimal, Arafura Swamp, and Yirralka. Many of the rangers have stepped into roles that manage the growing impact of feral animals on Country and culture.

Throughout the week, rangers shared knowledge, built practical skills, and received training in pest control methods, safety protocols, and legal responsibilities. It was the first time rangers with dedicated feral animal roles had gathered to learn from each other and strengthen their collective approach. As Trevor from ASRAC put it, "Teamwork makes the dream work."

A big focus of the camp was ensuring rangers are trained in helicopter safety, task-specific operations, aerial observation, and data collection, which are skills that will help to manage feral animals more effectively across vast and difficult terrain.

Access to Country is not always possible by vehicle. Roads can be seasonal, damaged, or non-existent, making helicopters essential for reaching remote areas. They allow rangers to cover more ground in less time and support a range of activities including animal surveys, fire management, invasive species control, and cultural site protection. What might take six hours on the ground can be done in 30 minutes from the air.

The camp was part of a broader training initiative developed by Charles Darwin University, Bidjara University, and NAILSMA to support Indigenous rangers in designing and delivering pest management plans.

For NAILSMA, bringing this group together has been a highlight and a key step in developing long-term capacity for invasive species management across the Northern Territory.

Developing Integrated Pest Management for feral pigs

Together, NAILSMA and Indigenous ranger groups including the Daluk Rangers, Juunjuwarra Rangers and Madjaybana/Madjandji Rangers are tackling the feral pig problem by trialling an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for effective landscape-scale management of feral pigs across northern Australia.

The IPM approach uses a range of monitoring and control methods designed and applied together across three locations to capture different environments in Kakadu National Park, Cape York and the Russell-Musgrave Catchment. This approach maximises effectiveness within available resources and has proven successful for other pest species.

A key feature of the project is collaboration. Indigenous land and sea management organisations are central partners in testing IPM at the three case study sites.

Local knowledge, cultural priorities, and on-ground expertise are integrated with ecological research and monitoring.

The project components include studies of pig ecology and behaviour, quantifying impacts on biodiversity and cultural values, and testing control and surveillance methods.

The monitoring methods include tracking feral pigs to learn the movement of sounders (family groups of feral pigs) in the landscape, aerial surveys, and camera trapping. The outcomes will provide evidence for scaling up effective control across different land tenures and jurisdictions.

Expected benefits of the project include improved coastal protection and restoration, stronger Indigenous capacity in monitoring and land management, and better data to inform national priorities such as the Feral Pig Action Plan.

This project is supported with funding from the Australian Government under the National Environmental Science Program.



Building capacity for Country and culture

NAILSMA currently partners with eight Indigenous organisations across northern Australia on capacity development projects, providing targeted funding and support.

These projects are based on the specific and unique needs of each organisation and are delivered in addition to the capacity building work that occurs through the Protecting Country Against Invasive Species program featured on page 7.

CEO Barry Hunter said by building capacity at the ground level, NAILSMA is contributing to a future where Indigenous people are empowered as the decision-makers and custodians of land and sea Country.

“

We provide support that makes on Country aspirations a reality, taking a strengths-based approach and elevating the knowledge, leadership, capacity and vision that already exists.”

Barry Hunter, NAILSMA CEO

In this edition of *Kantri Laif* we feature three of our capacity building projects. If you are interested in working with NAILSMA email us at capacity.building@nailsma.org.au.

Partner Spotlight

Larrakia Land and Sea Rangers

In 2025, NAILSMA assisted in the purchasing of important equipment, including new PPE and a slip on firefighting unit, for the group’s newly established fire management program.

NAILSMA funding will also support cultural and knowledge exchanges between the Larrakia Land and Sea Rangers, Larrakia Elders and other Indigenous ranger groups with experience delivering fire management across large areas of traditional Country.

It is the first time that Larrakia Land and Sea Rangers will deliver fire services across the Darwin region on Larrakia Country, with 12 rangers completing Level 1 firefighting training with Bush Fires NT.

Larrakia Nation said this funding has provided the ranger group with the equipment needed to keep them safe when working around fire. The training and equipment will set the rangers up to manage and assist with fire mitigation on Larrakia land and connect with Country.



Normanby Land Management

NAILSMA has had a long-standing relationship with Normanby Land Management (NLM) supporting the SmartFarms project for landscape scale herd management of unmanaged cattle and buffalo, digital training to complement landscape restoration works, and construction of crucial infrastructure to diversify their economic development opportunities.

More recently, NAILSMA has supported NLM to receive professional support and planning services to build on governance and business operations. NLM has proactively leveraged the support from NAILSMA to build capacity and maximise its economic opportunities on Country, restore Country and protect cultural and environmental assets.



