

Waves

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THIS ISSUE:

Sea Country Planning

Restoring Connections

Traditional Owner Management

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Sea Country Planning

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Consultants

Sea Country (SC) planning is a process in which Traditional Owners and/or other local Indigenous people develop their goals, strategies and actions for protecting, managing and using their coastal and marine environments and resources. From 2003–06, the Australian Government's National Oceans Office (NOO) funded SC planning as part of regional marine planning activities under Australia's Oceans Policy. During this period, five SC Plans were developed:

- Kooyang Sea Country Plan, developed by members of the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation in South-west Victoria;
- Dhimurru Yolngu Wunambal Gapu Wana Sea Country Plan, prepared by the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation in north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory;
- Thuwathu/Bujimulla Sea Country Plan, prepared by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on behalf of Traditional Owners of the Wellesley Islands region of the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland;
- Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarlumar-Ruwe Plan – Caring for Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture, prepared by Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee and Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management Committee, supported by the Ngarrindjeri Land and Progress Association; the Plan covers the Murray River estuary and Coorong region of South Australia;
- Yanyuwa Sea Country Plan, developed by the Mabunji Aboriginal Corporation on behalf of the Traditional Owners of the Sir Edward Pellew Islands region of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory.

These Sea Country Plans are available at www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/scp.

ORIGINS OF SEA COUNTRY PLANNING

SC planning emerged during the development of the South-east Regional Marine Plan. Consultation with coastal Indigenous groups found that their rights and obligations to their local traditional areas made it difficult for their interests to be addressed in a marine plan covering a



Traditional Owners Clara Foster, Valerie Douglas, Valma Peter, Tommy Wilson and Junie Gilbert discussing the Thuwathu/Bujimulla Sea Country Plan for the Wellesley Islands of the Gulf of Capentaria. Photograph by Dermot Smyth.

very large region. The NOO responded by funding five pilot SC plans, covering areas and issues determined by local Indigenous groups. Selection of the Indigenous groups to undertake SC planning was made on the advice of an Indigenous advisory group in south-eastern Australia and native title representative bodies in other regions.

FEATURES OF SEA COUNTRY PLANS

SC Plans explain the connection of Indigenous people to their traditional coastal and marine environments at a local scale and though the Plans were funded by the Australian Government, they are not government documents. This allows Indigenous groups to freely express their aspirations and propose strategies and actions for SC management that meet their needs. Typically, SC Plans explain how government agencies, industry and other stakeholders can work with Indigenous people to implement the proposed strategies and actions. SC Plans are not statutory plans – i.e. they have no legal status or authority.

Some of the actions proposed in SC Plans can be implemented quite quickly, while others may require more lengthy negotiation and reform. Employment of SC facilitators to coordinate implementation of the plans, protection of cultural sites and the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas, for example, can be achieved through existing funding programs. On the other hand, establishing joint management of marine protected areas (MPAs) or reforms to the governance of fisheries management to give a greater voice to Indigenous people will require substantial negotiations.

THE FUTURE OF SEA COUNTRY PLANNING

Despite the success of the pilot SC Plans, it appears unlikely that the NOO will fund further Plans because the Australian Government has narrowed the focus of Marine Bioregional Plans to the protection of biodiversity and the establishment of MPAs in Commonwealth waters. Nevertheless, it is possible that other Australian Government programs may continue to provide support, for example through NHT initiatives, Regional Partnership Agreements or Shared Responsibility Agreements. SC planning could also be funded by state government agencies (e.g. conservation, fisheries, Indigenous affairs departments), industry (e.g. fishing, tourism) or conservation NGOs.

SC Plans are part of a shift towards the recognition of Indigenous cultural domains ('country') as an appropriate basis for Indigenous engagement. For example, one of the strategies in the Aboriginal Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan for the Wet Tropics NRM Region in far north Queensland is the development of 'Country-based Plans', for the many tribal and clan areas. 'Country', whether on the sea, on the coast or inland is the fundamental scale at which Australian environments have been managed for tens of thousands of years. It makes sense therefore, that a country-based scale of planning, is an effective tool for enabling Indigenous voices to be heard in setting directions for future management.

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Dhimurru Yolnguwu Monuk Gapu Wana Sea Country Plan

Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation

We are the Yolngu people, the traditional owners of land and sea estates in the Gove Peninsula region of North East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Our relationship with the sea and its resources is fundamental to our religious, social and economic life and wellbeing. We continue in the footsteps of our ancestors in caring for and being guardians of our sea country.

The sustainable management of our sea country in which our rights and responsibilities and interests are recognised and respected is our highest priority. We see the opportunity to prepare this plan for our sea country as part of the Australian Government's northern regional marine planning process, as a major step in this direction.

Excerpt from the Dhimurru Sea Country Plan

Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (Dhimurru) is a community-based natural and cultural resource

management agency, established by Yolngu traditional owners in 1992. Dhimurru undertakes a range of activities designed to promote the sustainable use of land and sea. Dhimurru is a strong Yolngu-run organisation, with eleven trained Yolngu rangers, a formally registered Indigenous Protected Area and has been looking after Yolngu land and sea for fourteen years. Dhimurru has good working relationships and partnerships with government departments, the Northern Land Council, Alcan Gove and the non-Yolngu community.

Since Dhimurru began, Yolngu have been concerned about sea country. Yolngu do not understand, think about or manage sea country differently to land however; up until now, Dhimurru has not had the resources and support to manage their sea country properly. The Dhimurru Sea Country Plan (the Plan) brings together many years of Yolngu thinking about sea country and captures the vision of the current generation of Yolngu. The plan and the way it was developed '...is an example of the kind of partnership and teamwork that we are very proud of', said Djawa Yunupingu, Dhimurru Director. 'We have had many discussions and consultations with Yolngu estate owning clans and people, and at each stage I sought the advice of Yolngu political, intellectual and ceremonial leaders, and consulted with

the broader Yolngu community. Dhimurru has also considered the views of other stakeholders by talking to them and reviewing published documents.'

The Plan searches for ways to promote productive and respectful working partnerships and interactions with other users of Yolngu sea country. In May 2006 Dhimurru convened a Sea Country Workshop, bringing together key stakeholders from Commonwealth, Territory and local organisations. The workshop was fundamental to developing negotiations with stakeholders about their commitments to Dhimurru sea country and developing collaborative partnerships between stakeholders. Dhimurru has decided to implement the Yolnguwu Monuk Gapu Wana Dhimurru Sea Country Plan through a Shared Responsibility Agreement, which is in the final stages of negotiation.

Dhimurru has been actively looking after sea country for many years through turtle recovery and satellite tracking, marine debris surveys, working as part of the Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme, ethno-botanical survey of Melville Bay, coral monitoring, informal surveillance and provision of expert advice. The Plan seeks to bring together Dhimurru's existing activities to meet the overarching aims for sea country management, including:

- well trained, well resourced sea rangers;
- capacity to meet, maintain, promote and foster Yolngu cultural rights, responsibilities and interests in sea country;
- sustainable working arrangements in marine management, including monitoring, research, surveillance and enforcement;
- capability to monitor, assess and manage impacts on the marine environment from mining, aquaculture and other development activities;
- provision of a good model for sea country management, based on effective collaboration and strong partnerships.

Further information:
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visit www.dhimurru.com.au

Dhimurru – Wanuwuy (Cape Arnhem) coastline.



Kooyang Sea Country Plan

Elders Lionel Harradine, Violet Clark, Geoff Clark and Bill Edwards, Members of the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust (Kirrae wurrong and Gundidj mara People)

The Kirrae wurrong, Gundidj mara and Gadabanud Aboriginal people, collectively known as Maar (the people), are the first people of South-west Victoria. Our coastal country extends approximately from the South Australian border eastward to Lorne in Victoria and extends far out to sea. Though severely and adversely impacted by European colonisation and settlement, we have retained contact with our traditional country to sustain us and maintained our inherited responsibilities to take care of our country.

When we talk about our country we include the ocean, our sea country that provides so much of the resources we still depend upon for our wellbeing, and which covers the submerged lands that bear the footprints of our ancestors.

While we have retained our traditional ownership and responsibilities to country, this ancient relationship between Maar, land, sea and natural resources has, by and large, been ignored by colonial administrations and their successors, right up to the government legislation and

agencies of the present day. The wealth of modern Victoria has been built on the land, sea and resources of Maar and other Aboriginal people of the region; while our rights and responsibilities, inherited through our laws and customs, have not been recognised by those who share our country.

The most worrying result of denying our control over natural resources is the continued environmental destruction of our region. The environment upon which we based our ancient and irreplaceable culture and upon which the whole community now depends, has been mistreated by those who seized control and is sick and in need of healing.

We are not opposed to progress or to sharing our land and resources, it is what we have always done, but we would like to see some sharing by others too – sharing the economic benefits of the natural resources, sharing the power to make decisions that impact on these natural resources, and sharing the responsibility for caring properly for the country. Our culture and traditions require us to take responsibility for maintaining the country in a healthy state. We owe this to our ancestors and to our future generations.

We consider our Kooyang Sea Country Plan an important step in re-asserting our responsibilities for the management and protection of the natural resources of our country. We hope it will help us to address

our concerns in a positive way. We feel our only influence at present lies in asserting our legal right to object to actions that damage our heritage. While we will continue to assert this right if necessary, we believe it would be far better not to have to resort to this. Respecting the values of our people and adopting the approaches outlined in this Plan will lead to more ordered development decisions, less conflict and a sustainable future for this region.

Our Plan outlines for ourselves and for others the things we are concerned about and how we need them to be managed. This is not a selfish Plan that seeks to exclude. It is us who have been excluded and this plan is an indication that we are not prepared to be spectators any more. We invite others to read this plan, to consider openly what we have to say and to discuss it with us. We need your goodwill, support and advice and hope our Plan and our future coexistence has greater equality than in the past. Our country needs us all working together – understanding its needs and limitations, not just what it can provide in the short term. Without this there is no healthy and sustainable future for any of us.

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Our conference / Our festival

Cardwell October 9 -14th

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Queensland Government, Australian Government, and other logos are visible.

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li-Anthawirriyarra, – the People whose Spiritual and Cultural Origins are Derived from the Sea

John Bradley, Senior Lecturer,
Monash University

HISTORICALLY

On the 3rd of June 1992 the High Court of Australia overturned the legal fiction of *terra nullius* and recognised that Indigenous people in Australia had rights of ownership to their traditional lands. It is perhaps unfortunate that the High Court did not, at the same time, overturn the legal fiction of *marae nullius*, an empty sea, a sea without owners.

As much as Indigenous Australians have owned and managed mainland Australia, the same can also be said for the sea that surrounds our continent. The sea is also named, known, responded to and worked under Indigenous legal processes or Law for generations. For 30 years I have been privileged to work with the Yanyuwa people of the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria. They are saltwater people, their traditional country takes in the Sir Edward Pellew Islands and the surrounding sea and coastal regions – the Yanyuwa people called themselves *li-Anthawirriyarra*, whose spiritual and cultural origins are derived from the sea.

While many of the Yanyuwa people now live in the diaspora of Borroloola, some 60 kilometres inland, they have never forgotten their island and coastal homeland; they have fought through the long process of land claims to win back large portions of their homelands – 30 years of intense court hearings and government negotiations. Over this time the island and sea country has been constantly visited, talked about, danced and sung about – the sea country has remained at the heart of their emotions.

YANYUWA VOICES

It is fitting that a senior Yanyuwa Elder, Dinah Norman Marrngawi, describe what this relationship with the sea may entail:

Let me tell you something, the sea, the saltwater, the waves, they are my mother, the sea is my mother, it is my mother's Ancestor. I know this, I have known this

since I was small. Further I will tell you the sea has names, many names, names for the reefs, names for the seagrass beds, names for the sand bars, and the sea has boundaries, we know these boundaries, they did not come here recently. From the time of the Ancestral beings and our human ancestors they have been here. Our songs and ceremony are also in the sea, they are running through the sea, both along the bottom of the sea and they also rise and travel on the surface of the sea. White people think the sea is empty that it has no Law, but the Law and the ceremony is there in the saltwater, in the fish, in the seabirds, the dugong and the turtle, it is there and we knowledgeable people are holding it.

When Dinah speaks of the sea being her mother she is not speaking in some vague, spiritual sense, she means that her actual biological mother life spirit came from the sea Ancestor. As a result Dinah is *jungkayi*, guardian for the sea – for her mother, for its physical reality and for the Law and knowledge that is derived from it.

SEA COUNTRY PLANNING

Yanyuwa owners of sea and coastal country are increasingly appalled by both habitat and species degradation. Dumping of uneconomic fish species and fish frames, deaths of dugong and marine turtles, seagrass bed and reef damage and intrusion into sacred places and disturbance of important cultural material all have profound effects on people's emotional wellbeing. Yanyuwa people see all of the events differently to non-Indigenous people. In terms of Yanyuwa epistemology or Law, the sea and coastal environment is an enlivened one, animated by the actions of Ancestral beings, the actions of their human ancestors and the movement of contemporary kin. Therefore any damage to species and sea country moves beyond just what is observable; it enters into a realm of discussion about responsibilities, Law and an overriding concern for the maintenance of good emotional relationships with their country.

Any account of trying to understand Yanyuwa perceptions of damage to the sea country must move beyond specifying merely good or bad ecological processes, and examine the subjective and emotional interactions with the concrete and (in our 'scientific' observer terms) the 'imagined' phenomena. This subjectivity is a critical point of attempting to understand Yanyuwa responses to damage. It is a point that needs further

engagement because much of the inadequacy of non-Indigenous responses to Yanyuwa concerns is that it deals with the practical and mundane at the expense of what can be the mystical and sacred. In many instances issues of degradation caused by non-Indigenous people violate a system of management that depends on understandings of negotiation and relatedness, which are part of an ecology of internal relations where no event stands apart from any other. The stench from rotting dugong killed in fishing nets, or the smell of decaying fish carcasses, permeates the country and offends an unseen world of living human ancestors and powerful Ancestral beings that may then cause 'trouble' for their living kin.

In a Yanyuwa epistemology, there is a living ecological system that requires balance if it is to be sustained in a correct, appropriate and moral way. If this system experiences too many imbalances it will generate its own limiting factors to counter these increasing imbalances. The intimate nature of degradation, issues which concern Indigenous people, is not well understood by the broader society.

CONTEMPORARY YANYUWA PEOPLE

The sea and islands that the ancestors of the Yanyuwa people know is a different place, and contemporary Yanyuwa people feel an urgent need to access information that is appropriate and inclusive of their concerns and relevant to the current problems. Recently they have established the li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers and have completed a major plan of management with National Oceans funding called *Barni-wardimantha Awara – Don't Spoil our Country*. They have worked tirelessly with experts to understand the biology and issues that are affecting dugong and sea turtle. Importantly, they also are working to preserve the culture of their sea country through ways as diverse as the creation of a management atlas called *Forget About Flinders*, and more recently a project of animating songlines that travel through the sea country and contain important biological, historical and spiritual knowledge. All these responses are legitimate ways to care for the saltwater country and the Yanyuwa continue to be fearless in educating themselves and incorporating their own Law and stories into important ventures to safeguard the integrity of their sea country.

