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COVER
Image on book cover: People tending to a ground oven (umai) at Nayedh, Bau village, Mabuyag, 1921. Photographed by Frank Hurley (National Library of Australia: pic-vn3314129-v).

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Managing a sacred islet: Pulu Indigenous Protected Area, Torres Strait, Queensland

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Pulu is an islet of immense cultural significance to the Goemulgal, the people of Mabuyag (Mabuiag Island). In April 2009, the Goemulgal declared Pulu an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) under the National Reserve System, Australia’s national system of protected areas. They also developed a culturally-appropriate IPA Plan of Management, to assist them to look after this special place, which combines traditional laws and customs with Western approaches to protected area management.

- Mabuyag, Mabuiag Island, Pulu, Torres Strait, protected areas

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INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are a relatively recent form of protected area, developed in the 1990s by the Australian Government in consultation with Indigenous representatives as part of the National Reserve System (NRS). The NRS is Australia’s network of public, private, Indigenous and shared-management protected areas which aims to protect a comprehensive range of examples of terrestrial ecosystems and other important environmental values across the country (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: 5, 2009: 2, 9-10). The IPA program supports Indigenous communities to voluntarily declare their own lands and seas as protected areas, to be managed in accordance with International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines. In return for government financial and technical support for planning, declaration and management, the Indigenous owners are required to develop a formal plan of management and make a commitment to managing their estate to conserve its biodiversity values (Hill et al., 2011: 3-4; Ross et al., 2009: 245; Smyth, 2006; Szabo & Smyth, 2003; Thackway et al., 1996). As at 1 December 2012, 51 IPAs have been declared in Australia covering 36 million ha, comprising approximately 25 per cent of the NRS (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2012a; see also Hill et al., 2011: 1).

IPAs are part of a global trend to recognise and support protected areas declared and managed by Indigenous people and other local communities. The trend has arisen from Indigenous peoples’ struggles to have their rights in protected areas recognised and a paradigm shift in thinking by non-Indigenous park managers and conservationists. This new paradigm acknowledges the inextricable link between biological diversity and the territories of Indigenous peoples, recognises Indigenous people’s role in shaping and maintaining the environments in which they live, and values systems of Indigenous ecological knowledge for the critical contribution they can make to protected area management (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2004; Clad, 1988; Colchester, 2004; Kothari, 2008; Maffi & Woodley, 2010; Nietschmann, 1992; Stankey, 1989; Stevens, 1997). The IUCN refers to these protected areas as Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs).

There is no legislative basis to the declaration or management of an IPA. It is a voluntary arrangement that impacts neither Indigenous land tenure (freehold and/or native title) nor the traditional rights, interests and activities of the Traditional Owners, who are directly responsible for management of the IPA on their own terms (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2012b; Hill et al., 2011: 4; Langton et al., 2005: 36). The IPA program’s validation of, and support for, Indigenous land ownership and traditional ecological knowledge and resource management, has made it popular with Traditional Owner groups across Australia.

Two IPAs have been declared in Torres Strait: Warul Kawa (Deliverance Island, also known as Leberen) in 2001, Pulu in 2009 and a third declaration, Warrabalgal-Porumagal, is pending. Prior to these declarations, the Torres Strait region had seen little in the way of protected area initiatives. Round Island immediately north of Thursday Island, and Booby Island, a former lighthouse property and significant bird site, form the Round Island Conservation Park, while Possession and Eborac Islands, off Cape York Peninsula, comprise Possession Island National Park; both areas are administered by the Queensland Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. Under the terms of the Torres Strait Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea, a Protected
Zone was established, with environmental management one of its goals (Laffan, 1991). In addition, a Dugong Sanctuary was gazetted in 1987, prohibiting the taking of dugong in a 13,160 km² area in western Torres Strait, including part of the Protected Zone (Commonwealth of Australia, 1987, 2004). These initiatives have taken a largely ‘top-down’ approach.¹ IPAs are a break with past models of protected area management, with Traditional Owners responsible for the declaration and management of their own lands and waters, in ways that work for them (Davies et al., 1999: 60). Indigenous delegates at a national workshop on IPAs held in Alice Springs in April 1997, developed a definition of an IPA as follows:

An Indigenous Protected Area is governed by the continuing responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to care for and protect lands and waters for present and future generations (Environment Australia, 1997: 47).²

As Davies et al. (1999: 60) note, this definition ‘implies that land that has conservation value and cultural significance should be managed in accordance with indigenous customary rights and responsibilities’.

This paper examines Pulu’s significance to the Goemulgal³ and the process by which it was declared an IPA. We document the IPA Plan of Management that the community developed, using a mix of traditional values, Western approaches to protected area management and support from government and other partners, to continue managing their most sacred domain.