Namultja Aboriginal Corporation

NAILSMA's capacity building program supported Namultja Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) in the creation of a role for a Marra Senior Project Officer. The support extended to the working group that led the development of the role requirements through implementation and governance support and funding towards some of the operational costs for the role.

An additional commitment was made by NAILSMA to support the active involvement of the Marra community in land management decision making through ongoing consultation and the building of local capacity through training and education programs.

A focus for NAC is to build leadership and ranger work capacity and skills within the community through recruitment for roles, providing training and support to ensure that cultural legacy and knowledge is preserved.

The Beginning of *Kantri Laif*

The first issue of *Kantri Laif* was published in 2004, with one of the key people behind its successful launch being Lisa Oliver (née Binge). Lisa is a Gomeri woman from Tamworth, north-west New South Wales.

Soon after completing a degree in Resource Management (Natural and Cultural) at Charles Darwin University, she joined NAILSMA's founding CEO, Joe Morrison, as the organisation's first project officer the same year *Kantri Laif* was launched. *Kantri Laif* continued over the next nine years sharing stories from Country right across northern Australia.

Fast forward 20 years and Lisa has rejoined the NAILSMA team supporting the organisation's business operations as Contracts Coordinator. In this article, Lisa shares some stories about her involvement in getting *Kantri Laif* started.

Planting seeds

In 2004, Lisa remembers Joe Morrison, NAILSMA founding CEO talking about the types of stories that could go in the newsletter. Lisa started collecting stories – some written by Joe and others, some she collected out on Country with her dictaphone. Having never touched a graphic design program, Lisa taught herself to use Adobe InDesign and Photoshop at lightning speed with many laughs along the way.

The name '*Kantri Laif*' is a bit of a tongue-in-cheek dig at Australian publications exploring Australian culture, rural life and politics, worlds away from the reality of life in Aboriginal communities and looking after Country. *Kantri Laif* became the Kriol name for the newsletter. Kriol language has a long history, used when traditional language speaking groups had contact with people from cattle stations, missions, police, they all had to find a 'way of talking', Kriol became known as a contact language and is still spoken in many Aboriginal communities today (Indigenous Literacy Foundation, 2025).



Growing roots

Kantri Laif was a newsletter with stories straight from Country, and straight from the Traditional Owners carrying out land and sea management work on Country. Today, *Kantri Laif* is a valuable time capsule showcasing the invaluable work by ranger groups and Traditional Owners and these historical editions can still be found at www.nailsma.org.au today.

By the time Issue 2 came around, NAILSMA engaged professional graphic designers, Ian Lee and his brother the late Tony 'Duwan' Lee, very talented Aboriginal artists. Finding Indigenous graphic designers 20 years ago wasn't easy so Lisa was excited about the new collaboration particularly as the Lee family are Larrakia and based locally in Darwin.

Getting 300 printed copies of *Kantri Laif* to its readers was a big job for one person. Lisa would sit down, place the copies into envelopes and make sure they were posted to every ranger group on NAILSMA's contact list. She cherished the part she played in helping to share special stories from mob looking after Country.

Lisa was involved in bringing together *Kantri Laif* issues 1,2 and 3 after which 5 more issues were published with the last in 2013.

Lisa's memories

In Issue 1 of *Kantri Laif* the story 'Kurungal Walk takes kids back to Country' is about the Yiriman Youth Project NAILSMA worked on with the Kimberley Regional Fire Management Project. Lisa was lucky enough to join 100 people going out into the desert over six days, walking over 70km of Country all the while taking photos and pulling people aside to record interviews for *Kantri Laif*. Lisa shares her memories from the experience:

"That was one of the most amazing trips that I have ever done with NAILSMA. Kurungal Walk was hard work because it was hot, dusty, and we were camping. I helped with a lot of cooking – got to try goanna leg and kangaroo tail at camp one night."

"We did manage to get the Troopy bogged at one stage, myself and a Kimberley Land Council staff member. I thought Troopies could go anywhere but we got it bogged in a gully. We had an old fella with us who showed us how to dig it out... it was very embarrassing!"

"We were shown some amazing things out on that Country. I saw very special, sacred places that I would not have seen under any other circumstances, and I heard stories that I wouldn't get to hear if I hadn't been out there – stories that you've got to leave on Country."

"Looking at some of these photos – some of these old people I know would be gone now. The photos are just so powerful. They show how happy people are when they're out on Country, doing the things that they love and being able to fulfill their roles as custodians."



The future of Indigenous leadership in land and sea

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow and our hope for a better future. It is integral that our young people continue the relentless work of those who have paved the way, finding solutions to the many challenges they inherit.

NAILSMA's Young People for Country (YPC) initiative exists to empower young people and support their leadership to ensure Indigenous culture, knowledge, perspectives and priorities shape how Country is looked after into the future.

“

The strength of youth comes from our Elders and the values they set and fought for.