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Ngarrindjeri Nation Launch their Yarlumar-ruwe Plan – Caring for Sea Country and Culture

Robyn Bishop, Australian Government NRM Facilitator (Coastal and Marine)

The land and waters is a living body.

We the Ngarrindjeri people are a part of its existence.

The land and waters must be healthy for the Ngarrindjeri people to be healthy.

We are hurting for our country.

The land is dying, the River is dying, the Kurangk (Coorong) is dying and the Murray Mouth is closing.

What does the future hold for us?

Tom Trevorrow, Ngarrindjeri Elder, Camp Coorong, 2002

Members of the Ngarrindjeri Nation have been working for several years on the development of their Yarlumar-ruwe (Sea Country) Plan, which is a statement of their vision for their sea country. On 23 March 2007, Ngarrindjeri people invited others to join them to celebrate the launch of the Yarlumar-ruwe Plan. As Ngarrindjeri



Celebrations at the launch of the Ngarrindjeri Yarlumar-ruwe (Sea Country) Plan. The Port Elliott Primary School Choir sang 'Let the Murray Flow'. Photograph by Robyn Bishop.

Elder and leader Tom Trevorrow pointed out, 'Goolwa is a good place to launch the plan' – a reference to the traditional significance of Goolwa and the site of many years of protest and calls for cultural recognition over the building of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge.

Ngarrindjeri people have sustainably managed the marine, estuarine and riverine resources of their country for tens of thousands of years. Their traditional technology included fishing nets, hooks, weirs, spears, fish traps, rafts, canoes and large floating fishing platforms. Stone fish traps continue to be visible along the Coorong today. Despite the impacts

of colonisation, Ngarrindjeri people have maintained their cultural knowledge, language and have continued cultural traditions.

The Ngarrindjeri vision, outlined in the Plan, draws upon Ngarrindjeri relationship to sea country – which sustained the Ngarrindjeri culturally and economically. The Plan outlines Ngarrindjeri connection to sea country, issues, priority actions and opportunities for partnerships to implement their plan. Key aspects of the plan include a call for Ngarrindjeri rights, interests and values to be recognised in all matters relating to the establishment and management of protected areas within their country, and a number of strategies and actions are outlined to progress this.

Dr Dermot Smyth, who assisted the Ngarrindjeri with their planning, identified that sea country plans become a catalyst to bring people together, and many government agencies and regional Natural Resources Management representatives attended the launch and workshop session to discuss ways in which they can assist the implementation of the Plan. According to Dr Smyth, a significant aspect of sea country planning is the attempt to use a geographic scale that is relevant to Aboriginal people. In many other planning situations Aboriginal people are required to fit in with other scales that might be inconsistent with their own.

Further information: Robyn Bishop, (08) 8303 8672 or Robyn.Bishop@csiro.au



The Talkanjeri Dance Group performed at the launch of the Ngarrindjeri Yarlumar-ruwe Plan. Photograph by Robyn Bishop.

Our Journey Home to Ancestral Lands – The Woppaburra People of the Keppel Islands

Chris Doherty and Bob Muir, Kindred Spirit Authors for the Woppaburra People

BACKGROUND

The hard work, determination, drive, and commitment from many dedicated descendants over the last 15 years of a lengthy government process finally brought us to our Returning of Country Ceremony on the 4th April 2007.

In reality we have waited and fought a lifetime to have our ancestral lands returned. We have been proactive every inch of the way, never giving up hope – strong family ties, love and respect kept us all going.

In the last 15 years, since lodging our Expression of Interest under the Aboriginal Land Act, we have lost many beautiful Elders who started everything over 30 years ago. They were with us 'in spirit' at the ceremony, as we celebrated the lives of our past Elders and Ancestors.

We believe in our heart of hearts that our old people were with us all the way, for there were times when they revealed signs that they were with us, for example:

- We received information six months before the ceremony, from friends in the Queensland Museum, that they had located another Woppaburra Skeletal Remain in a London museum – their sign, telling us to bring them home.
- On a site conservation trip to Great Keppel we took our youth and government friends to the drowning cave where, to our astonishment, a figure/shape of one of our old people was revealed on the floor of the cave just before the tide came in – their sign, they were happy we were there respecting them and what happened to them at this awful place.
- Through local research, we found the gravesites of a few of our ancestors, in the pagan area of the old Rockhampton cemetery – their sign, they were telling us to bring them home.

The above are only a few examples of why we knew our old people have always been with us 'spiritually'.

THE RETURNING OF COUNTRY CEREMONY

This ceremony was a remarkable, historic and astonishing day, deep in tradition and custom. The theme of our ceremony was celebrating the lives of our ancestors and a celebration of colour – of our sacred red and white ceremonial colours – and every single activity was in this colour theme.

Our young men, women and children danced traditionally on ancestral lands for the first time in 115 years, since the forced removal of our ancestors in 1902. It will be remembered forever; they will tell their children and future generations.

We had five of our youth speak about the moment and what it meant to them – five youth representing the five family clans. We had five children hand a copy of the Deed to five Elders – representing the five family clans – all painted in ceremonial colours.

The Deputy Premier and the Minister of the Department of Natural Resources and Water were invited by our youth to dance with them – and they did – respecting our culture, customs and traditions. It was a beautiful moment.

We presented two very special plaques to two very special friends of the Woppaburra – to show our recognition and respect:

- Mr Mike Rowland – an archaeologist who has worked with us for over 30 years and has been instrumental in writing academic papers and recording the history of our people and our sites of significance. Mike radio carbon dated one of our midden sites at 4,500 years old, clearly demonstrating physical evidence of our ancestor's occupation.
- The Morris Family – Mr James Morris saved the lives of our ancestors. He was instrumental in having the barbaric practice stopped of using our ancestors as slaves like cattle to pull the plough, with a bullock driver wielding a whip to induce to greater effort.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS – OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

- We have worked with the State and Commonwealth governments, and our islands now have recognised language names – Woppaburra Language Names.
- On two occasions, we have been invited to provide traditional language names for two Marine Parks Vessels (EPA/QP&WS).

- Last year, we were invited to host the National Indigenous Land Management Facilitators Conference. We [Bob and Chris] were both presented with Certificates of Appreciation from the [then] Department of the Environment and Heritage in Canberra, which really humbled us.
- We facilitated a workshop on Great Keppel Island – a first, as we guided First Australians Business to work with and support a Traditional Owner Group – a positive model for other groups.
- Bush TV has produced a trilogy of DVDs that record our journey home – something to pass down to our young people and future generations.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

To set a secure future, based on self determination for our young people and future generations, to transfer our strength and determination; and provide them with their spiritual connection to their ancestral lands and their ancestors.

Further information: Chris Doherty and Bob Muir, (07) 4923 7620 or woppaburra@bigpond.com



Woppaburra children and youth at the Returning of Country Ceremony. Photographs by Graham Lightbody.

Restoring Connections Between People and Country in South-western Australia

David Guilfoyle, Restoring Connections Project Coordinator

The role of the Restoring Connections Project is to work with Traditional Owners of South-western Australia to undertake localised restoration measures at important heritage areas – before connecting the area to its larger cultural landscape by developing or linking with existing conservation corridors and natural resource management (NRM) plans. A large number of Restoring Connections projects are currently underway, based on a principle of respecting customary protocols of Noongar country while working alongside community groups on action-oriented protection and restoration of important cultural and ecological landscapes.

One of these projects – Southern Forests – set out to identify priority heritage places within the coastal region of south-western Australia, between Augusta to Walpole, north to Manjimup. In this project, Traditional Owners were engaged to identify heritage areas that they considered were under threat or degraded, and so develop a priority for on-ground actions to undertake restoration work. The region contains many diverse environments, characterised by extensive public land (national parks, wilderness areas and reserves) and dotted with rural towns, largely driven by livestock farming and timber industries. All these environments are highly significant cultural landscapes and, as with the ecology and biodiversity, these values are under threat from the region's growing population – especially along the coastal fringe and estuarine environments.

ROCK ART SITE

At one coastal area, a unique geological formation contains a significant rock art panel, one of the few rock art sites in the whole of south-western Australia. The site is part of a network of sites that extend across the Region. Sadly, cows have been free to roam over the formation for over 100 years of farming settlement,

eroding segments of the panel. Weeds and grasses have also taken over the paddock, covering most of the formation and cracking through the art.

Under the direction and control of a Traditional Owner representative, the project work included controlled archaeological excavation to remove the weeds and expose the rock art panel in its entirety, while erecting a fence to keep the cows away. A specialist team conducted a 3-D laser scanning assessment and computer modeling of the place

The on-ground works included blocking and redirecting vehicle access away from the waterfall area, and establishing pedestrian access only. A regional cultural survey took place (on private and public land) to assess the range of cultural places linked to the waterfall area and document the patterns of recreational tracks and usage. This led to the development of a regional management plan that incorporated key themes – cultural, environmental and community (recreation).

‘Sadly, cows have been free to roam over the formation for over 100 years ..., eroding segments of the panel. Weeds and grasses have also taken over the paddock, covering most of the formation and cracking through the art.’

– both for archival purposes and as a mechanism to monitor changes. The team is continuing efforts to monitor the area, while developing a long-term management action plan, including revegetation and ways to protect exposed art panels. The place is an important spiritual place for the Custodians; a place of the Dreaming; a place demonstrating the power of the Noongar connections to landscape across a wide area; and a place for teaching and learning.

The Restoring Connections Project is designed to provide a medium through which heritage management issues may be communicated directly from traditional Noongar custodians of the region to NRM bodies, land managers and land owners. In implementing this Project, the preliminary assessments examine heritage places and values, archaeological and historic values, recreational and public usage values and natural resource values. During the field work the team incorporates traditional knowledge and stories into site

‘... the project work included controlled archaeological excavation to remove the weeds and expose the rock art panel ... while erecting a fence to keep the cows away.’

WATERFALL SITE

Another area associated with a number of cultural features – including lizard traps, gnamma holes, and stone artefact scatters – is a smoothed granite rock face over which a river flows into a large waterhole. The large waterhole and the waterfall are an obvious focal point of the surrounding ecosystem. However, intruding into this site across the top of the waterfall is an undeveloped vehicle track, with recreational usage directly impacting upon this ecological and cultural resource. A landscape-level management approach was required to examine the wider recreational landscape in relationship to the cultural landscape – in order to identify how both elements may coexist and enhance the area's values and features.

assessments (identifying environmental and heritage threats and impacts), and then devises solutions via management action plans – with an emphasis on ‘action’.

SCRIPT (Inc) is the regional group for natural resource management on the South Coast of WA. SCRIPT, in partnership with the South West Catchments Council, has secured regional competitive Natural Heritage Trust funding for this three-year Restoring Connections Project.

Further information: David Guilfoyle, (08) 9892 8434 or davidg@script.asn.au

Mungalla Station

Jacob Cassady, Mungalla Aboriginal Business Corporation

Mungalla Station is the traditional land of my people – the Nywaigi peoples – who now own the property of the station, which is approximately 880 hectares.

Mission Statement:
Mungalla Station is a resource owned by the Nywaigi Traditional Owners for the purpose of fostering Aboriginal cultural values by building economic and cultural opportunities through the careful use of our country as a legacy for our children.

Nywaigi Traditional Owners 1994

The property has a sandridge area and magnificent wetlands bordering the beachside township of Allingham, situated

approximately 12 km east of Ingham. The Mungalla Aboriginal Business Corporation (MABC) is the incorporated body responsible for the business and project activities for the Nywaigi people's traditional country of Mungalla Station. The MABC is affiliated with the Nywaigi Aboriginal Land Corporation (NALC) and currently has a memorandum of understanding in place. The NALC is the title-holding body and primarily looks after land, sea and other issues relating to Nywaigi country, while the main function of the MABC is business, enterprise development, land use agreements, maintenance, training, education and employment.

Nywaigi community members have great plans for the property, especially for exploring community-based activities, and we have expressed a desire to plan

these activities in a practical and culturally appropriate manner. The property has been purchased to benefit the community financially, socially and spiritually – important considerations in the planning process. Mungalla is a property rich in natural resources with enormous potential; and the community and the corporations they operate have the capacity to develop this potential. The future is an exciting one as the process of land, sea and community development unfolds, step by step.

One of the most confronting issues that the Nywaigi people have currently is the problem of the invasive Hymanachne weed, currently choking our waterways and wetlands at an alarming rate. Described by the Traditional Owners as the 'cane toad of weeds', this introduced grass species is causing an environmental catastrophe. The main problem seen by the Traditional Owners is that the weed clogs up our precious wetlands and waterways, along with the also introduced 'water hyacinth'. Both aggressively cover the water surface, reducing bird numbers dramatically over the last five years. With no water surface for the birds and the fact that this weed sucks the oxygen levels out of the water, the fish, freshwater turtles and numerous other aquatic animals are being killed off. The other major impact is the health of our sea country, as we believe that the mangroves and the wetlands are as vital to the sea as lungs are to a human.

This also has an effect on the tourism aspirations of the Traditional Owners who know that the abundance of bird life – cranes, jabiru, water fowls, ducks, broilgas and owls – will attract bird watchers from all over the world. Currently the MABC is looking at undertaking the management and removal of Hymanachne and Para grass from regionally significant wetlands on Mungalla Stud at Allingham. On-ground works will remove Hymanachne and Para grass from among remnants and former open waterways. Through management of regenerating native species, wetland function and habitat will be restored and managed – allowing the recolonisation of native birds, fish and plant species. This project will link with the Mungalla Natural Resource Management Plan to identify key sites and activities for improving the condition of wetlands and other habitats within the Mungalla property, and linkages to surrounding habitat. It will also help to identify natural and cultural sites with ecotourism potential.

Further information: Mungalla Aboriginal Business Corporation, (07) 4777 8718

Mungalla Station promises a wealth of opportunity for the children of Nywaigi community. Photograph by Joanne Cassady.



Carpentaria Ghost Net Program – Saltwater People Working Together

Riki Gunn, Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme Coordinator and Erlend Haugen, Landcare Australia Ltd

Northern Australia is under attack by a new threat – ghost nets. These are fishing nets that have been accidentally lost, abandoned or deliberately discarded but continue to 'fish' indiscriminately. Australia's proximity to intensive fishing operations in neighbouring regions, the difficulties in surveillance and enforcement of existing fish management arrangements with these neighbours and the particular configuration of prevailing winds and currents makes the Gulf of Carpentaria particularly susceptible to this threat.

Due to its unique shape and location, the Gulf of Carpentaria acts as a catchment for marine debris from the entire Indo-Pacific region. Nets are swept in by the monsoonal winds over summer; aided by the south-east trade winds during the winter season, the result is a steady stream of nets all year round. The Gulf also has a strong circular current which means the nets are stuck in an endless cycle of ghost fishing, bringing with it a huge and devastating catch of precious marine life.