**PULU**

Pulu is a small, granite-strewn and sparsely wooded islet lying just off the western shore of Mabuyag. It is located at Latitude 9° 57’ 25” South and Longitude 142° 9’ 46” East (Figs 1, 2). It is roughly rectangular in shape and oriented on a NW-SE axis and measures approximately 570 x 360 m with an area of about 15 ha. Huge granite boulders (*kula*) are scattered along the beaches (*bau*), slopes and hill (*pad*) of the islet, some perched on top of one another. Small sandy coves, enclosed by boulders, are found on the southern, western and northern shores, while mangroves (*thag*) line the eastern margin of the islet.

Pulu supports a range of vegetation communities and at least 198 plant species, which is 15 per cent of the Torres Strait region’s known flora – a surprisingly high figure for a relatively small island (Fell, 2009). It is also home to a range of terrestrial vertebrates including birds, bats, goannas, snakes and other reptiles. As they have since time immemorial, people from Mabuyag utilise the waters around Pulu to fish and dive for *kayar* (Tropical Rock Lobster, *Panilurus ornatus*). They also make trips to the island to harvest *ubar* (Wongai fruit, *Mimusops kaukii*) (Hitchcock et al., 2009; Watson & Hitchcock, 2015).

The islet is described in the Queensland Government’s cadastral mapping system as Lot 27 on Survey Plan TS275 in the Parish of Orman, County of Torres. On 6 July 2000, the Federal Court of Australia determined that native title exists over Mabuyag, Pulu, and other small islets, which is recognition in Australian law of Goemulgal exclusive ownership of their ancestral estate, in accordance with their traditional laws and custom (*Mabuiag People v. Queensland* [2000] FCA 1065). The native title is held by the Goemulgaw (Torres Strait Islanders) Corporation RNTBC (Registered Native Title Body Corporate), on behalf of all Goemulgal.
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FIG. 1. Aerial photograph of Pulu, showing location of cultural heritage sites

On 2 July 2010, the Federal Court of Australia also recognised that Torres Strait Islanders, including the Goemulgal, hold non-exclusive native title rights and interests in the region’s waters (Akiba on behalf of the Torres Strait Islanders of the Regional Seas Claim Group v State of Queensland (No 2) [2010] FCA 643).

Pulu is a sacred islet, the most important cultural place of the Goemulgal. This significance centres on two key sites – the kod (ceremonial complex) and Awgadhalkula, the totemic skull cave. Both sites are central to Goemulgaw clan identity and are revered across western Torres Strait. The kod with its well-preserved shrines of dugong bone mounds and bu (Australian Trumpet, Syrinx aruanus) shell arrangements and associated rock-art was where key ceremonies related to male initiation, mortuary rites, war, and turtle and dugong hunting magic were performed. Awgadhalkula contained skulls from headhunting raids and the sacred emblems of the legendary Mabuyag warrior culture hero Kuyam (Thomas, 1885). Detailed recordings of the kod by Cambridge anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon in 1898 represent the most comprehensive nineteenth century archive of information available for an Australian Indigenous ceremonial site (Haddon, 1898, 1901, 1904a).

Collaborative cultural heritage research on Pulu has focused on archaeological excavation and site mapping at three important places: the kod precinct, Mask Cave and Tiggershark Rockshelter (Baidamau Mudh) (McNiven et al., 2002; McNiven et al., 2006; McNiven et al., 2008; McNiven et al., 2009). Excavations suggest that the kod and the sacred status of Pulu emerged 300-400 years ago. Prior to this status change, Pulu was a place of regular visitation and camping from at least 4,000 years ago. Between 1,500 and possibly 2,500 years ago, visitors to Pulu used finely-made red-slipped pottery, sherd of which were discovered at Mask Cave. This pottery appears to be made from western Torres Strait clays and may well represent Indigenous Australia’s first known pottery tradition (McNiven et al., 2006; see also Wright & Dickinson, 2009).

Pulu is also important as a storied landscape, and as such, a key component of Goemulgaw cultural patrimony. Some of the feats of Kuyam took place there, and it also features in three other Mabuyag stories: ‘Wameal / The Stone that Fell from the Sky’ [Menguyzi Kula], ‘Kamutnab’ and ‘Uga’. Each of these four stories has material manifestations in the form of rocks and boulders viewed as being created by, or evidence of, the actions of various story beings (see Haddon, 1904a, 1904b; Lawrie, 1970; McNiven et al., 2009).