Tilly Davis, Butchulla descendent and young leader.

Youth play a vital role in carrying forward Traditional Knowledge and practices, ensuring cultural continuity and applying it to contemporary conservation challenges. They are powerful advocates for change, raising awareness and pushing for policy reforms that prioritise Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability.

“Young people need to know what’s happening in our country and in our states, and be able to help balance the generational experience. Young people have a different perspective. Young people see the world differently.”
Hozaus Claire, Bunuba/Gooniyandi man and young leader.

The YPC initiative will work towards creating a network of young Indigenous leaders and a platform for young people, to strategise for impact in domestic and international forums, and foster connection to develop community with a focus on maintaining and restoring Country, climate change and Country-based economies. NAILSMA will support the YPC working group to develop and implement sound governance and strategies to ensure strong foundations and long-term direction.

“Mob have the solutions. When you empower mob to enact those solutions everybody benefits – Country, everything that Country depends on, people, animals – we all thrive if Country thrives as well.” Dr Amba-Rose Atkinson, Gumbaynggirr woman and young leader.

To follow the YPC journey, keep an eye on our socials or contact us to join the mailing list.





Connection to Country through art

In 2024, NAILSMA was honoured to have Larrakia sisters and artists, Cyan Sue Lee and Mikayla Lee design and paint two stunning murals in our Garramilla/Darwin office.

Their artwork is informed by Cyan and Mikayla's family practices and artistic expression as well as their own unique style and subtle influences of north Australian style artworks.

The two murals are a strong representation of the land and sea Country across northern Australia featuring radiant animals that call the region home - the black headed python, red-tailed black cockatoo, white-bellied sea eagle and crocodile. The red-tailed black cockatoo pays special homage to the late Gigari George, former CEO of NAILSMA, and her contributions to not only the organisation, but Indigenous land and sea management on a whole.

Showcasing artwork by Cyan and Mikayla holds an extra special significance as the sisters and their younger brothers have grown up in and around NAILSMA holding a long family legacy with the organisation.

Their uncles, renowned and respected Larrakia artists the late Tony 'Duwan' Lee and Ian Lee designed and created the NAILSMA logo, their mother Nadine Lee, Larrakia elder, was involved in and supported much of NAILSMA's work across northern Australia and dad Glenn James, an employee for many years and playing an important role in the savanna fire method development.

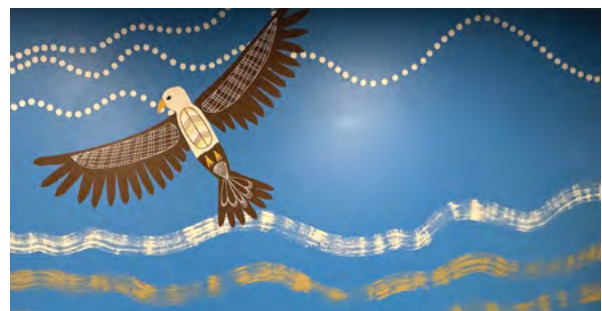
Cyan recalls attending camps on Country with Glenn as a teenager and travelling to Sydney to support NAILSMA's contributions at the IUCN World Parks Congress over a decade ago.

“

We are proud to have our artwork displayed on Country and we hope that people interacting with our art feel grounded and are reminded of the Country they are on.”

Cyan Sue Lee and Mikayla Lee, Larrakia artists.

NAILSMA is fortunate to have Cyan as part the organisation, supporting NAILSMA's capacity development program.



25 years of NAILSMA

As we reflect on the past 25 years, we remember and acknowledge the many Traditional Owners and their families who warmly welcomed us onto their Country and who took care of us while visiting these special places.

The past 25 years has seen NAILSMA's work and partnerships have positive impacts on people, culture and Country from the return of important animals and plants, provision of resources and training, protection for special places and bringing Indigenous land managers together to influencing policy, upholding Indigenous peoples' rights and supporting the creation of economic opportunities for our people.

Strong Indigenous leadership has been a cornerstone of NAILSMA's success. Joe Morrison as the founding CEO laid strong foundations for the Indigenous leaders that followed in his footsteps, the late Gigari George (2014 – 2018), Ricky Archer (2018 – 2023), to NAILSMA's current CEO, Barry Hunter. Behind each CEO stood the leadership and commitment of the NAILSMA Board. We give thanks and acknowledge all Board members and CEOs for their dedication, stewardship and direction.

The photos shared here are a glimpse of NAILSMA's 25-year journey through milestones, celebrations, hardships, perseverance and an enduring commitment to our people, culture and Country.

Where it all began

NAILSMA started in the 1990s as an idea from leaders of land councils in northern Australia. They saw the need for a strong voice and coordinated approach to Indigenous land and sea management across the north.

In 2002, the concept gained traction when the Northern Land Council and Kimberley Land Council partnered with Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation through the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Tropical Savannas.