Practical, on-ground measures are currently the only way to deal with the ghost nets as only 5% of nets originate in Australia, making it harder to deal with the issue through negotiations with commercial fishing bodies and awareness raising among the fishing community.

The Carpentaria Ghost Nets Programme (CGNP) involves removing decades of accumulated ghost nets from the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Torres Straits, to stop them re-entering the ocean. The Sea Rangers record information about the nets which will help negotiations to stop the problem at its source. A big part of the Project for the Sea Rangers is when they are able to find animals, especially turtles, still alive, they are able to release them back into the wild. The Project works within five natural resource management regions including Cape York, Northern Gulf, Southern Gulf, Torres Strait and the Northern Territory. It is managed by the Northern Gulf Natural Resource Management Group and was



Sea Rangers, hard at work identifying ghost nets before they go to landfill. Photograph by Stephen Ambar.

recognised for its excellent work – taking out the coveted Queensland Coastcare Award 2005 and the Banksia Award in 2006.

Even though the work is physically demanding, the number of participating Indigenous 'caring for country' groups has grown from seven in 2005 to eighteen today. Of that eighteen, seven of the groups have never performed any official form of 'caring for country' work in the past, yet have enthusiastically elected to become involved in ghost nets work. Some of these Sea Ranger teams are trained professionals with the latest equipment, while others are father and son teams equipped mainly with passion and determination.

In the past 18 months the Sea Rangers participating in this Project (approximately 90) have removed from the accessible parts of the coastline (the equivalent distance from Adelaide to Perth) 2,174 pieces of net with an average size of 28.3 metres. This equates to approximately 58.896 kilometres or approximately 60 tonnes of net – enough net to cross Sydney Harbour Bridge over 100 times – demonstrating the huge impact dedicated Coastcarers can have on our coastline.

The largest net was a 6-tonne, 19 kilometre long Taiwanese Gill net found off the coast of Arnhem Land in

November 2006. The removal of this net was a massive cooperative effort, using resources from Customs, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Dhimurru Rangers, NT Parks and Wildlife, and two local charter vessels. It took five very long hours to get this net from the water's edge to the landfill.

Individuals learn skills in project planning and management, as well as information recording and reporting. They are encouraged to design their own work plans to cater for the resources they have, and realise the resources they need to complete the task and how to get them. These are valuable skills as they can be transferred to other 'caring for country' projects such as coastal surveillance of illegal fishing operations.

The flexibility of the Project allows for the high variation in literacy and numeracy skills – from simple data entry in the survey sheets supplied to GIS mapping. The project encourages individuals to self-assess and improve their skills; continually raising the bar by providing a range of training from one-on-one numeracy and literacy to courses in GIS mapping.

Further information: Riki Gunn, (07) 4145 9661 or riki@ghostnets.com.au; Erlend Haugen, (02) 9412 1040 or erlend@landcareaustralia.com.au

The NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project

Lorrae McArthur, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance

Concerned about alarming global declines, Traditional Owners (TOs) across northern Australia are developing community-driven approaches to the sustainable management of dugong and marine turtle.

Coordinated by the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), the Dugong and Marine Turtle Project (DMTP) takes a 'bottom-up' approach in which TOs identify their concerns and aspirations, and the related research and management they wish to pursue. Project partners (including the Kimberley Land Council, Northern Land Council, Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Balkanu – Cape York Development Corporation and the Torres Strait Regional Authority) work with TOs to develop Regional Activity Plans.

Currently, the Bardi Jawi people in the Kimberley region of Western Australia are working along the Dampier Peninsula (Ardyaloon, Lombadina/Djarindjin) undertaking cultural mapping, catch management, beach nest surveys, community workshops, coastal clean-up, and management of tourism and access to breeding sites. The Project also builds networks and shares information among government and scientific agencies.

The Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation Sea Rangers work across the coast of North-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Rangers conduct turtle nesting surveys and search beaches for turtles caught in ghost nets. Dhimurru also coordinates a tracking program to monitor the health of turtles.

The li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers are developing and implementing management and monitoring regimes across the east coast of the Northern Territory. Sea Rangers also work closely with the World Wildlife Fund collecting satellite data on the daily movements and migratory patterns of marine turtles.

The Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and Gangalidda peoples of the Wellesley Islands region in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria are also working toward the long-term management of dugong and



Banula teaching his son, Milika, about marine turtles. Photograph courtesy of Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation.

marine turtle. These species are central to the culture, identity and economy of the region and have been sustainably harvested for thousands of years.

In Cape York, communities at Injinoo and Pormpuraaw on the west coast are busy recording knowledge of customary law and biology of dugong and marine turtle as part of the Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways project (www.tkrp.com.au). This will underpin management plans. In Lockhart River and Hopevale on the east coast, research data on dugong and marine turtle is being collated and returned to those communities.

In the Torres Strait, dugong and marine turtle are a traditional food source of 19 Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal communities within the Maluiligal (Western Islands), Guda Maluiligal (Top Western Islands), Kulkalgal (Central Islands), Kaurareg (Inner Islands), Kemer Kemer Meriam (Eastern Islands) Nations and of adjacent coastal communities in Papua New Guinea and the Gudang Nation of Cape York Peninsula. Presently, activities in the Iama, Boigu, Erub and Badu Islands focus on the cultural management of marine turtle and dugong, recording catch sizes and monitoring nesting sites, as well as providing training and education on the management of these resources.

NAILSMA, project partners and communities are working together using a diversity of approaches to achieve healthy and sustainable populations of dugong and marine turtle that support Indigenous livelihoods across the north of Australia. This goal requires successful community-based management plans built on long-held Traditional Knowledge and Customary Law integrated with contemporary knowledge, scientific research and management planning.

Further information: [Dr Rod Kennett, rod.kennett@cdu.edu.au](mailto:Dr.Rod.Kennett@rod.kennett@cdu.edu.au) Also, download the [Dugong and Marine Turtle Management handbook](http://www.nailsma.org.au) from www.nailsma.org.au.

Indigenous Protected Area Programme

Simon Hartley, Coordinator Ranger Program, Anindilyakwa Land Council

The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) programme is a federal government initiative to foster the long-term cooperative management of premium Aboriginal-owned land for the preservation of cultural and ecological values.

Benefits of an IPA are broad. Fundamental is the commitment to the long-term protection, sustainability and integrity of environmental and cultural values. It recognises conservation as a legitimate and worthwhile land use, and importantly provides financial benefit. IPAs provide a mechanism whereby traditional ecological and cultural knowledge can be synthesised with contemporary scientific approaches to maximise outcomes. Further, exposure to western land management practices and science provides an opportunity for Indigenous skills development and vice versa.

A CASE STUDY: THE ANINDILYAKWA (GROOTE EYLANDT) IPA

The Anindilyakwa archipelago includes approximately 40 islands, and is located in the Gulf of Carpentaria about 630 km east of Darwin. All land is owned by Anindilyakwa (the local language) speaking clans. The main island, Groote Eylandt, is Australia's third largest island and covers an area of about 2,687 km². In the 2001 census the population was estimated to be 2,419 of which approximately 1,500 were Indigenous.

The Anindilyakwa archipelago is in an enviable environmental position. The area is relatively biodiverse with over 40 mammal, 70 reptile, 15 amphibian and over 200 bird species, including some rare and endangered species such as the northern quoll, brush-tailed rabbit rat, northern hopping mouse and several species of marine turtle. Although this is an impressive list of endemic wildlife, probably of more significance is the absence of feral animals from the island, including pigs, buffalo, foxes, horses, cattle, goats and cane toads.

Complementing the archipelago's wildlife is a plant community which hasn't been farmed, grazed, forested or cleared in a major capacity; and while there is a small amount of mining, impacts are localised and there is a rehabilitation

program. Surrounding the island is a marine environment with stunning scenery, fabulous reef systems and rich indigenous, commercial and recreational fisheries. Accompanying all of this is an Indigenous population that speaks traditional language, harvests bush tucker and medicines, and still practises long-established customs and rituals.

The Groote archipelago was designated an IPA in mid-2006; however, the plan of management (POM) was prepared in 2005 and the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) began implementing management actions at this time. Six Indigenous rangers, a coordinator and recently a project officer were employed to execute the POM. Their duties are broad, and include: training; construction; threatened species and biodiversity surveys; pest animal trapping; turtle monitoring; visitor management; illegal fishing patrols; crocodile removals; schools talks; and collecting, processing and recording ghost nets and marine debris information. This work is underpinned by IPA and ALC funding, but could not be

sustained without external funding, all of which requires constant applications, presentations and reporting.

For some rangers, a commitment to a work ethic and sense of achievement was evident. They had pride in their performance and developed self-esteem – demonstrating this with over 20 talks to the community about their work. As one of the rangers said: 'My work provides me with a reason for being'. Support offered by the employee, project officer and coordinator assists with an understanding of mainstream Australian lifestyle skills such as banking. The collection and recording of data demonstrated the value of literacy and numeracy and fostered a desire for knowledge. The attendance of rangers' children at school increased and anti-social behaviour decreased.

Some benefits, especially the social ones, could have been delivered by any worthwhile work program; however, the reality is that looking after country is culturally important to Aboriginal people, and therefore makes the IPA program



Top: Rangers about to release a marine turtle rescued from ghost fishing nets. Photograph by Phil Wise.

more likely to deliver. The Anindilyakwa IPA is relatively new, but with continued support and hard work, the program has the ability to deliver significant environmental, cultural and social benefits.

Further information: Simon Hartley, (08) 8987 4040 or simon@anindilyakwa.org

A Partnership for Turtle and Dugong

Donna Kwan, Assistant Director, Migratory and Marine Biodiversity Section, Department of the Environment and Water Resources

Indigenous people and governments have formed a new partnership to tackle the need to sustainably manage turtle and dugong. A 'National Partnership Approach for the Sustainable Use of Turtle and Dugong' (the Partnership) is an initiative of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC). The NRMMC consists of all State, Territory and Australian Government ministers responsible for natural resource management.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

The Partnership has the flexibility to expand to as many members as required to address regional and local issues.

Indigenous membership is a mix of:

- ongoing members, such as those nominated from the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources' Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC);
- key champions who are widely

recognised and respected for their knowledge and experience for hunting turtle and dugong; and

- regional or local people from a clan, community, area or region who have the knowledge and authority to speak about sustainable management of marine turtle and dugong harvest.

Nominated representatives from government agencies include:

- Parks and Wildlife Service, Northern Territory;
- Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland;
- Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia;
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- Torres Strait Regional Authority;
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

PARTNERSHIP GOALS

- 1 Improve the information base available to Indigenous communities for managing the sustainable harvest of turtles and dugongs.
- 2 Respect Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and management.

3 Improve education and awareness.

4 Identify the economic, social and cultural factors that may contribute to unsustainable harvest levels and implement measures to address them.

5 Protect Sea Country Resources.

HOW THE PARTNERSHIP WORKS

The Partnership operates on a 'roving' basis to enable business to be done 'on-country'. This maximises the opportunities to canvas and address a range of relevant issues.

The Partnership held its first meeting in Cairns in November 2006 where Indigenous people from Torres Strait, Cape York and Moreton Bay met with government agencies to agree on the next steps for the Partnership. The Partnership agreed that its most critical task is to use its collective experience and skills to identify, refine and/or develop a range of management tools that can be used individually or as a package, to address local, regional or national management needs.

Further information: Donna Kwan, (02) 6274 1193, Donna.Kwan@environment.gov.au or visit <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/species/turtles/national-approach.html>

Indigenous Language Team Shifts Focus to Land and Sea Management

Bruce Birch and Nick Evans, Iwaidja Documentation Project, University of Melbourne

The Indigenous peoples of coastal Australia maintained detailed knowledge of its environments and the countless species of fish, birds, shellfish, turtles and other creatures inhabiting the sea, its reefs and strands, and the almost endless uses to which they can be put – ranging from food to sources of material for implements and indicators of weather, tide, season and climate. Although language is clearly central to the transmission of this huge storehouse of marine ecological knowledge, all around Australia's coasts the traditional Indigenous languages are under serious threat from the expansion of English. Since many words in Aboriginal languages have no ready English equivalent, (e.g. the Iwaidja word *arjambuj* describes a depressed area of sea caused by the motion of a turtle or dugong below the surface), the erosion of these finely-tuned tongues threatens to carry with it the fruits of millennia of accumulated observation.

One group who has acted on these concerns is the Iwaidja-speaking population on Croker Island in the Arafura Sea and the nearby Cobourg Peninsula, Western Arnhem Land. In July 2003, concerned by the effects on their language of the pressure for children to learn English, they began the process of documenting and strengthening their language in earnest. Until this point, the only existing documentation of the language had been a grammatical sketch and draft dictionary written and compiled in the 1970s.



Nick Evans and Khaki Marrala discuss Khaki's plans for Wilyi on the beach at Minjilang. Photograph by Sabine Hoeng.

With the help of Nick Evans, a University of Melbourne linguist, and a generous grant from the Volkswagen Foundation's Program for the Documentation of Endangered Languages, a team of Iwaidja language consultants, linguists and scientific specialists began the work of recording, transcribing and translating oral texts focussed on key areas of cultural knowledge, as well as revising and expanding the draft dictionary.

By mid-2004, the evolving Iwaidja Language team based on Croker was ready to start publicising some of the knowledge they had been documenting over the previous year. Sabine Hoeng, Publishing Coordinator, began preparing material for books, posters and CDs to be distributed not only locally, but nationally and internationally. This publications project has been a stunning success. A CD of music by composers on Croker won two Northern Territory Indigenous Music Awards in 2005 and a range of bilingual books and posters, including posters on the fish, shellfish and regional medicinal plants (and their uses), have been widely sold and distributed.

One member of the Iwaidja language team, Khaki Marrala, now in his seventies, encouraged by the success of the work and the interest shown in his language and knowledge by the broader community, wants to take things a step further. Khaki is applying for funding to establish a base on his country at Wilyi (Mountnorris Bay), for the purpose of documenting and implementing local Indigenous land and sea management practices – of which he has extensive knowledge. The base will provide a much-needed interface between Indigenous landowners, governmental land and sea management agencies, and the research community; a place where unique locally based ecological knowledge can be documented and appropriate management practices can be implemented.

Khaki's knowledge of land and sea country in the region is widely recognised as unparalleled, and the need to document it is seen as a high priority by other clan and community members. Now he is determined to spend the last years of his life at his beloved Wilyi in a way which will not only benefit his own clan and community, but which will add to our understanding of the complex coastal habitats of Arnhem Land.

Further information: Bruce Birch, 0410 103 965 or birchb@unimelb.edu.au

Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Revival on Cape York

Brian Singleton, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation

The Traditional Knowledge Recording Project (TKRP), recently renamed the Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways Project in view of the increasing breadth of opportunities and outcomes coming from it, was initiated in 2001 by the Kuku Thaypan Elders, who wanted their knowledge, beliefs and practices recorded and preserved for present and future use by their families and youth.