Continuing cultural restrictions on the use of Pulu by the Goemulgal has ensured preservation of the islet’s unique cultural places and associated terrestrial and marine environments. Like the rest of the Goemulgaw ancestral homeland, it is an exemplar of Nietschmann’s (1992: 3) ‘Rule of Indigenous Environments’, which posits a correlation between biological and cultural diversity: ‘where there are indigenous peoples with a homeland there are still biologically rich environments’.4

THE DECISION TO PROCLAIM AN IPA

The Mabuyag community worked for over a decade to establish an IPA over Pulu. Initial pilot funding to explore the possibility of establishing IPAs in Torres Strait was provided by Environment Australia (now Department of Environment) for the Island Coordinating Council (now Torres Strait Islands Regional Council) in 1996-1997 (Davies et al., 1999; Dews et al., 1997; see also Ponte, 1997). As a result of this process, which included community consultation and identification of potential IPA sites, it was decided to focus...
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on establishing two protected areas: Warul Kawa and Pulu. A second round of funding followed in 1998, for additional community visits, surveys of natural and cultural values on Warul Kawa and the establishment of an agreed process for declaring and managing IPAs in the region (Kwan et al., 1999: 18; Kwan et al., 2001: 220-221).

A rapid assessment of Warul Kawa’s environmental and cultural elements took place in October 1999 (Kwan et al., 1999), and the island and surrounding reef flats, an area of some 2,500 ha, was declared as Warul Kawa IPA on 15 February 2001, following consultation with Traditional Owner groups including the Goemulgal (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007; Waia et al., 2001).

Between 1998 and 2001 there were three phases of work to document Pulu’s cultural heritage values and conservation needs. The Goemulgaw Kod, the Mabuyag community’s cultural heritage organisation, worked with external consultants to document the islet’s traditional stories, record oral tradition and archaeological sites, conduct excavations and develop a management plan for the kod (McNiven et al., 2002; McNiven et al., 2004: 83-84). Despite this promising start, the Pulu IPA concept was not progressed for some years due to factors outside of the community’s control. Nonetheless, the Goemulgal did not lose sight of the goal of protected area status for Pulu. This focus reflected their ongoing commitment to protect the islet and its sacred values and an understanding, based on their experience of co-management of Warul Kawa, that the IPA program is consistent with, and respectful of, Goemulgaw and Torres Strait Islander cultural values, traditions, governance processes and sovereignty.

In 2008, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) provided funding to reinvigorate the declaration process, by engaging consultants to support the Goemulgal to conduct collaborative scientific surveys and develop a culturally appropriate Plan of Management. This process was necessary in order to progress Pulu IPA from a consultation phase to the declaration phase, at which time additional resources would become available to the community for future management tasks.

Over one hundred years ago, Haddon described how Goemulgal managed Pulu:

The sacred island of Pulu, associated as it was with initiation and death ceremonies and with some of the exploits of Kwoiam, contained no more sacred spot than the cave of Augudalkula. No woman might approach the place; its custody was entrusted to the oldest and most influential men of Mabuiag, the tumaiaawai-mabaegal, that is, ‘the watching men,’ or watchers (Haddon & Wilkin, 1904: 368).

Goemulgal continue to look after the island today, and wanted to combine these practices, based on their own traditional laws and customs, with Western approaches to protected area management. To this end, they established the Pulu IPA Committee in 2008 to progress their plans, comprising six members: one member from Goemulgaw Kod, one member from the RNTBC and one representative from each of the major totemic clan districts on Mabuyag: Goemu, Maidh, Panay/Dabangay and Wagadagam/Mui5.

In June 2008 community consultations took place on Mabuyag and a draft Plan of Management was developed. At public meetings, workshops with the IPA Committee, and one-on-one consultations with Traditional Owners, a range of objectives, priorities and activities for the management of the cultural and natural resources of Pulu were identified (see below).
The community also supported baseline research in collaboration with the Mabuygiw Rangers (the Mabuyag Ranger Program). A cultural heritage survey of Pulu in November 2008 identified fifteen new sites across the islet, including burials, rock-art, middens, artefact scatters (including post-contact materials) and a stone cairn. A multidisciplinary expedition followed in April 2009, in which the Rangers worked with Western scientists – an archaeologist, anthropologist, geologist, botanist and zoologist – several with prior experience working with the Goemulgal – to document, in broad outline, the natural values of Pulu. An additional rock-art site with previously unrecorded motif types for Pulu was also discovered during this assessment, demonstrating the diversity of cultural heritage site types to be found there, and indicating that more remains to be learned about its cultural values and history (Hitchcock & McNiven, 2009).