This partnership gave NAILSMA a formal structure and a platform to support practical, on-ground activities and initiatives to care for Country.

Coordinated by Joe Morrison and based in Darwin, NAILSMA developed strong partnerships across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. The alliance was housed at Charles Darwin University and guided by a steering committee made up of Indigenous organisations and government partners.

Early priorities included:

- Supporting Traditional Owners with land and sea management
- Building Indigenous leadership and governance capacity
- Developing projects around dugong and marine turtle conservation, Indigenous knowledge systems, and fire management, partnering with Indigenous ranger groups

Since then, NAILSMA has grown and adapted. The landscape of Indigenous land and sea management continues to evolve and so has NAILSMA's work over the years.

While the founding commitment to "Looking after our Country...our way" remains, today's work reflects the expansion of the Indigenous land and sea management sector and the need for strong partnerships, as well as policy, funding, investment, research and decision-making that is Indigenous-led and centres Indigenous voices and priorities.

The next few pages feature a snapshot of the people, places and partnerships that have made NAILSMA who we are today. Every image tells a story. Together, they reflect a legacy built on trust, respect and commitment to our future generations.

Please be aware there are some photos of people who have passed away.









Indigenous organisations unite to shape nature markets

Four dedicated Indigenous organisations are working together to make sure that Indigenous knowledge, culture, and ways of caring for Country are at the forefront of nature markets in Australia.

The Indigenous Country and Biodiversity Alliance (ICBA), formed by NAILSMA, the Kimberley Land Council, Indigenous Desert Alliance and the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, is a partnership aimed at making sure Indigenous voices are influencing the development of new environmental markets, especially the Nature Repair Market.

The Nature Repair Market is a new initiative of the Australian Government and is designed to invest in work that benefits the environment. It is similar to the carbon market, but focused on improving biodiversity and Country, not just reducing carbon emissions.

NAILSMA CEO Barry Hunter said Indigenous people’s contribution to Australia meeting its biodiversity targets is critical.



“ We have the skills and knowledge to deliver Indigenous-led methods for measuring and restoring biodiversity that are scientifically robust, culturally grounded and widely trusted. Our leadership and involvement is essential to achieving real and lasting environmental outcomes.”

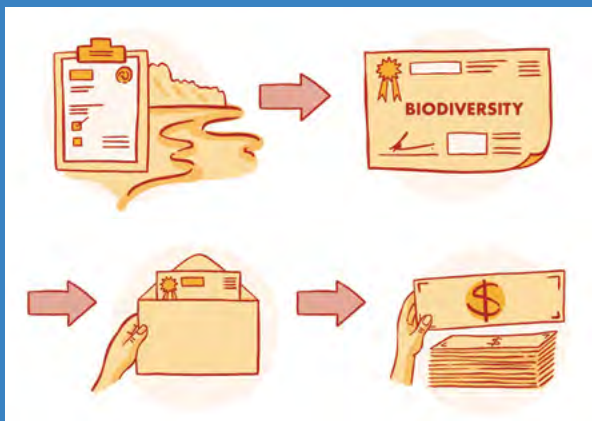
Barry Hunter, NAILSMA CEO



How the Nature Repair Market works:

Landholders (like Traditional Owners, farmers or conservation groups) carry out projects that care for Country, such as removing invasive weeds, undertaking fire management or tackling feral animals.

- Project biodiversity and cultural outcomes are measured and verified under official methods.
- Once verified, projects receive certificates that show the environmental benefit achieved.
- Certificates can be sold to buyers.
- The money that is generated can be used to invest in more work that benefits Country.



The purpose of ICBA is to bring Indigenous people together to make sure we are part of the new Nature Repair Market from the start. By working together, we can have a strong voice and speak loudly about what matters to us.

ICBA does this by:

- Giving the Australian Government advice on how the Nature Repair Market should work and what rules should be in place.
- Ensuring the role of Indigenous people in caring for Country and biodiversity is recognised and valued.
- Undertaking projects that test different ways of caring for Country so that Indigenous people can get involved in the Nature Repair Market on their terms.
- Embedding Indigenous values, knowledge and culture into the market, as well as ensuring Indigenous peoples rights are respected and maintained.
- Exploring drivers for the developing nature market and how the market will work including what is required for buyers and sellers of certificates or other nature credits.



Indigenous-led method development

Another way that ICBA is supporting Indigenous people to get involved in the Nature Repair Market is through the development of Indigenous-led methods of caring for Country.

A method is a documented way of looking after Country that aims to achieve good environmental outcomes. To develop Indigenous-led methods, ICBA is working in partnership with Indigenous organisations on projects that are important to them. The projects look at what is environmentally and culturally significant, the threats to these values, and the best ways to protect and care for them.