The Kuku-Thaypan Elders, Dr George Musgrave Snr (deceased) and Dr Tommy George Snr, are situated in the Cape York region of Far North Queensland, Australia. For many years these Elders have tried to pass on their knowledge, have it secured, and have it put into practice to sustain the future of country and community.

After years of recording and applying knowledge with modern technology, the team had the opportunity to develop a unique methodology of recording and demonstrating traditional knowledge and traditional law using digital video and computer storage equipment. With very little funding and resources, the team started recording knowledge for no arranged payments. Knowing that it was a job that was to be done urgently, it was initiated from the heart.

As knowledge was recorded, it was then edited and categorised into separate knowledge fields. A database was then developed that could store the information in the way that best mimics the traditional knowledge structure – which is constantly evolving as recording continues.

With little funding support, the project requested Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation (BCYDC) to assist with the operation of the TKRP. BCYDC recognised the potential of this initiative, supporting the project and enabling it to develop under its own terms.

As the project successfully continued, it started to attract attention from other Indigenous clans who wanted to undertake the same initiative.

All of the operations and components developed by TKRP are done with the



Dr Tommy George, Louis Musgrave and Victor Steffensen filming at Lakeland Nati.

Developing a Partnership with the Local Indigenous Community at Cape Byron Marine Park

Andrew Page and Megan Gallagher, NSW Marine Parks Authority; Wally Stewart, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation

permission of the Elders and Traditional Owners. The project's methodology has been developed with the protocols of the traditional way of managing and applying cultural knowledge and practices.

TKRP follows a system of methods which encompass the cultural process of the project. This method of process is necessary for the project's successful implementation. Choices made during the project's development are respectful of Aboriginal cultural processes, their laws and ways of teaching and learning. Therefore, the project methodology seeks to respect and retain the integrity of the transfer of traditional knowledge from Elders to youth.

The process of adopting clan groups into the methodology of the project is based on recognising the Elders as the mentors. Most Elders recognise other related clan groups within their traditional kinship system, and share views and strategies for revitalising their youth and culture.

The project ensures that the Elders have the leading role of demonstrating the project in new areas, positively introducing other clan groups the TKRP methodology. That way the clan groups are initially encouraged to undertake the project, not through dollars and promises, but by realising the importance of working with their own Elders and Country to do what they can, while they still can.

The traditional knowledge and traditional law pertaining to resource use sets the scene for management on the Cape. The popularity of this methodology has led to its adoption as the central process for the Cape York contribution to the greater NAILSMA Dugong and Turtle Project.

Further information: Brian Singleton, (07) 4019 6200, brian.singleton@balkanu.com.au tkrpweb@balkanu.com.au or www.tkrp.com.au

Developing a close working partnership with the local Indigenous community has provided benefits to both the community and to the NSW Marine Parks Authority (NSW MPA) in the effective management of Cape Byron Marine Park (CBMP).

CBMP in northern NSW was declared by the NSW Government in 2002. It covers approximately 22,000 hectares extending from Brunswick Heads in the north to Lennox Head in the south. Its waters support a high diversity of tropical and temperate marine life, including rare and threatened species such as sea turtles (five species), grey nurse shark and black cod, as well as humpback whales and shorebirds that migrate through the Marine Park.

The seas within, and the lands adjacent to, CBMP have long been recognised by the Bundjalung people as a special place for meeting and gathering and for sharing resources and culture. The area has supported Aboriginal people for at least 22,000 years and includes many spiritual and culturally important sites such as middens, burial sites, ceremonial borings and various open camping sites.

Since the declaration of the Park, the NSW MPA and members of the Byron Bay Bundjalung (Arakwal) Community have worked together to manage the Marine Park. Representatives from the Arakwal community sit on the Cape Byron Marine Park Advisory Committee and their input into the preparation of the Marine Park Zoning Plan led to the creation of special purpose zones which cater for and recognise traditional use. In addition, these representatives were instrumental in obtaining legislative change that will allow Aboriginal people to utilise the resources of sanctuary zones for traditional use, under a Marine Parks permit.



The spotted eagle ray is a resident of the Cape Byron. Illustration by local Indigenous artist Sean Kay.

The NSW MPA has provided opportunities for the employment and training of members of the local Indigenous community in aspects of marine park management. Aboriginal staff at CBMP include a Field Officer (half-time) and a Cadet Marine Ranger, who is undertaking tertiary studies as well as working 12 weeks a year with marine parks staff. Upon completion of study, the cadet will become a full-time Marine Ranger in CBMP.

The Indigenous training program, developed by the NSW MPA, has resulted in marine parks staff and many of the Aboriginal staff currently employed by the Department of Environment and Conservation in the Department's Byron Area Field Service Centre, being trained in vessel operations, scuba diving, mooring maintenance, marine mammal stranding and disentanglement techniques, and other related skills. Consequently, CBMP boasts the only commercially qualified Indigenous dive team in NSW, and no longer pays contractors to undertake tasks associated with the establishment and maintenance of public moorings or marker buoys in the Marine Park.

Arakwal people are currently working with the NSW MPA on a memorandum of understanding to formalise the strong and mutually beneficial partnership that has developed between the Indigenous people of Byron Bay and the Authority. A key message from the development of this partnership is ... invest in training the local community so adversity can be conquered by diversity.

Further information: Andrew Page, (02) 6639 6200 or andrew.page@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Integrating 'Caring for Country' into Sustainable Tourism

William Hyams and Dr Alastair Birtles,
James Cook University

Creating new opportunities for the involvement of Aboriginal Traditional Owners (TOs) in the planning and management of coastal and marine tourism is the focus of a collaborative PhD research project being undertaken by William Hyams, James Cook University and the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation (a regional alliance of nine Aboriginal tribes with six Saltwater groups) based in Cardwell, North Queensland.

Like many TO groups in northern Australia, Girringun TOs are concerned about their limited control over the environmental, social, cultural and economic effects of tourism occurring within their traditional estates. Girringun country forms part of iconic protected areas within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This spectacular natural playground is a jewel in the tourism industry's crown but is also the home to Aboriginal communities for whom the region exists as a living cultural landscape and seascape, which holistically links the people to their environment. The wellbeing of country and people are inextricably intertwined.

Girringun TOs retain a rich tapestry of Indigenous knowledge through customary law/lore. The possible use of this knowledge within the planning and management of tourism requires the sensitive development of participatory management frameworks. This requires a cross-cultural approach to balancing the Indigenous priorities of 'caring for country' with the existing narratives of ecologically sustainable tourism.

A round of scoping interviews is being planned for early 2007 with Girringun TOs and other coastal TO groups in North Queensland to assess relevant issues on a regional scale. Negotiations are ongoing with the Gudjuda Reference Group (representing Bindal, Juru, Gia and Ngaro TOs in the Burdekin region of North Queensland) and Kuku Yalanji TOs of Mossman Gorge, Cooya Beach and Wujal Wujal (in the Daintree region) for their inclusion in this stage of the project.

The results of an exhaustive literature search and the analysis of the scoping interviews will assist the Girringun Governing Committee in developing a Tourism Vision for Girringun Country. This Vision will provide strategic direction for negotiations with a range of tourism stakeholders in Girringun Country.

Key issues to be considered in developing the Tourism Vision for Girringun Country, and negotiating its implementation include:

- 1 exploring the range of custodial responsibilities of TOs for managing country and their connectivity to tourism activities;
- 2 documenting how the current regulatory setting limits the capacity for Girringun TOs to plan for and manage tourism on their traditional estates;
- 3 targeting specific tourism stakeholders with rights and interests in Girringun Country to discuss issues of concern to Girringun TOs, with an aim to explore mutual opportunities for partnerships that can enable a more holistic approach to sustainable tourism management.

Girringun TOs look forward to discussing their aspirations with tourism stakeholders including tourism operators, tourism industry bodies, local governments, and state and national agencies currently responsible for permitting commercial tourism activities. By including the unique perspectives of TOs within tourism planning and management, opportunities that may emerge include:

- 1 partnerships between TOs and existing tourism operators for inclusion of Indigenous cultural values within interpretation programs;
- 2 development of 'cultural accreditation' programs and cultural awareness programs, to identify and support 'best practice' tourism operators;
- 3 greater opportunities for Aboriginal ecotourism development on traditional country;
- 4 strengthening consultative mechanisms with TOs to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge within the assessment of tourism development proposals.

Important milestones have already been achieved by Girringun Saltwater TO groups – Djiru, Gulnay, Girmay, Bandjin, Warrgamay and Nywaigi – for recognition of their rights and responsibilities in managing their country. These include the accreditation of the first Traditional



Girringun sea country: new signage at Fishers Creek boat ramp on the Hinchinbrook Channel. Photograph by William Hyams.

Use of Marine Resources Agreement for Girringun sea country by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in December 2005, and the establishment of the Cardwell Saltwater Indigenous Ranger Unit.

The research team is optimistic that this project can deliver further positive outcomes for TOs and their communities. The GBRMPA has expressed support for the aspirations of Indigenous groups for greater Indigenous involvement in the tourism industry and Indigenous participation in how tourism is managed in the Marine Park. Thirteen Indigenous tourism permits have also been provided collectively under the Cairns, Whitsunday and Hinchinbrook Plans of Management.

The final stage of the project will be a post-evaluation of this tourism visioning process with those TO groups involved in the scoping phase, to assess the regional implications of the project.

This project aligns closely with the theme of the 2nd Indigenous Land and Sea Management Conference to be hosted by the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation in Cardwell from 8–12 October 2007 with the theme: 'Reaching positive social outcomes through effective land and sea management'. This forum will provide an opportunity to discuss preliminary results of the project and to share ideas and experiences with other TO groups.

Further information: William Hyams, Principal Investigator, James Cook University, (07) 4781 5428 or william.hyams@jcu.edu.au

Footnote from Philip Rist, CEO, Girringun Aboriginal Corporation:

We really support the work that Will is doing with this research. It will enable the Girringun Saltwater groups to play a more effective role in managing tourism within our Saltwater Country. Greater involvement in planning and management will create new opportunities for our people. We look forward to building strong partnerships with all of those tourism stakeholders within Girringun Country.

Potential for Eel Production in the Budj Bim Landscape

Lachlan McKinnon, Audentes Investments Pty Ltd and Damien Bell, Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation

BACKGROUND

The Budj Bim Landscape in south-western Victoria was formed by the Tyrendarra or Mt Eccles Lava Flow about 8,000 years ago. It provides a highly productive environment – consisting of seasonal and permanent wetlands and lakes interspersed with basalt 'stony rises' and other features of the lava flow. Until these wetlands were drained by Europeans around 100 years ago, the Indigenous Gunditjmara made use of the hydrogeology and hydrodynamics afforded by the unique landscape to manage the production of shortfinned eels (*Anguilla australis*) over many thousands of years through the construction of complex earthworks, channels and weir structures. These were used to divert water and eels between waterbodies, and to hold and maintain eel populations in wetlands and subsequently trap eels on their downstream migration. At other times eels were also harvested by other means such as spearing, making the eel resource available all year round.

Examples of such trapping systems are still evident in western Victoria near Mt William, Toolondo and within the Budj Bim Landscape, including Lake Condah. The traditional eel culture and management system covered an area of approximately 100 km² of the Budj Bim Landscape alone and is believed to have supported a permanent social and economic structure within the Indigenous Gunditjmara people.

EEL BIOLOGY

Like all anguillid eels, the shortfinned eel reproduces only once in the ocean before dying. Shortfinned eels are long-lived, generally reaching maturity at between 10 and 20 years of age. They begin their seaward spawning migration as early as November, and migration continues through summer and into autumn when water temperature begins to drop, triggering the final migration into the ocean from the estuaries. A number of physiological changes occur in eels during migration, including 'silvering' of the skin,

enlargement of the eyes and a decrease in gut volume, as eels stop feeding at this point. Migrating eels rely on stored fat to fuel their journey of some 2,000 km to the spawning ground.

Spawning occurs in the vicinity of central and western Polynesia, between Samoa and the Coral Sea; however, the exact location of the spawning area is unknown. Adult shortfinned eels migrate to sea in summer and juvenile (glass) eels return to estuaries in winter and spring at about 4.5 to 7 months of age. Eels continue to migrate upstream into fresh water, becoming fully pigmented within a few weeks of entering the estuary. Eels are opportunistic feeders but prey mainly on invertebrates until about 400 mm in length, when fish are included in the diet. The sex of eels is not determined for some time and depends on a number of factors including population density and habitat type. Eels tend to develop into females in lakes and when eel population density is low, while male eels are more likely to develop where eel population density is high. Female eels grow much larger than males: shortfinned females reach over 6 kg in weight; males reach a maximum weight of about 500 g.

THE PROJECT

The natural watering regime of Lake Condah and its associated wetlands is to be restored, in part at least, with the construction of a regulator on the drain which has deprived the traditional eel fishery management system for so long. The Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project and Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation is now in the final stages of assessing the potential for eel fishery and aquaculture development using traditional management methods when Lake Condah and its associated wetlands are reflooded later this year.

As an integral part of the project, assessments have been made on the instream and riparian habitats, and of the population biology of the resident eel population in Darlots Creek and the Lake Condah drain. Eels are abundant in Darlots Creek; however, the population is small in terms of biomass,

with the average weight of eels presently just over 300 g. This is due to the currently limited availability of habitat and food and a possible predominance of males in the population. It is expected that once permanent water is restored to Lake Condah, the eel fishery will develop and grow, with resident eels taking full advantage of newly available habitat and food resources. It is also expected that a larger proportion of the eel population will develop as females, thus growing to a larger mean size.

Importantly, the eel fishery can continue to develop with natural recruitment of juvenile eels (elvers) migrating upstream from Darlots Creek and the Fitzroy River into the lake via a fishway to be installed on the regulator. Furthermore, monitoring of escapement rates of mature eels over the regulator as they make their way to the South Pacific Ocean to spawn will also be possible. Quantifying such movements and migration of eels into and out of Lake Condah will provide important information for managing this fishery, with application to eel populations in other parts of the State.

Further information: [Lachlan McKinnon, 0407 987 011 or audentes@bigpond.com](mailto:Lachlan.McKinnon@audentes.com.au)

Eel sampling, Lake Condah. Photograph by Andy Govanstone.



Culture and Climate Change: Impacts for Indigenous Australians

Donna Green, Climate Change Research Centre, UNSW

WHY FOCUS ON THE CLIMATE-CULTURE CONNECTION?

Any changes in the climate – and consequent impacts on ecosystems – are likely to have a disproportionate effect on Indigenous Australians living in remote communities. This is partly due to the importance of the connection they perceive between the health of their 'country' and their cultural, mental and physical wellbeing. Indigenous Australians aren't alone in this respect: a number of Indigenous Arctic communities have voiced their concerns for over a decade about how their culture has already been, and continues to be, affected by unpredictable seasons and extreme weather. However, recognition that in the near future many Indigenous Australians are likely to experience similarly significant impacts from climate change on their culture is only just now being realised.

HOW COMMUNITIES CAN COPE WITH CHANGE

Indigenous communities in the north of Australia have been extremely adaptable in the past: they have lived through environmental change of greater magnitude than is being projected in the most recent (2007) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. However, the climatic change that occurred thousands of years ago was gradual – giving people and ecosystems time to adapt. In contrast, scientific projections suggest that future anthropogenic (human-made) climate change will occur more rapidly. The existing social and economic disadvantage caused by inadequate infrastructure, health services and employment present in most remote Indigenous communities compounds this problem, and can reduce communities' resilience to cope with climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTIONS

There is little knowledge of the nature of Indigenous Australians' specific vulnerability to climate impacts. However, there is a high probability in the near



Sandbagged graves on Saibai Island. Photograph by Donna Green.

term that they will face a more extreme and variable climate. A major concern for coastal communities relates to sea level rise and storm surges. Many low-lying river systems in the Northern Territory are likely to be affected by salt inundation and changes to mangrove ecology, which will indirectly affect communities further inland from the coast. Projected increases in the intensity of downpours during the monsoon season are likely to cause more frequent and severe floods. Longer droughts in the dry season are expected, in combination with more intense (if not more frequent) tropical cyclones. These extreme weather events are liable to cause greater infrastructure damage, and put more pressure on emergency services in many remote communities. Rising temperatures across the north are likely to change the range of mosquitoes and other disease-carrying vectors, as well as alter the incidence of infectious pathogens. Inland areas will experience more frequent spells of contiguous hot days and nights (over 350°C) that will increase heat stress, especially in the elderly and individuals with medical conditions.

CULTURAL IMPACTS

Torres Strait Islander communities are among the first Australians to implement strategies to adapt to climate change. Although Island communities have responded to past episodes of environmental change over hundreds of years, the speed of change in the last 30 years has been much more rapid.

A combination of high tides and strong winds caused the inundation events on several of the north-west and central islands in January and February 2006. Repeat incidents are likely to become more frequent with rising sea levels and increasing intensity of tropical cyclones in the region. These events caused Island leaders to consider how to protect cultural heritage sites from further damage. Saibai Island's graveyard is an example of a site that is extremely vulnerable to storm

surges. Island Elders and council members are weighing their options about how best to protect it – and more generally how to increase the community's resilience to the changing environment.

Direct biophysical changes, such as rising temperatures and more intense cyclones, and indirect changes, such as social and economic impacts from less predictable commercial and subsistence hunting, are likely to affect Indigenous culture in coming years.

WHAT CAN TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE TEACH US ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Much can be learnt from how Indigenous Australians adapted to past environmental change. Importantly, this information could potentially inform culturally appropriate adaptation strategies. It could also provide an important source of data about environmental observations with respect to previous climate changes that could improve the accuracy of climate projections. These data would be extremely valuable because existing documented climate observations in northern Australia are very limited. That is to say, the lived experience recorded in the oral traditions of many Aboriginal and Islander communities in 'weather lore' could be a significant source of previously untapped knowledge about environmental change and could be of considerable value to inform science and policy making that could make these communities more resilient. Ethnographic work and community studies can provide some information on this local knowledge but to date the extent and nature of knowledge has not been systematically assembled in Australia. This work is being explored in the 'Sharing Knowledge' program of the Climate Change Research Centre, University of NSW.

Further information: Donna Green, 0417 455 920, donna.green@unsw.edu.au or visit www.sharingknowledge.net.au

Nurragah

Acrylic and oil on canvas.

Artists: Tex Skuthorpe and Trevor Winn

Tex Skuthorpe is an Aboriginal man from Goodooga, north-western NSW. He was privileged to be taught much of his traditional culture by old people in the area and has continued his learning for more than 40 years. Tex was taught that his learning comes with a high level of responsibility – to share the knowledge appropriately with all groups of people living in this country.

Consequently, Tex has been sharing his knowledge with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups for more than 20 years. Tex has worked in education, corrective services, environment and various corporate industry areas. The philosophy behind all Tex's work is understanding – that if we understand each other and value difference, then true reconciliation among many groups can occur. This philosophy and knowledge makes Tex an esteemed and sought after consultant.

Trevor Winn is a highly respected artist from the Wollombi Valley who collaborated with Tex on this painting. Trevor painted the seascape and riverscape, using oil on canvas.

This painting shows how our actions on the land and rivers are also felt in the oceans – where the river meets the sea. The painting features the sea turtle and the freshwater turtle. The oceanscape is contained within the freshwater turtle and the riverscape within the sea turtle, to show the interdependence of freshwater and saltwater environments.

Tex believes that ignorance and isolation are the main causes of our environmental problems. The separation of people in decision-making roles from the realities and minutiae of everyday life in our environment results in decisions being made without the full facts. Our system of scientific research, through organisation and funding structures, encourages us to learn only about one thing at a time – we never study the minutiae of the whole.

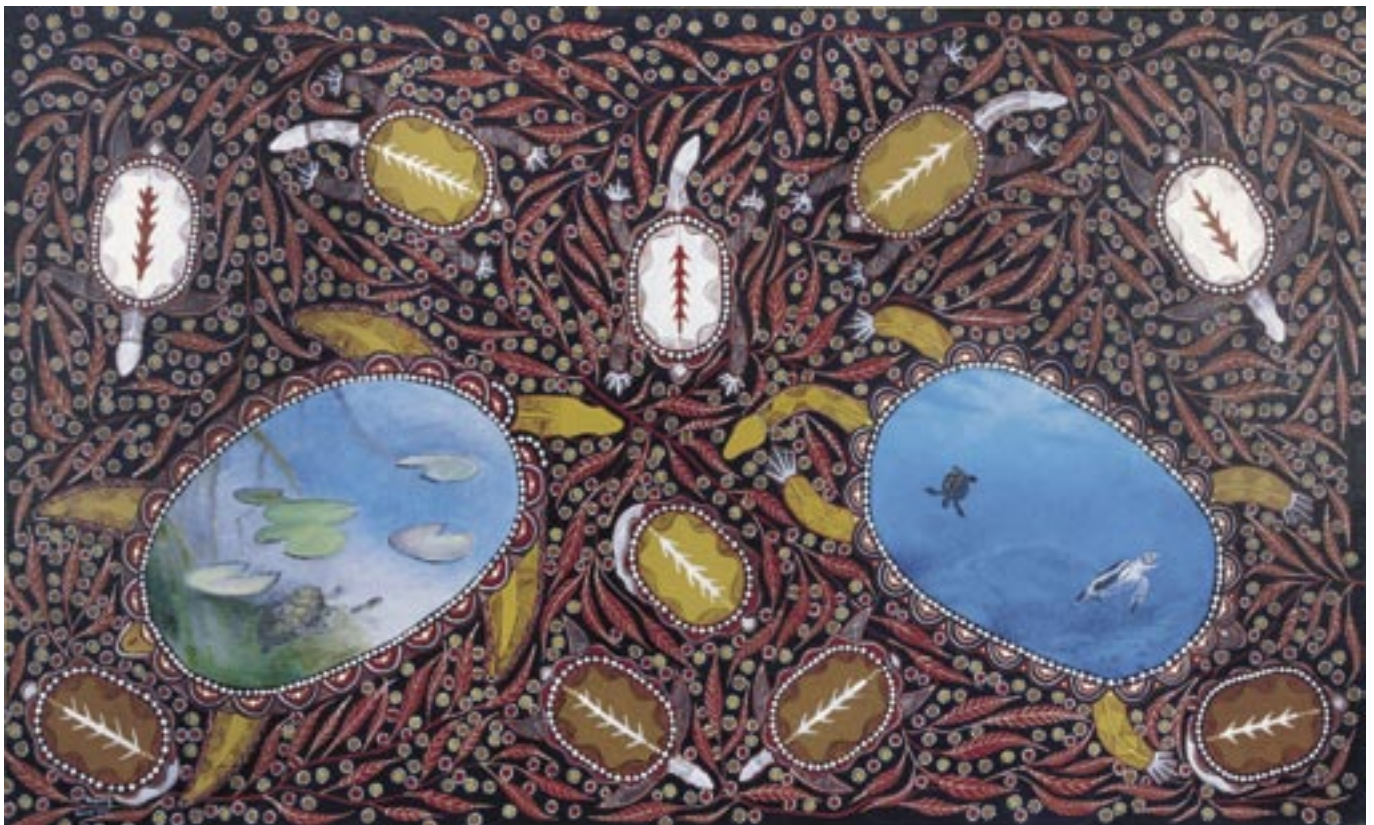
Consequently, we find a pesticide to kill an insect or bird causing problems to our plant life or commercial crop without understanding the role of that animal or insect in the whole ecosystem. That role is only discovered years later when our crops are being consumed by another insect which previously was kept under control by the insect or bird we killed. Additionally, the pesticide run-off flows through our river system and into the ocean.

In Tex's country, white is the colour for mourning. The turtles painted white

represent his mourning the loss of many of our species of fauna, through ignorance, politics and greed. For example, the disappearance of certain types of insects has had a devastating effect on our frog population. Our demand to have our homes safe from flooding has resulted in a major decline in our native fish stocks, many of which need the warm, shallow floodwaters to breed.

The small circles surrounded by white dots represent the loss of flora, often in our immediate environment. Our rivers no longer have the plant species along the banks which once played the dual role of keeping the water clean and protecting the banks from erosion. Modern systems contrast starkly with the traditional Aboriginal management systems.

A significant part of young people's learning involved learning about their country. This took many years and the learning was truly experiential – it came from months of watching particular insects, birds or animals in their environment. Young people learned to see everything in that environment and determine the role it played in the survival of the whole. Additionally, all that learning then had to be related back to themselves, resulting in young people seeing themselves as simply a part of the whole environment, with no more or less importance than anything else.



Native Title Appeal Decision on Blue Mud Bay

On 2 March 2007, the Federal Court upheld an appeal recognising Traditional Owners (TOs) exclusive rights over the intertidal zones of Blue Mud Bay, Northern Territory (NT). TOs have long owned the seabed out to the low-tide mark around much of the NT coastline; however, this court ruling has now granted ownership of the water above that seabed – pending further appeals.

Effectively, this means the *Northern Territory Fisheries Act 1995* has no application in relation to tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land granted under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* – 80% of the Territory's coastline and tropical river systems. The decision also has impacts far inland as, due to the huge tidal ebbs and flows, the high-water mark can extend many kilometres in from river mouths.

Now that the Fisheries Act has no force, on behalf of the TOs the Northern Land Council (NLC), in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government and the Northern Territory Seafood Council (NTSC), is negotiating interim licences to preserve the status quo for commercial and recreational fishers.

Commercial licences for fishers catching mud crab, barramundi and trepang in intertidal waters off Aboriginal land are likely to be on the same terms and conditions as government licences, will have no fee, and will be automatically issued to all current commercial operators. The licences will expire after the High Court determines an appeal by the NT Government, filed on 30 March 2007 and to be heard later in 2007. If successful in the High Court, the NLC has stated they will implement a similar process to ensure an amnesty of least 12 months in favour of the status quo to allow commercial fishing to continue – thus allowing an ordered transition to a negotiated outcome. Members of the Barramundi Licensee Committee feel confident negotiations will allow for agreements to be made between TOs and commercial licensees.

Temporary fishing arrangements have also been put in place so recreational fishing can continue as usual (i.e. the public had a right to enter and fish in most tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land but crossing Aboriginal land to access

tidal waters required a permit) until 31 May 2007. After this time, recreational fishers will require a once-only temporary fishing licence and permit, issued by the NLC, which is valid until at least two months after the High Court decision. The temporary licence and permit will be free and automatically granted by the NLC. All current fishing controls, such as bag limits, are still in place and must be observed.

Amateur fishers are threatening to call on the Commonwealth Government to amend the NT Land Rights Act to deny TOs their new-found ownership of coastal waters. Recreational fishing is big business in the NT. The Amateur Fisherman's Association, a powerful political lobby group, claim 40,000 people fish in the Territory and spend \$45 million a year – more recreational fishers than any State. The Commonwealth Government has not ruled out a change to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act if the High Court appeal over the Blue Mud Bay decision fails.

If Aboriginal ownership of coastal waters in the NT is confirmed by the High Court, the NLC sees investment and employment chances for Aboriginal people. The NLC argues these coastal communities have a legal right to be active as players and stakeholders within the NTSC and the industry itself, i.e. commercial involvement. Ultimately, the NLC supports a role for TOs in policing and regulating commercial fisheries as fishing is one of the few economic drivers that Aboriginal communities can actually latch on to. This could provide new opportunities and fully paid work for existing Aboriginal sea ranger groups, helping alleviate reliance on Community Development Employment Projects and social security payments.

Abridged from:

ABC News Online, 3 March 2007, <http://abc.net.au/news/items/200703/1862234.htm>

ABC Message Stick, 20 March 2007 http://origin.abc.net.au/message/news/stories/ms_news_1876675.htm

ABC Message Stick, 24 April 2007 www.abc.net.au/message/news/stories/ms_news_1904843.htm

ABC 7:30 Report, 27 April 2007 www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s1883439.htm

NT Government website www.fishing.nt.gov.au/recreational/

Northern Land Council website, Blue Mud Bay media release and fact sheets www.nlc.org.au

Fishing Licences as an Opportunity – What Can We Learn About Ourselves?

Greg Williams, School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Charles Darwin University

Blue Mud Bay looms large in the conversations of both commercial and recreational fishers in the Northern Territory (NT) at the moment. Recent decisions in the Federal Court have upheld changes in the jurisdictional landscape in the intertidal zones adjacent to Aboriginal land and – if the reports and letters in local newspapers are anything to go by – the changes (and the subsequent introduction of permits) are, on the whole, not well received.

These decisions, and the implications they have for the average recreational fisher who feels put upon by the need to get a permit to exercise their hobby, highlight a need for us to examine the way we think about resources such as fish stocks.

Firstly we need to think about what it is that is really at stake in the discussion over fishing rights in the intertidal zones adjacent to Aboriginal land. Among other things, what *is* at stake is a fundamental and deeply held assumption about the right to access the resources of the sea. For many within 'mainstream' Australian society, it is a long-held belief, deeply entrenched within society, that we have a fundamental right of free access to fish stocks, that they are a national resource and one of the last remaining commons.

So often our mainstream experience of culture is that we regard our own understanding of the way the world ought to work as *the* most accurate representation of reality. We need to be aware though, that what we think is real or which we assume to be true beyond question, is drawn from our cultural experiences – from the history of our culture; from that which is passed down to us unchallenged from our ancestors; and from that which we experience ourselves in carrying out our own cultural activities.