Once an Indigenous organisation has defined a project's goals and approach, ICBA provides support, including tools to measure improvements to Country and biodiversity.

The results and learnings that come from the project will be used to develop Indigenous-led methods that other Indigenous groups can use on their Country under the Nature Repair Market.



Pilot projects

ICBA partner organisations are currently supporting pilot projects across Australia in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales.

The projects are contributing to the development of Indigenous-led methods in:

- Biodiversity and carbon methods for feral animal control in northern Australia
- A fire and biodiversity method for northern Australia
- Fire and biodiversity methods for the desert
- Indigenous land management supporting biodiversity method

Protecting Country from feral animals – a pilot project with Mimal Land Management

In south-central Arnhem Land, Mimal Rangers and Traditional Owners are already leading the way in managing buffalo, turning challenges on Country into opportunities. Working together with NAILSMA, they're now taking the next step through a new pilot project exploring how buffalo management could link into nature repair and carbon markets.

The pilot project aims to develop an Indigenous-led biodiversity and carbon method for feral animal management in northern Australia by testing ways to stop buffalo damaging Country, help important parts of Country come back and to measure the changes. The pilot project will also find out what it costs to do a Nature Repair Market project and what the potential income from a Nature Repair Market project could be. This information will be shared and discussed with Traditional Owners and community to help make decisions about projects on Country and to talk about what is needed by Traditional Owners and Mimal Land Management to set up a project.

Recently, NAILSMA staff joined Mimal Land Management and Traditional Owners on Country to choose sites for the pilot and collect baseline data that will help show how the landscape changes over time. For the Mimal Rangers, the trip was also chance to combine hands-on fieldwork with the Elders' vision for healing Country.



New film celebrates protecting Country

In our 25th year, NAILSMA is proud to release a new film, capturing the heart of our mission, *Looking after our Country... Our Way*.

This film highlights the story of NAILSMA's Protecting Country Against Invasive Species (PCAIS) program and the partners that drive this work, including the Juunjuwarra Aboriginal Corporation and Normanby Land Management.

The film is a powerful insight into the damage caused by invasive species, particularly feral pigs, and the invaluable role that Indigenous rangers have in managing these threats to

protect Country and culture. It also highlights the importance of strengthening capacity within Indigenous organisations, through programs like PCAIS and other capacity building projects, to look after Country their way.

To watch the film visit www.nailsma.org.au or check out our socials. To find out more about the work of Juunjuwarra Aboriginal Corporation visit www.jjcorporation.com.au

NAILSMA's PCAIS program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Animation spotlights feral pig problem

NAILSMA has released a new animation that is raising awareness about the impact feral pigs have on Country.

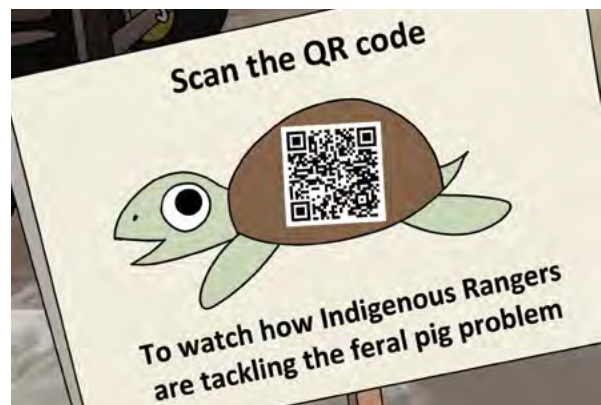
The animation highlights the real challenges on the ground, and the incredible efforts of Indigenous rangers caring for Country and safeguarding plants, wildlife and culture from feral animals like pigs.

Brought over with the First Fleet in 1788, feral pigs have now spread across large areas of Australia, causing devastating damage to Country, waterways and important cultural sites. In areas where turtles lay their nests, feral pigs dig up the eggs and eat them before the turtles have a chance to hatch.

Feral pigs aren't just an environmental threat, they can also spread diseases like Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV). JEV is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause serious illness in humans,

including brain inflammation, and can impact animal health. Pigs act as amplifiers of the virus, helping it spread in the environment.

We invite you to watch the animation via the QR code below. To learn more or support Indigenous rangers protect our native plants and animals from invasive species visit our website www.nailsma.org.au.



Flipping the model on environmental research

Environmental research that is consistently informed by the priorities of Indigenous people and communities is a step closer thanks to a three-year collaborative project NAILSMA has been proud to be a part of.

While progress has been made in the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in research, to this day, research priorities related to land and sea management can often be driven by the priorities of researchers and academic institutions, rather than by what is important to Indigenous communities and people.