Philosophers tell us that we can't in a deep sense know anything for sure, *except that we exist*. Of course to live effectively in this world we operate as if we *do* know things; we need a functioning

system of beliefs and structures upon which we can securely hang our ideas and actions. When we convince ourselves (sincerely or otherwise) that those systems equate to objective reality, we run the risk of unilaterally imposing those same beliefs and structures on others in our mistaken assumption that they are universally applicable and acceptable.

Mainstream recreational and commercial fishers, and marine and coastal community resource managers often assume that these concepts of the sea 'commons' are universal. Other people, however, including the Yolngu of Blue Mud Bay, think otherwise – for example, that areas of the sea and its resources are owned or held in trust by particular, identifiable groups of people. This view now has some support from the Federal Court.

The introduction of licences for recreational and commercial fishing in intertidal waters adjacent to Aboriginal land is potentially far more of an opportunity than it is an imposition. It is an opportunity to interrogate and challenge our own way of thinking. This is because it forces us, when we are now required to apply for a permit to fish in waters adjacent to Aboriginal land, to acknowledge that there are different ways of viewing the way the world is structured. It has the potential to make us realise the limited applicability of our own ontological assumptions and, *if* we stop to think, it allows a space for us to entertain the ideas that other ways of knowing, other ways of conceptualising resources and their use are possible and in fact do exist.

Although this notion is not new, it is important for people who work within the resource sectors in the NT to think about what assumptions they make in relation to their own use of those resources. Contemplating different ways of *knowing* creates the possibility of different ways of *doing* in relation to the management and use of resources.

Who owns the fish within the intertidal regions adjacent to Aboriginal land? The law has made a decision, but the real issue is fundamentally philosophical. As practitioners, resource managers and fishers, we must grasp the opportunity to challenge and question our assumptions about knowledge and resources, so that the different cultural groups involved may work together to create a common ground of shared understanding.

Further information: Greg Williams, (08) 8946 6467 or greg.williams@cdu.edu.au

Indigenous Surfing Takes Off!

Martin Grose, Surfing Australia

While names like Maurice Cole and Ken Dann have made an impact as competitive surfers in past eras, more recently Coffs Harbour surfer John Craig and Kirra surfer Dale Richards are members of the Indigenous community who are now making an impact in competitive surfing.

John Craig was crowned 2006 NSW State Open champion and Dale Richards won through the trials of the Quiksilver Pro to take on the likes of Kelly Slater and Andy Irons in the World Championship Tour (WCT) event. While Dale's fairytale did not proceed past the second round, it has highlighted to the surfing community that there is an untapped market of talent just waiting to be introduced to surfing.

Surfing Australia, with support from the Indigenous Sports Program (ISP) based at the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), has developed some low impact programs that have been used by its state branches to introduce surfing to the Indigenous community. Currently these programs have been operating with great success in Western Australia for ten years and over eight years in Victoria.

However, surfing is not just about winning competitions: it offers rewards beyond the health benefits of daily activity. Surfing offers the cultural and lifestyle benefits of living and participating on our beaches – the best in the world. Surfing teaches respect – for the ocean and what it provides and even greater respect for the power that it has.

There are employment opportunities in the areas of coaching, event management and judging, plus opportunities in surfboard design and construction. Surfing is a sport for all ages. While we need to target the youth to offer them constructive activities, we also need to introduce the sheer fun of surfing to the older members of the Indigenous community.

Surfing Australia is now looking to form partnerships with other community organisations to create more opportunities for members of the Indigenous community to head to the beach and go surfing.

Recently on the NSW Central Coast, one of those partnerships resulted in an Indigenous surfing competition, driven by the MINGALTA Corporation and Gosford and Wyong Councils, with support from Surfing NSW, the local radio station and some local sponsors. Plans are underway for a similar event in Coffs Harbour, NSW and in Yeppoon, Queensland.

If you appreciate the beauty of a clean wave breaking on the beach under Australian skies, we hope we can encourage you to come surfing with us.

Further information: Martin Grose, (02) 6674 9886 or marting@surfingaustralia.com

Top: NSW State Open Champion 2006 John Craig receiving the winners cheque and trophy. Photograph by Luke Southern.
Bottom: Happy medal winners at the NSW Central Coast Indigenous Surfing Competition. Photograph by John Dewbury.



Yirrkala Surf Life Saving Pilot Program

Coryn Tambling, Surf Life Saving Northern Territory

Surf Life Saving Northern Territory (SLSNT) is working with the Yirrkala Community and relevant agencies in North-east Arnhem Land to develop a Surf Life Saving model for Indigenous communities in Northern Australia. Funding has been provided through the Nhulunbuy Indigenous Coordination Centre, the federal Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to undertake a pilot program.

It is envisaged that the pilot program will enable school students to utilise a

Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue) towards credits for Year 12 studies. Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation and Laynhapuy Homelands Association Sea Rangers will also be trained in these skills as they are relevant for working in the aquatic environment. Yirrkala landcare workers, Yirrkala Dhanbul environmental health workers, school teachers and sport and recreation officers will also be trained.

The first aid component, and more specifically the cardiopulmonary resuscitation skills, should assist with the alarming incidence of drownings that affect Australia's Indigenous population in comparison to the mainstream.

The program is working on the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems, and will engage community Elders to incorporate this very valuable knowledge. Coastal

Indigenous Australians have survived in some of the most hazardous aquatic environments in the world, and local people have an intimate knowledge of the local areas and associated hazards such as crocodiles, jellyfish, stingrays. SLSNT would like to develop a model that allows a 'both ways' approach to water safety, inclusive of local languages, practices, customs and law.

SLSNT recognises the importance of creating partnerships to ensure the long-term development and support of water-based skills. Partnerships with the Royal Life Saving Society of the Northern Territory and also Swimming NT have been formed to develop skills in swimming and lifeguarding. Other organisations such as Duke of Edinburgh promote leadership skills, particularly for young people.

Although Surf Life Saving is Australia's largest leading community-based water safety organisation, it is also a fantastic sporting organisation. The Australian Championships are the single largest sports event in the southern hemisphere with up to 8,000 competitors. There is interest in the development of these skills from within Indigenous communities and it is hoped that there will be increased Indigenous participation in events such as the North Australian Championships and also the development of Regional School Surf Leagues. The Surf Sports Carnivals are fantastic events in which surf lifesavers can demonstrate their skills and broaden their social networks and make friends with other lifesavers from across the country.

Surf Life Saving is a volunteer-based organisation and depends on community involvement. The family focus is very important and all family members from the age of seven are encouraged to participate in activities. Not everyone needs to be a patrolling member as there are many highly valued positions with a Surf Life Saving club, including: administrators, radio operators, first aid officers, trainers, coaches and officials.

SLSNT encourages any Indigenous organisation, community, homeland or individual to contact us for more details. The Yirrkala Pilot Program is the first step in including Northern Australian Indigenous participants into surf lifesaving. We hope that many more Indigenous communities will come on board.

Further information: Tony Snelling or Julie Snelling, (08) 89 489 553 or slsnt@dhl.com

Champion surfer John Craig demonstrates his prowess (see article page 21). Photograph by Luke Southern.



Sponsorship Opportunities!

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For more details contact: Anne Briggs,
Marketing and Communications Manager,
E: anne@mccn.org.au T: 02 9985 8578

National Oceans Advisory Group Report

Geoff Wescott, MCCN National Reference Group

The National Oceans Advisory Group (NOAG) held its 23rd meeting in February this year. This Canberra meeting covered reports on a range of matters – the main ones are covered below.

NOAG now advises only the Minister for the Environment on matters concerning Australia's Ocean Policy and associated issues and hence its role has become a little less clear than it once was. NOAG's future role was discussed and will be a discussion point for some time to come.

Oceans matters are now dealt with by sectors and, while the coverage is broad and comprehensive, there is little attempt under this government to integrate the matters under Oceans Policy or to consider matters that aren't easily dealt with in a sectoral manner. This approach is reinforced by the commitment to now pursue Regional Marine Planning (RMP) through the use of Marine Bioregional Plans under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

This approach is likely to speed up the RMP process, and reports were delivered on progress on the South-west plan with the first public consultation phase. It may also increase the rate of declaration of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), but probably multiple-use MPAs only, with only a few high protection ('no-take') MPAs. The question of management of these areas is discussed regularly at NOAG, as well as in the wider community.

The Northern Marine Bioregional Plan is also proceeding well and the State and Territory governments are expected to 'sign on' soon, if they have not done so by the time of publication.

NOAG received a briefing on the massive (in terms of dollars) Fisheries Structural Adjustment Package, and its potential impact on marine biodiversity. Other reports included the Science Advisory Group and introduced marine pests (now under the heading of 'Biosecurity').

Climate change was also covered, with the continuing emphasis being placed on actual responses to the impacts of climate change and descriptions on what the changes may be.

There are also strong and positive developments in High Seas protection – an area where the Australian Government has played a major leadership role. In national terms, members were invited to comment in confidence on the draft *Marine Protected Areas: Goals and Principles* report, which will be released in the future for 'stakeholder consultation' – i.e. you!

Further information: Geoff Wescott, wescott@deakin.edu.au

MCCN – Tides of Change

The ebb and flow of the tides have brought more changes to MCCN staffing.

After nine years, MCCN is sad to say *adios* to our Western Australian Regional Coordinator, Edwina Davies Ward. Edwina has been an industrious networker in the Western Australian coastal and marine scene, and will remain so with her new role with the Department of Environment and Conservation as the Coordinator for the Healthy Wetlands Habitats Program. Diligent and a mistress of detail, Edwina and her remarkable memory will be missed by staff, the NRG and her volunteers.

Likewise, we also bid a fond *adieu* to our hard working National Assistant, Prue Barnard. Prue was never one to avoid a challenge, significantly increasing her workload in her role with MCCN, and will no doubt be applying the same principles in her new role with the Australian Marine Conservation Society in the Northern Territory.

Conversely, we are delighted to welcome Anne Briggs as our new Marketing and Communications Manager and Nicola Waldron as the new Victorian Regional Coordinator. These two exceptionally talented women have significant experience in their respective fields.

Anne comes to us from the corporate high-flying world, with specific expertise in marketing, promotions and communications. We look forward to MCCN becoming more of a household name under Anne's careful direction!

Nicola has a degree in Coastal Management (MAppSc) and Marine Biology (BSc Hons) and previously worked for Life Saving Victoria. In that role Nicola was involved in developing coastal risk management best practice and encouraging safer use of coastal and aquatic locations. Nicola has joined the MCCN team just in time for the review

of Victoria's Coastal Strategy 2002, which will be a tremendous asset for MCCN's network of participants in coastal communities around the State.

From top to bottom: Edwina Davies Ward, Prue Barnard, Anne Briggs and Nicola Waldron



Connecting Aboriginal Communities to NRM Activities

David New and Brooke Sweetman,
Rural Solutions SA

The new Aboriginal Natural Resources Management (NRM) website (www.aboriginalnrm.com.au) is 'connecting Aboriginal communities to NRM activities' by focusing on Aboriginal participation in the NRM field within South Australia. This groundbreaking online resource is currently in development phase and is due to be complete in early to mid-2007.

The website will enable you to:

- search for a NRM contact;
- develop your own personal résumé (with the ability to print and/or save);
- register your skills on a statewide database. When you register your skills on our statewide database, NRM Boards are able to search your details in order to link you to potential contract opportunities within their region(s). (Limited access will be granted to NRM Boards);
- receive up-to-date NRM information on what is happening in your region;
- find other appropriate links to NRM websites and information.

The new website currently offers an NRM contacts database tool that can assist with communication between Aboriginal people, government agencies, NRM Boards and NRM staff. The website also currently encompasses an online skills register of Aboriginal people, thereby acting as an Aboriginal NRM employment link.

Future plans for the site include regional/state notice boards and automated communication email lists/information about the different Aboriginal advisory groups and committees from across the state.

Further information: David New, (08) 8226 4391 or new.david@saugov.sa.gov.au

Pathway to Success: The Four Nations NRM Governance Group

David New, Senior Consultant Indigenous Services, Rural Solutions SA

The coming together of the Four Nations NRM Governance Group is a first for NRM in South Australia. This group consists of 12 dynamic Aboriginal leaders from the Kurna, Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri and Peramangk Nations. These leaders are focused on moving forward, developing and promoting social change. The Group is achieving social change by participating in and working with the whirlwind that the NRM reform has created.

The Four Nations NRM Governance Group has met regularly over the last three years to collaboratively develop and produce a number of documents that ensure a solid foundation for Aboriginal involvement and engagement in the region.

Initial consultations the Four Nations NRM Governance Group conducted in 2002 identified and mapped a pathway to engage Aboriginal communities in the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges NRM region. In 2004–05 this plan was put into action in the form of a regional project funded by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). Community meetings were held with each of the Aboriginal Nation groups and representatives of these groups were nominated to participate further. Feedback gathered at these meetings directed sweeping changes to the delivery of the project. This redirection focused on using the existing capacity of the four Aboriginal Nations to deliver the desired outcomes.

Individual service level agreements between the project manager (Rural Solutions SA) and each of the four Nations were developed and entered into. The agreements identified roles, responsibilities and allocated resources. New agreements have been developed for the delivery of the 05–06, 06–07 and the upcoming 07–08 NHT-funded projects. These agreements are a proven best practice for Aboriginal engagement in the Adelaide and Mt Lofty NRM region.

The draft Protocols for Engagement and Tools of Knowledge sections for each Nation were developed within one document in 2004–05. This discusses how best to engage Nations at an individual level and also highlights background and historical information identified by the Aboriginal groups involved in the project.

In 2005–06 the Four Nations NRM Governance Group was born. The Group participated in NRM-focused training workshops, then went on to produce their 2006 – 2010 Strategic Plan. This compiles the group's aspirations for involvement in the region and will form the basis for negotiation in the 2006–07 project.

The current project looks at developing a working agreement between the Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Board and the Four Nations NRM Governance Group. This agreement will secure the role of the Four Nations NRM Governance Group in the structure of the region's management. The Four Nations Governance Group is finalising the draft protocols document, which will be launched in coming months.

Further information: The Four Nations NRM Governance Group Chairperson via David New, (08) 8226 4391 or new.david@saugov.sa.gov.au

FOUR NATIONS NRM GOVERNANCE GROUP PURPOSE

The Four Nations NRM Governance Group will act as a 'one stop shop' to negotiate with all groups of interest to achieve employment outcomes that provide social and economic equity, and encourage and support youth through to senior Aboriginal people to fulfil cultural obligations to country.

FOUR NATIONS NRM GOVERNANCE GROUP VISION

The Four Nations NRM Governance Group will work together to promote and preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage, native title and spirituality in relation to Soils, Water Resources, Geological Features and Landscapes, Native Vegetation, Native Animals, Other Native Organisms and Ecosystems.

Through this vision, the Four Nations NRM Governance Group will be upholding customary obligation and, in doing so, fulfil their cultural inheritance to country.

Management Plan for Yued Sites at Wedge or Kwelena Mambakort (Dolphin Bay)

Brendan Moore, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

The Management Plan for Yued sites at Wedge or Kwelena Mambakort (Dolphin Bay) was commissioned by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) in February 2007 from Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding. It is the first of a number of plans to be completed by the Environmental Officer under the Mogumber Caring for Country (Budjar) Project and the Yued Heritage Sites Environmental and Cultural Audit Project, which were also commissioned by NACC and funded by NHT.

While all sites are protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972)*, and administered by the Department of Indigenous Affairs, not all midden sites on the central west coast of Western Australia (WA) have been registered. The three sites at Kwelena Mambakort considered in this plan form part of a collection of midden sites on the central west coast of WA. These sites are unique in terms of their physical location, links to government agencies and their importance to the Yued people. They are located adjacent professional fishers' shacks at 'Wedge' on an unclassified, unvested reserve (43283), currently managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation. Increasing pressure from development and recreation, particularly the new coastal highway, threatens the quality and value of the sites.

The management plan will help protect and retain traditional Yued heritage by identifying, documenting and reviewing land management and cultural ties. It encourages Yued engagement through a prescriptive action plan for Kwelena Mambakort. It is foreseen that the Traditional Owners will take on active roles in management of Kwelena Mambakort, maintain the ancient Yued cultural links, which despite systemic interference have continued to exist for thousands of years.

The timing of this plan is important to the Yued mob as they, and other Noongars of the South West of WA, will hear the outcome of the Single Noongar Claim. Despite an urban myth that native title threatens backyards, freehold land extinguishes native title and instead Yued people are seeking recognition as Traditional Owners – the right to be consulted and the right to negotiate. Regardless of the legal outcome the Yued mob know that this land is Yued budjar, always was, and always will be.

Further information: Brendan Moore, (08) 9358 7431 or brendan.moore@noongar.org.au

Environmental and Cultural Audit of Heritage Sites

Marissa Maher, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council is running a three-year project which aims to conduct an environmental and cultural audit of cultural and spiritually significant Aboriginal sites in the Yued region. The Yued region is north of Perth and is the northern-most region in Noongar country.

Under the project the Yued Natural Resources Management Advisory Group (Yued NRM AG) was created to prioritise and select sites to be audited. These sites are registered under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Site audits collect environmental data as well as cultural information and will enhance proactive and proper management of spiritual-natural resources on Country. Yued people with knowledge of the site attend the audit and provide information on the traditional use of the land and give their management recommendations for the sites.

In the first year of the project, 13 sites were audited and management plans for four sites are being produced. Important information on the management wishes by Yued people has been recorded and gives organisations and land managers the Noongar perspective of management issues. The formation of the Yued NRM AG has provided a platform for Yued consultation regarding NRM issues,

and has helped develop strong working relationships with organisations and groups in the region, such as the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council.

This project is funded from the Natural Heritage Trust through the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council.

Further information: Marissa Maher, (08) 9358 7400

Guilderton Memorial Grove: Unveiling of Plaque

Marissa Maher, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

The Men of the Trees, a contract tree planting community company, successfully rehabilitated a previous rubbish dump on Unallocated Crown Land near the entrance to Guilderton using species endemic to the area. A nature walk is being constructed and the Shire of Gingin has erected a plaque acknowledging the Yued people and their use of the land. The memorial grove is situated close to the Moore River which is a significant spiritual site for Yued people. The area was used for camping and hunting.

On Wednesday, 21 February 2007, an official unveiling of the plaque was held at the site, and was attended by over thirty people from the Yued community, the Gingin Shire, Guilderton community members and representatives from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Mr Ben Taylor gave the 'Welcome to Country', spoken in both Noongar and English, stating the history of the area and how the Yued people used to walk from inland down towards the coast through the memorial grove area toward the summer seasons. The Welcome was followed by Richard Walley playing a song on his didgeridoo, significant to the area, using bird calls and other sounds of nature throughout.

All in all, this project has involved a very positive coming together of many parts of the community, near and far.

Further information: Marissa Maher, (08) 9358 7400

McArthur River Mine Expansion Fiasco

On 30 April 2007, Traditional Owners had a legal victory against Xstrata's moves to expand a multimillion dollar zinc mine in the Northern Territory (NT). In the NT Supreme Court, Justice Angel found that the approval of the expansion of the McArthur River Mine was invalid, as proper procedures under the Mines Management Act were not followed. Xstrata plans to turn the McArthur River Mine into an open cut mine, diverting approximately 5 km of the McArthur River – a known habitat of the threatened green sawfish (*Pristis ziijron*). However, the NT Government has rammed through legislation, the McArthur River Project Agreement Ratification Act, to override this court decision.

Abridged from: ABC News Online, 30 April 2007, www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200704/s1910305.htm

ABC News Online, 2 May 2007, www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1912609.htm

Indigenous Sea Ranger Groups in the Northern Territory

Fourteen Indigenous Sea Ranger groups now participate in surveillance, monitoring, resource management and cultural activities that cover the entire Northern Territory coastline. The Northern Land Council (NLC) helped to set up the first of these programs in the early 1990s, and 12 groups now operate under the NLCs Caring for Country initiative. The other two groups have been established by the Tiwi and Anindilyakwa Land Councils.

Ranger programs have been established to better equip Traditional Owners (TOs) to monitor and protect their precious estates, particularly in light of concerns about illegal fishing activity. The close involvement of the relevant community TOs has been the key to success of these programs.

MARDBALK MARINE RANGERS

One of these Sea Ranger Groups is the Mardbalk Marine Rangers on Goulburn Island, comprising approximately six men and five women and based in Waruwi, the main settlement on South Goulburn Island. They receive Community Development Employment Project wages, and funding from NT Fisheries. Recently a women's ranger group has also formed, comprising six women.

Area of operations

From their base in Waruwi, the rangers patrol the main two Goulburn Islands, nearby scattered islands and adjacent areas of the mainland along the western Arnhem Land coastline – from De Courcy Head in the west, to Jungle Creek in the east. This area includes the lower catchment of the King River. The majority of people in the region live for most of the year in Waruwi, although numerous people also live permanently, occasionally or seasonally on outstations. There are at least four different Aboriginal clan estates in the region and four languages are commonly spoken, with English usually a third or fourth language. The languages of the islands are Muang and Iwaidja.

Surveys for colonial breeding seabirds indicate that several islands in the area are nationally significant breeding areas for various species, including black-naped tern, roseate tern and bridled tern. These islands are also recognised breeding areas for four species of marine turtle (olive ridley, flatback, green and hawksbill), and constitute one of the more important breeding areas in the NT, if not Australia, for each of these species. The islands also provide important refuges from cane toads which are rapidly invading the Top End.

Land management history

The Mardbalk Marine Ranger program grew from the Garngi Ranger program on nearby Croker Island, which has strong cultural links with the Goulburn Islands. Garngi started in 1998 and expanded its operations to South Goulburn Island in 2002, after the appointment of a shared coordinator. After the coordinator left at the expiry of his contract in 2003, the two groups went their separate ways and the Mardbalk Rangers emerged as a group in their own right.

They have since received significant funding from NT Fisheries as well as equipment such as boats. In 2006 the Mardbalk Rangers signed an agreement with NT Fisheries to carry out patrols, education and communication activities.

Current programs

The main threats to the environment facing people in the Goulburn region include:

- weed invasion of species such as coffee bush, Parkinsonia and mission grass;
- damage caused by feral animals;
- illegal fishing;
- inappropriate fire management;
- permit control;
- illegal use of, and desecration of, coastal islands and sacred sites.

The Mardbalk Rangers work closely with police, Fisheries and Customs and also mount coastal patrols with the Djelk Sea Rangers, their neighbouring ranger group.

The rangers are also involved in:

- animal surveys, marine and land-based;
- establishing a community nursery;
- collecting marine debris off beaches;
- fee-for-service work with AQIS to check feral animal populations for disease;
- school visits to promote the program;
- Back to Country programs with Elders to safeguard Indigenous knowledge;
- enterprise development, e.g. sponge and trepang aquaculture and safari hunting;
- training: restricted Coxswains certificates, senior first aid and fisheries compliance;
- keeping cane toads off the islands;
- marine research work.

Key achievements

- signing formal funding agreement with NT Fisheries in January 2006;
- reporting illegal foreign fishing vessels;
- wildlife surveys of North Goulburn Island;
- NT 2004 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships for sponge aquaculture.
- Arnhem Land Marine Biodiversity Research Project, with NT Museum, National Oceans Office and NLC.

Further information: Kath Nash, (08) 8999 4456, kath.nash@nt.gov.au or Terry Mahney, (08) 8920 5175, MahneT@nlc.org.au

Projects from the Torres Strait

Stephen Ambar, Head Ranger on Hammond Island

Hi, my name is Stephen Ambar and I live and work on Hammond Island (traditional name Kirriri). Kirriri is part of the Kaiwalagul Group of islands in the Torres Strait. Hammond Island is situated NNW of Thursday Island and it is 7.5 km long and 2.5 km wide, with a population of approximately 250.

I am the Head Ranger on Hammond and there are also three Assistant Rangers: Miss Judith Thaiday, Mr Francis Dorante and Miss Alice Garnier.

SEAGRASS MONITORING

Dr Jane Mellor started Hammond Island on seagrass monitoring. We had a workshop on Thursday Island in March 2007, with two groups from the HMD CDEP Program, Community Nursery and Community Rangers attending the workshop.

Now we have started monitoring one site on the east side of the Island. Our aim is to have three sites all up – the one on the east plus one on the west and one on the south. We also have an international shipping channel running west to east on the north side, so the community are very interested to see the results of this monitoring.

Further information: www.seagrass.com.au

GHOST NET PROGRAMME

The Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme started a few years ago to remove old fishing nets from our beaches and reefs, and to find out where these nets come from. It also trained rangers in lots of different skills, like data collection, using GPS equipment and identifying nets.

When it started, only Badu Island was involved, yet we had the same problems. The Torres Strait Regional Authority held discussions with Riki Gunn, the Coordinator of the Carpentaria Ghost Net Programme, to see if Hammond and Horn Islands could join the project and start cleaning our waterways of discarded ghost nets.

I have been working on Hammond for nine years as a Ranger and I can tell you Riki's Ghost Net Project is a god send! For example, the Project gives us a dedicated Project Facilitator, Gary Luchi, who is accessible any time we need help and visits us regularly to train and assist us with lots of different things. We started this project in October 2006 and it's going very well – with Hammond Island Rangers already collecting around 8 tonnes of derelict fishing nets.

The Project enables four rangers to work two days a fortnight for 40 weeks but we can work this anyway we want. For example, we can work it as one day per week or two days every second week. If we miss out on a month we work four extra days the following month, as long as each person works 40 days per financial year. It's a great way to be able to cope with other work that may come up or with our wet season that sometimes makes it impossible to work.

A typical two days ghost net collecting would be:

Day 1: We collect the nets from mangroves, rocks, coral reefs, etc.

Day 2: We process the nets. Rangers are skilled up in filling out data sheet, and for any net that we can't identify we send that sample to Riki in Karumba.

The data sheets are sent to Gary at the end of each month and he checks them before he sends them on to Riki. When Riki gets them she enters them into a database, which adds all our data to the information from all the other Indigenous ranger groups that are involved in the Project. In the end we will work out where all this mess is coming from and who is responsible. The project has a website at www.ghostnets.com.au where the world can see what we are doing!

The fishermen who deliberately throw fishing nets out should realise the destruction it causes to the marine animal life. It's terrible.

Further information: **Stephen Ambar, (07) 4069 1301 or stephen@hammond.qld.gov.au**

Turtle Permits and Monitoring

Nathaniel Surha, Gudjuda Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation

The Gudjuda Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation (GRGAC) was established in 1999 and its office is located in Ayr, less than 100 km south of Townsville. GRGAC is the administrative arm of four family clans which come under the Birri Gubba Nation – the Bindal, Juru, Gia and Ngaro family groups. Their traditional land covers: south of the Ross River in Townsville; west to Reid River; parallel with the eastern side of the Leichhardt and Clark Ranges; south to Mount Crompton; east to Midge Point; and outer east to the Great Barrier Reef.

The GRGAC is a proactive organisation in areas of natural resource management and, in the area of endangered species, is one of the first groups to actively participate in the management and restoration of turtle numbers.

On behalf of the four family groups the GRGAC administers permits to hunt for turtle according to the hunting rights of the Birri Gubba Nation. Families and other Indigenous hunters who wish to take a turtle for cultural purposes ask permission to hunt and, if approved, are granted a permit. The permit is open for a set number of days, with a set catch number and these details are recorded and numbers carefully monitored over the year.

Turtle monitoring and tagging is also an activity of the GRGAC and, in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and other environmental agencies and groups, they look after the turtles within their region.

Further information: **Nathaniel Surha, (07) 4783 7229 or 0418 193 751**

Sydney's Aboriginal Heritage

David Watts, Manager, Aboriginal Heritage Office

Most visitors to Sydney are struck by the beauty of its harbours, beaches and foreshores. The opportunities to explore bushland and prime water views along tracks and paths seem almost endless and remarkable in Australia's oldest and largest city. What is perhaps even more amazing is the wealth of Aboriginal heritage that has survived.

Many people are surprised when they learn how many Aboriginal sites there are in the area. It is one of the largest outdoor rock art galleries in the world. There are hundreds of sites literally staring people in the face as they walk around these foreshores. Yet most people have no idea. Aboriginal Sites Officers in Sydney often remark that non-Aboriginal people didn't invent the ocean view. Rock shelters with shell middens, archaeological deposits and rock paintings are common and are thousands of years old.

People have this idea that it all finished 200 years ago. Certainly, in Sydney a lot of Aboriginal people died quickly and a lot of traditional knowledge was lost. However, the sites are still there and there are many Aboriginal people working to protect them and to educate the wider public about the importance of these places. If you travel up or down the coast and talk to Bundjalung elders, talk to the Wodi Wodi, or the Dharwal – there's a lot of knowledge there and that knowledge should be respected.

In Sydney, the Aboriginal Heritage Office and others are trying to hang on to what's left – the shelters and middens and engravings. They can tell us a lot about the past – from what shell species were common that have now become rare, to what marine species people chose to engrave into the sandstone. The job now is to get the upcoming generations to learn more about their local environment. That's how Aboriginal people were brought up and it's how they knew how to care

for country. It's what has been lacking in Australian society and what needs to improve if we're to have something to pass on to future generations. The sites are like signposts or reminders, and also knowledge holders. They can speak, but only if you're prepared to listen. Aboriginal Sites Officers tell people on our walks – if you want to see the paintings, you have to sit quietly, let your eyes adjust to the light. Then they come out, they appear and they get stronger and stronger. It's quite amazing.