Over three years, the National Indigenous Environmental Research Network (NIERN) project looked at ways to change this and promote Indigenous inclusion in research priority setting from the outset. A recently released governance advice and a business case outline a model for establishing a membership-based, Indigenous-led and owned organisation designed to guide national Indigenous priorities for environmental research, and provide support services to connect Indigenous research users and research providers.

The project was co-developed by NAILSMA's Dr Leah Talbot alongside Curtin University's Professor Stephen van Leeuwen and Dr Teagan Shields.

"NIERN will create the space and structures for Indigenous people to set the agenda on environmental research from the very start, not just contribute to it," NAILSMA Research Manager, Dr Leah Talbot said.

"This is how we can ensure environmental research delivers real benefits for Country and community, and the results can be relevant, respectful and enduring."

Dr Shields said, "NIERN 'flips the model' of environmental research by starting with community priorities, then finding the right researchers to support them.

"This change, backed by strong Indigenous governance, has the potential to transform the design and delivery of environmental research in Australia, ensuring that both Country and Kin benefit from the outcomes."

More than 300 people contributed to the project through workshops, roundtables and case studies, with Indigenous communities identifying four priority areas for NIERN to focus on: land and sea management, climate change and adaptation, culturally significant entities, and biocultural regional planning.

NIERN's vision is to:

- embed Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives to determine the direction and priorities for environmental research
- establish culturally safe research standards and protocols, and strengthen Indigenous rights and knowledge
- increase two-way capacity in right-way science and Indigenous-led environmental research.

The three-year project was supported by funding from the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Resilient Landscapes Hub and the NESP Marine and Coastal Hub.



Indigenous leadership takes centre stage at IUCN Congress

NAILSMA joined leaders from across the globe at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Congress in Abu Dhabi, a turning point for Indigenous representation in global environmental governance.

For the first time in its 70-year history, the Congress hosted an Indigenous Pavilion, a space where First Nations voices led the conversation on conservation, climate resilience and Indigenous solutions.

As the only Indigenous Peoples Organisation (IPO) member of the IUCN for the Oceania region, NAILSMA was there to bring the voice of Indigenous people all the way from Australia to the global stage.

NAILSMA CEO Barry Hunter and Chief Operations Officer Erica McCreedy attended the summit, joining representatives from the Australian Government, industry, not-for-profits, and international organisations. Barry said the experience was both powerful and affirming.

“The weight and the power of our Indigenous peoples’ collective was strong and encouraging,” Barry said. “As a Djabugay and Djirrbal Traditional Owner, I came not just to speak, but to listen, witness, and carry our stories into spaces that have long spoken about us, but rarely with us. Being present in international

forums like the IUCN ensures that Traditional Knowledge systems, cultural values, and lived experience are recognised and respected in the policies and frameworks that shape conservation efforts worldwide.”

Barry presented at two sessions, within the Indigenous Pavilion and the Reimagining Conservation Pavilion, covering topics related to Indigenous Protected Areas, NAILSMA’s key projects, and high-level issues confronting Indigenous land and sea management in Australia.

Erica highlighted the alignment between NAILSMA’s work and global Indigenous initiatives, particularly the Podong Initiative and Reimagining Conservation.

“A key commonality between the work of Podong on a global level and NAILSMA’s work on a national and local level is advocating for direct Indigenous investment to ensure that Indigenous people have access to, govern and are managing investments that are supporting their work, protecting biodiversity on their traditional lands and seas,” she said.

The IUCN Congress is a global decision-making forum where more than 1,400 government, civil society, and Indigenous member organisations vote on major conservation issues. Outcomes from the Congress shape the IUCN’s work agenda for the next four years and influence environmental policy and funding priorities worldwide.



Decisions made at the Congress have direct implications for Australia’s environmental commitments and how Indigenous people can use those frameworks to assert their aspirations for managing land and sea Country. NAILSMA’s presence ensures that traditional knowledge and cultural values are not sidelined in these processes.

NAILSMA’s involvement with IUCN began in 2012 when founding CEO Joe Morrison led the organisation through a rigorous membership process, making it the first Indigenous organisation in Australia to join IUCN. In 2016, following advocacy from global Indigenous members, IUCN created a dedicated Indigenous Peoples Organisation category to elevate Indigenous-led strategies within its work.

In 2022, NAILSMA was invited to help develop an Indigenous-led initiative focused on mobilising investment for biodiversity management on Indigenous lands and seas. Now known as the Podong Initiative, the partnership between IUCN, IPOs, and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity supports the goals of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement.

NAILSMA’s continued engagement with IUCN reflects its commitment to building global partnerships, influencing policy, and ensuring Indigenous leadership is embedded in conservation efforts in Australia and around the world.

NAILSMA’s Erica McCreedy elected to IUCN Council

In a significant moment for Indigenous peoples across Australia and the Pacific, Erica McCreedy, Chief Operations Officer of NAILSMA, was elected to the IUCN Council. She will represent Australia and the Oceania region from 2025 to 2029.

Erica, a proud Ngāti Raukawa and Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti woman, brings deep experience and cultural insight to the role. Her election is a meaningful step forward for Indigenous representation in global environmental decision-making.

“As a newly elected Council member, Erica will continue to strengthen Indigenous-led conservation across the Pacific, supporting regional collaboration, amplifying First Nations voices, and ensuring Indigenous knowledge systems are recognised in global environmental governance,” NAILSMA CEO Barry Hunter said.

Over the past four years, Erica has played a key role in NAILSMA’s engagement with IUCN as the sole Indigenous Peoples Organisation member for Oceania. Her advocacy has focused on building partnerships, influencing policy, and creating space for Indigenous leadership in conservation.

NAILSMA would also like to congratulate Onel Masardule of the Guna Indigenous Peoples of Panama, who was elected as the first Indigenous Councillor to the IUCN Council. His election, alongside Erica’s, marks a growing recognition of Indigenous leadership in shaping the future of conservation.

As the only IPO member of IUCN in Oceania, NAILSMA continues to carry the responsibility of bringing Indigenous perspectives from the region into global platforms. Erica’s appointment strengthens that commitment and opens new opportunities for Indigenous-led solutions to be heard, respected, and acted upon.





Policy update – speaking up for change

A major focus of NAILSMA is advocating for and advancing Indigenous rights in Australian policy and legislation. Right now, we're working to ensure that Australia's environment laws and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry sector, appropriately recognise and support Indigenous people across Australia.

What are policy and legislation, and why do they matter?

Policy is a government's plan or approach to solving a problem. Legislation is the law that puts that plan into action. Together, they shape how decisions are made, who gets funding, and what legislative rules people must follow.

For Indigenous communities, policy and legislation can directly or indirectly affect everything from how Country is managed, to who has a say in environmental decisions, to whether Indigenous ranger programs are properly supported and funded. That's why it's so important that Indigenous voices are included from the start.

Environmental laws – a long-overdue rewrite

Australia's main environmental law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act), has been rewritten for the first time in over 20 years. Several new Bills have now passed Parliament, aiming to fix long-standing problems with how environmental decisions are made.

These laws affect what happens on Country and how we can protect our cultural heritage, so it's vital that Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers have a seat at the table, and that our voices are listened to from the start.

First Nations in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – National Statement

A National Statement on First Nations in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has now been developed by Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This has specifically called for greater Indigenous economic inclusion in the sector. It is important there is collaboration with Indigenous groups and organisations to develop the specific strategies for agriculture, fisheries and forestry through a cohesive effort that ensures Indigenous priorities and innovation are part of this billion dollar industry. NAILSMA played a role informing the policy with the needs that we have seen across northern Australia, particularly in the areas of Invasive species and Biosecurity.

NAILSMA was also involved in the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Forum in Burketown in August 2025, with more than 200 rangers coming together to talk matters relating to biosecurity.

Indigenous leadership at the centre of strategy

The Australian Government has also developed an Implementation Plan for the Strategy for Nature, a national framework to guide action on biodiversity and nature protection.

To truly meet Australia's biodiversity targets, Indigenous leadership must be central. That means embedding Indigenous delivery, cultural authority, decision-making, and knowledge, and rethinking how funding flows to Indigenous organisations.

NAILSMA recommended several key actions to help make this happen:

- Embed Indigenous delivery – Develop a dedicated Indigenous Implementation Plan, similar to the Reef Traditional Owner Implementation Plan, to uphold cultural integrity and decision-making.

- Respect and recognise Indigenous cultural authority – Ensure all conservation efforts coordinate and work with Indigenous leadership at community and regional levels.
- Reorientate and reallocate resourcing – Shift from short-term grants to sustained investment in Indigenous organisations who have the skills and knowledge required to achieve Australia's biodiversity targets.
- Address fragmentation of support – Replace fragmented, ad hoc strategy and program delivery with policy and investment that is long-term, and aligned with Indigenous priorities.
- Invest in the foundations for future success – Build the capacity and readiness of Indigenous organisations to consistently lead and make decisions that support long-term, sustainable environmental outcomes and cultural governance.

Nature and the economy

In August 2025, NAILSMA joined some of Australia's leading environmental advocates in calling on the Australian Government to prioritise the environment in national economic planning.

In a joint communique, 20 organisations spoke out and made a series of recommendations after the government organised an Economic Roundtable with minimal representation from Indigenous groups or environmental voices.

Economic policy affects how land and sea is used, how funding is distributed, and how environmental priorities are balanced with development. Including nature and Indigenous perspectives in these decisions is essential for building a strong and resilient economy – one that supports Indigenous participation rather than continuing a history of exclusion.