Jessica Sinnot, a member of the Budawang clan of the south coast of NSW, works as a guide and educator for the Aboriginal Heritage Office. 'With our Schools Program, we go out and tell the children about how the Guringai people used to live, what Sydney was like and what a big impact the invasion had on them. If you think that up to 80% of Aboriginal people in this area died from smallpox, starvation and everything else, that really hits a culture hard that hands down knowledge orally. How much detailed information about the Sydney environment was lost in that period? How much more information is being lost around Australia because we aren't looking after our Elders?'

Development is still a major threat for sites in Sydney, and around Australia generally. As the 'sea change' fashion builds on an already heavily pressured coast, the surviving Aboriginal heritage is impacted. Rising sea levels from global warming will continue to erode beach fronts, destroying shell midden and camping sites, as well as exposing and undermining burials.

Local councils have an important role in land-use planning and development approvals and it is vital that local government is given more support to increase their awareness and skills at managing this irreplaceable resource. Local Aboriginal communities are keen to work with governments, but there needs to be commitment for a strong, long-term relationship. This is something that has been slowly building in northern Sydney, since North Sydney Council was the first in

Australia to employ an Aboriginal Heritage Officer at local government level. This initiative has grown to over six councils and one area of the Sydney Harbour National Park.

Australia's coastlines are not just home to important habitat for marine and terrestrial animals. They are also home to thousands of years of Indigenous heritage. The habitats of many native species are under great threat; however, with care they can be repaired and regenerated. In contrast, Aboriginal sites are irreplaceable. Once they are gone, they are gone forever. This generation therefore has an enormous responsibility to look after what has survived.

The Aboriginal Heritage Office is a partnership between six North Sydney councils: Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, North Sydney, Warringah and Willoughby Councils. Volunteers are welcome!

Further information: David Watts, (02) 9949 9882 or puurrii@optusnet.com.au See also: www.aboriginalheritage.org

Agreement signed over Stockton Bight

An agreement signed between the NSW Government and the Worimi people will allow joint management of 4,000 hectares of Crown Land in Stockton Bight. The area will be managed by a board comprising Aboriginal owners, Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Port Stephens Council representatives.

The State Government committed a funding package of \$5 million over the next three years to support the co-management program. Under the agreement the general public will still be able to use the area for popular activities such as four-wheel-driving, fishing and walking dogs.

Source: Newcastle Herald, 10 February 2007

Cultural Heritage – Sharing the Dreaming along Victoria's Great Ocean Road

David Clarke, Executive Officer, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee

We all know about the Great Ocean Road. Home to vibrant communities, a burgeoning sea change population, visited by millions of Australians and international visitors each year. Fantastic coastline, great drive, amazing beaches and natural values – the list continues. But how many visitors stop and think about Indigenous heritage, values past and present, and the opportunities these values provide to engage, involve and inspire?

The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) is responsible for managing 37 kilometres of Crown land along the coast between Torquay and Lorne, Victoria. These coastal areas along the Great Ocean Road remain important to Indigenous people and are in the traditional country of the Wathaurong and Gadubanud people, represented today by the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and Framlingham Aboriginal Trust.

The coastal zone is a place of traditional importance to Indigenous communities as a source of resources and as an important part of the stories of the creation of the landscape. Traditional use of the coast has resulted in the relatively high concentration of Aboriginal archaeological sites along the coastal zone. The Kooyang Sea Country Plan prepared by the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust describes the value of the coast to contemporary Aboriginal communities:

When we talk about our country we include the ocean, our sea country that provides so much of the resources we still depend upon for our wellbeing, and which covers the submerged lands that bear the footprints of our ancestors.

Kooyang Sea Country Plan, 2005, page 4

Aboriginal sites abound in GORCC's management areas and are highly significant to Indigenous people today, providing a tangible link with history and ancestors. Aboriginal sites are protected by law, but sites have far more than just legal status. Sites like shell middens (the most common type of site found on the local coast) provide an insight into the intimate relationships between Aboriginal people and their country. Midden sites are under pressure from natural erosion and recreational use of the coastal environment.

Many visitors to the Great Ocean Road will be aware of its natural values but unaware of its high cultural values as there is a lack of interpretation surrounding Indigenous culture and heritage. Appropriate interpretation has the potential to enhance the tourist experience and add a new dimension of meaning to the landscape. GORCC is currently working on an interpretation strategy for the coast with a focus on Indigenous values.

In late 2006, GORCC's staff in Torquay and Lorne received cultural awareness training from the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust and the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative. The training was a fantastic opportunity to learn about Indigenous relationships with the coast, brush up on management responsibilities and find out who to talk to about cultural issues.

GORCC is also discussing the potential development of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Wathaurong and Framlingham communities. The MoU would comprise an agreement as to which GORCC activities would require input from the Indigenous community and outline mutual rights and responsibilities. An MoU would also assist in identifying what types of works may require prior archaeological survey and assist GORCC in planning and budgeting accordingly. An excellent example of a successful MoU is that signed between the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Framlingham Aboriginal Trust, Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (see www.ccma.vic.gov.au).

With such a rich Aboriginal history and partners like the Framlingham and

Wathaurong communities to work with, GORCC hopes to build awareness of the coast's long history of human habitation and culture, as well as ensure all cultural sites are appropriately protected.

Further information: David Clarke, (03) 5220 5027 or david.c@gorcc.com.au

Tatungoloong Revegetation Project

Robert Andy, Community Partnerships Officer, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. Identifies with the Tatungoloong Gunai/Kurnai Country.

The Boole Poole peninsula is a significant place to the Tatungoloong Gunai/Kurnai people of East Gippsland, as it holds many of their traditional burial sites within the Gippsland lakes. Boole Poole was privately owned, but is now owned and managed by the Aboriginal Cooperative – Gippsland East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC).

The focus of this Project was a burial site that overlooks Lake King. The site faces west and has been subject to erosion damage due to lack of vegetation, pest animals and strong winds, which exposed burial remains. To protect the site, it was necessary to reduce the threat of the erosion damage.

The Cultural Heritage Board, Gippsland Coastal Board, Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and the Aboriginal organisation GEGAC created a partnership project and applied for funding through the Natural Heritage Trust and the Victorian Government. The Project began in March 2005 and finished in July 2006. Aboriginal workers and contractors established a sustainable banked wall along the foreshore. The site is now stabilised with native vegetation such as coastal pigface, grass and boobiallas. The burial site was also fenced off to reduce further damage.

Further information: Robert Andy, (03) 51503581 or RAndy@egcma.com.au

Hot of the Press!! This Project just won the Cultural Achievement Award at the 2007 Victorian Coastal Awards of Excellence!

Cultural Learning for Aboriginal Students in Tasmania

Theresa Sainty and Judy Hunter,
Aboriginal Education Unit, Department of Education

The Tasmanian Department of Education's Aboriginal Education Unit conducts a number of programs aimed at improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in Tasmanian schools. The Aboriginal Cultural Program *Connecting Community, Country and Culture* is an off-campus, cultural education program.

The program has been very successful and connects Aboriginal youth with community, country and culture, by providing a number of meaningful, relevant and authentic cultural learning opportunities. Participating students are able to explore their identity within their own community. Furthermore, through improving their knowledge of and connection with Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural practices, they become more confident and better equipped to find their niche within the wider community.

Cultural connections are made by visiting Aboriginal sites around the State. Sites include middens found along the coastline of Tasmania. Middens are interpreted for participants by Aboriginal Heritage Officers or community members with specific knowledge. Students learn about how to identify and collect cultural resources for activities: such as bull kelp for making kelp water carriers; shells for stringing and making the beautiful necklaces our people have always made; marine animals for tucker; and so on. The camps also provide opportunities for 'yarnin' (reflecting on our 'old people) and discussing how cultural practices have changed or remained the same over time.

Muttonbird rookery visits are another exciting and highly successful element of the Aboriginal Cultural Program, often involving both students and their families. Rookeries are located around the coastline

of Tasmania and associated islands including the Furneaux group in Bass Strait and off the north-west tip of Tasmania, and Bruny Island in the south.

Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) organise for family groups to visit a rookery, where they find out about the journey and lifecycle of the muttonbird or short-tailed shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*). At dusk groups watch parent birds – which have been away from the burrow all day feeding on krill, squid and fish – return to the rookery to feed their young.

Visits are always accompanied by an 'old birder' who will gently pull out a chick from a burrow to show the students and families; for some students this is their first introduction to the life of the muttonbird. The chick is then returned to the safety of its burrow to await its evening feed. A lot of 'yarnin' happens while waiting for the parent birds' arrival – mainly about muttonbirding, a practice that has always been part of the culture of Tasmanian Aborigines. We mostly visit the rookeries at Cape Deslacs (in southern Tasmania) and Lillico Conservation Area on the north-west coast.

During the muttonbird season of 2006, AEOs and experienced 'birders' accompanied two groups of Aboriginal secondary students to Big Dog Island for a week of muttonbirding. Big Dog Island is situated between Cape Barren and Flinders Island in Bass Strait. The island is recognised as a place where the cultural practice of muttonbirding has been carried out by Tasmanian Aborigines for many, many years. This continued connection with country was recognised by the State Government when they handed back Big Dog Island to the Aboriginal community of Tasmania in 1995, along with eleven other significant sites.

During the camp, students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of muttonbirding. In the rookery, students are taught what holes to go in, how to tell if there is a bird and not a snake in there, how to kill the birds swiftly and humanely, and how to size and carry them on the spit properly. It is hard work, but the value

of this kind of interaction with Elders and other community members is priceless – by the end of camp students are truly 'connected'.

However, Big Dog Island Camp is not just about muttonbirding; there is much to see and learn on the island. Opportunities abound for: collecting shellfish, such as mutton fish (abalone), limpets, periwinkles and werreners; to go rod fishing; or simply to explore the many rock pools on the island's shoreline.

The cook from the 2006 camp is also one of our most senior shell stringers. When not involved in the preparation of tucker, including of course muttonbird, she'd take some of the girls to the beach to look for shells. One prized shell is the beautiful mariner shell used for centuries by Tasmanian Aborigines for shell necklace making. These shells were once abundant around the beaches of the islands but they are now scarce due to changes in the marine environment.

The benefits of the camp, along with valuable information on the cultural practice of muttonbirding, have been captured on DVD. *The Big Dog Connection*, which is based on the 2006 camp, opens with Elders sharing memories of their birding experiences and the concerns they have that the cultural practice be taught to the young people. Experiences of students, staff and community members are also presented – as is the breathtaking beauty of Big Dog Island.

The values and continuous connections underpinning the teaching and learning passed down by Tasmanian Aborigines from generation to generation – using the environment as a classroom – are highlighted and celebrated through this film. It is a classroom that has always been there and one we must continue to value and protect. The DVD, with supporting curriculum materials, will be available to educational facilities in Tasmania from June 2007.

Further information: Theresa Sainty (03) 6233 7953 or theresa.sainty@education.tas.gov.au

Inaugural Queensland Coastal Conference 2007

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For further information please visit the conference website or contact the conference organisers.

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For more details contact: Anne Briggs, MCCN

T: 02 9985 8578 E: anne@mccn.org.au

MARINE AND COASTAL COMMUNITY NETWORK IMPORTANT DATES CALENDAR

Date	Event	Contact
8–12 July Perth, WA	World Conference on Science and Technology Education The conference theme is education for sustainable development.	T: 08 89273 6395 F: 08 9322 1734 W: www.worldste2007.asn.au/
8–15 July	NAIDOC Week 2007 – 50 years: Looking Forward, Looking Blak NAIDOC celebrations are held around Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	W: www.naidoc.org.au/
9–13 July Melbourne, Vic	Australian Marine Sciences Association 45th Annual Conference The theme for this years conference is 'Marine Science in a Changing World'	W: www.amsa.asn.au/conference/conf2007/index.php
10–12 July Sydney, NSW	Biodiversity Extinction Crisis Conference – A Pacific Response The conference identifies major problems for biodiversity conservation in our region, existing and potential solutions and links to the global biodiversity initiatives.	T: 02 9290 3366 F: 02 9290 2444 W: www.biodiversity2007.com/
17–20 July Melbourne, Vic	Coasts and Ports 2007 The conference brings together engineers, planners, researchers and others working in disciplines relating to coastal and port matters, to engage in discussions currently facing this community.	T: 03 9439 3855 F: 03 9431 5167 E: coastsandports2007@clems.com.au W: www.coastsandports2007.com.au/index.php
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous People	W: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/news_internationalday2006.html
9–12 August	NSW Coastal Volunteers Forum – 2007 Coastal issues – local solutions	WyCare Inc: T: 02 4352 1199 F: 02 4351 0254 E: wycare@bigpond.com
19–22 August Bundaberg, Qld	Sharing the Water – Food, Fibre, People and Environment	E: pcs@cogroup.com.au W: www.ancid.org.au
20–22 August Sunshine Coast, Qld	National Sea Change Taskforce – SEA CHANGE 2007: Setting the Coastal Priorities Exploring policy initiatives and strategies to address the environmental, social and economic impact of rapid growth and development on coastal Australia	T: 02 9904 0311 E: susan_faulkner@bigpond.com W: www.seachangetaskforce.org.au
3–6 September Brisbane, Qld	10th International River Symposium & Environmental Flows Conference The symposium will focus on the emerging field of river management and environmental flows	W: www.riversymposium.com/index.php?page=Home
7 September	National Threatened Species Day Encourage the community to help conserve Australia's unique native fauna and flora	W: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ts-day/index.html
17–19 September Bundaberg, Qld	Queensland Coastal Conference	T: 02 9368 1200 F: 02 9368 1500 E: qldcoast07@iceaustralia.com W: www.iceaustralia.com/qldcoast07
23–25 September Fremantle, WA	WA – Protected Areas Forum A Sense of Place, for all People, for all Time	T: 08 9332 2900 F: 08 9332 2911 E: promaco@promaco.com.au
2–5 October Sydney, NSW	Greenhouse 2007 – The Latest Science & Technology Presented by CSIRO, scientists and representatives from industry and government to hear the latest findings in climate science and discuss the implications for Australia and the region	W: www.csiro.au/events/pe4w.html
9–12 October Cardwell, Qld	2nd National Indigenous Land and Sea Management Conference CARING FOR COUNTRY – our people, our nation, our responsibility	T: 07 4066 8300 F: 07 4066 8353 E: conference@girringun.com.au W: www.caringforcountry.com.au/index.php
31 October – 2 November Hobart, Tas	Seafood Directions Conference 2007 'Seafood for Tomorrow – Embracing Change' The conference will examine a number of critical strategies from which to develop an action plan to successfully guide the industry into the future.	T: 03 6224 3773 F: 03 6224 3774 E: info@cdesign.com.au W: www.cdesign.com.au/seafooddirections/
26–27 November Canberra, ACT	The 5th National Waterwatch Conference Themes include sustaining waterwatch; best practice/innovation; partnerships, linkages and opportunities.	E: waterwatch@con-sol.com W: www.waterwatch.org.au
3–9 December	Coastcare Week	T: 02 9412 1040 W: www.landcareonline.com/page.asp?pid=78