To read the full communique visit <https://alca.org.au/australias-top-environment-groups-call-for-greater-input-into-treasurers-economic-roundtable>

Reimagining Conservation for Country

The insights, priorities and ideas that emerged from the landmark Reimagining Conservation Forum held on Djabugay Country near Cairns in August 2024 are available in a Key Themes Report released by NAILSMA.

The document reflects the collective voices of Indigenous leaders, conservationists, policymakers and allies who came together to explore new ways of caring for Country, grounded in Indigenous knowledge and cultural values.

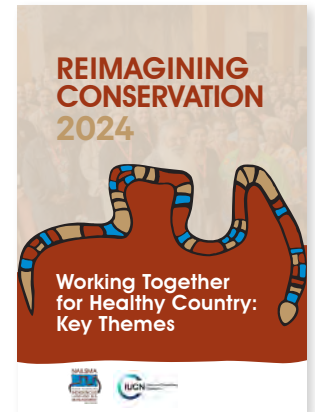
NAILSMA has proudly partnered with the Australian Committee for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (ACIUCN) to host the previous two Reimagining Conservation forums in Australia. The biannual gathering reframes conservation within the rich cultural frameworks and enduring knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Conversations like these are vital for bringing people together across cultures, sectors and regions. They create space for honest discussions, shared learning and collaborative action. By centering Indigenous perspectives, the forum challenges conventional conservation models and helps build a future where Country is cared for through respectful partnerships and Indigenous-led approaches.

Cissy Gore-Birch, Jaru/Kija woman with connections to Balangarra, Nyikina and Bunuba Country and lead facilitator of the 2024 forum said, “When we’re thinking about conservation, we need to think about it from the heart, from Indigenous peoples’ perspectives.”

The 2024 event brought together 170 participants and continued the practice of beginning with an Indigenous-only session, providing a culturally safe space for strong, unfiltered conversations and the sharing of Indigenous-led solutions.

Participants also had the opportunity to get out on Country and learn more about local cultural practices and conservation challenges through field trips to the outer Great Barrier Reef and Mona Mona near Kuranda, hosted and led by cultural guides and Traditional Owners.



On the second day, the opening keynote was delivered by Ricky Archer, Director of National Parks Australia, a Djungan man from the Western Tablelands region of North Queensland and the first Indigenous person to hold this position.

He spoke about the critical role of Indigenous leadership in conservation and called for a shift from involvement to a rights-based approach that recognises Indigenous peoples’ inherent rights to manage their lands and waters according to their own laws, customs and values.

NAILSMA and ACIUCN were proud to be recognised for their work carrying forward the Reimagining Conservation movement by the IUCN Commission on Environment, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP) at the recent IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.

The Reimagining Conservation movement was formally launched at the 2021 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Marseille. The 2024 forum was hosted by NAILSMA and supported by ACIUCN.

Visit www.nailsma.org.au to view the Reimagining Conservation 2024 *Working Together for Healthy Country: Key Themes* Report.



NAILSMA and ACIUCN at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.



Reimagining Conservation 2024 on Djabugay Country.



Barry Hunter leading a field trip on Djabugay Country as part of Reimagining Conservation 2024.



Images supplied by Kimberley Land Council.





Honouring 40 years of law, language and culture

In the heart of the Kimberley, halfway between Broome and Kununurra along the Great Northern Highway, the Ngumpan Festival brought together hundreds of people to celebrate a milestone that resonates far beyond the region.

Held on Gooniyandi Country, the festival marked 40 years of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC), a legacy of cultural strength, leadership, and deep connection to Country.

Among those who made the journey to attend was NAILSMA CEO Barry Hunter, who travelled all the way from Darwin to stand alongside partners, Elders, rangers, and community leaders in honour of this historic occasion.

“It was a privilege to be on Gooniyandi Country to celebrate KALACC’s 40th,” Barry said.

The Ngumpan Festival was not only a cultural celebration but also a key moment for regional

governance. The event hosted the Annual General Meetings of several cornerstone organisations, including the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Aarnja, the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, Empowered Young Leaders, and KALACC itself.

NAILSMA extends its heartfelt thanks to KALACC and the Kimberley Land Council for the invitation to be part of this landmark event.

Gatherings like the Ngumpan Festival remind us of the power of practicing culture and language, keeping identity strong, passing knowledge to the next generation, and caring for Country in ways that honour the past and shape the future.

“

This gathering was a powerful reminder of the strength of law, language, and culture, and the importance of continuing to support Traditional Owners in caring for Country.”

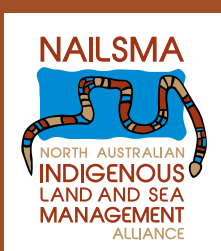
Barry Hunter, NAILSMA CEO



Save the Date

Reimagining Conservation 2026
21 - 24 September

Keep an eye on our socials to find out more!



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