The results of the surveys were incorporated into a draft Pulu IPA Plan of Management. A final version was then considered by the Goemulgal during a public meeting held at Mabuyag on 17 April 2009, at which time the community made the decision to ratify the Plan and declare Pulu an IPA (TSRA, 2009a).

The Pulu IPA will be managed in accordance with the following IUCN Protected Area Management Categories (IUCN, 1994; see also Dudley, 2008), in recognition of its status as a site of high cultural and biological diversity:

**IUCN Category III – Natural Monument:** Protected Area managed for conservation of specific natural features. Area containing one or more specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

**IUCN Category V – Protected Landscape/Seascape:** Protected Areas managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation. Area of land, with coast and seas as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, cultural and/or ecological value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

**GOEMULGAW VALUES FOR MANAGEMENT**


Prose translation: In Goemulgaw conservation, you will find humility, ancient ways and dignified inheritance of leadership.

Goemulgaw conservation philosophy is founded on mina pawa (appropriate and respectful ways), in particular, respect of traditional values and the collective knowledge and wisdom of Elders. This respect extends to the responsibility for ongoing active management of their ancestral domain to honour the ancestors and spirits of places. Such management also helps ensure the spiritual and material nourishment and collective well-being of current and future generations of Goemulgal. As Islanders and a sea people, Goemulgal have always sought to build alliances based upon mutual respect and trust. In this sense, the Goemulgal have embraced the opportunity to work in partnership with various outside agencies, through the Pulu IPA Committee, to maintain the cultural and natural values of Pulu.
Goemulgaw principles for management are based on the islet’s singular cultural significance, as a place of authority, knowledge, story, hunting magic ceremony, mortuary ritual, initiation, dance and performance. The people wish their perspectives and worldview to structure and guide future management of Pulu. At the same time, the community acknowledges and respects the information and benefits that flow from collaborative partnerships with outside others, and looks forward to combining the various approaches to safeguard their islet, as Goemulgal have for thousands of years.

During workshops held at Mabuyag to develop a community-oriented Plan of Management for the IPA, Goemulgal identified a number of traditional concepts, philosophies and practices, and Pulu-specific cultural values, which would guide them through the consultation, planning and declaration process, and future management of the IPA:

- **Muruyguw ngulayg** – ancestral knowledge
- **Apasin** – respect, humility and humbleness
- **Buway garkaziw-a-kuykumabaygaw niyaylag** – the sitting place of authority and leadership
- **Uthuylag kerngew** – the sleeping place of the initiates
- **Yaburaw sagulaw lag** – the place of dance, including the Yabur dance
- **Adhiw lag-adhilnga** – the story place
- **Goemulgaw kupay** – the Goemulgaw worldview

The resulting Plan (Hitchcock *et al.*, 2009) combines these traditional principles with current information on the cultural and natural heritage values of the islet, from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, to present a way forward for Goemulgal to continue to look after this special place, while always being respectful of Goemulgaw Elders, and the cultural lore, traditions and practices they pass on to future generations. It also sets out the management and conservation projects that the community wish to implement there, listing planned activities according to three priority levels, to be actioned within a five year period:

- **Immediate Priority Actions** – to be completed within the next 12-18 months;
- **High Priority Actions** – within the next three years;
- **Moderate Priority Actions** – within the next five years.

In 2009 the TSRA was successful in an application under the Commonwealth Government’s Caring for Our Country initiative, to deliver a Torres Strait Indigenous Ranger Program across the region (TSRA, 2009b). There are currently 45 rangers employed through the TSRA’s Land and Sea Management Unit in 14 outer island communities (Damian Miley, pers. comm., 2014; TSRA, 2014). Mabuyag was the first community island to establish a program: the Mabuygiw Ranger Program was officially launched on 18 May 2009, and three rangers – a Senior Ranger and two Rangers – are currently employed (Anonymous, 2009). In addition to a range of tasks across Mabuyag and the other parts of the Goemulgaw estate, the Rangers are responsible for conducting the on-the-ground works listed in the Pulu Plan of Management, working under the guidance...
of the Pulu IPA Committee (Fig. 3). The funding and planning cycle of the ranger program dovetails conveniently with the five-year-long scope of work in the Plan of Management.

The Plan addresses the following topics: visitation management, general visitation and research protocols, fire management, cultural heritage, terrestrial and marine environment, interpretation and education, and capacity building.

**VISITATION MANAGEMENT**

The Plan establishes culturally appropriate visitation protocols in relation to Pulu. The Goemulgal wish to continue their management policy of limiting visitation to the islet to small parties, accompanied by senior members of the community. Such guidance will ensure that appropriate behaviour is maintained and that inadvertent visitation does not take place to exceptional sites such as Awgadhlalkula. Visits to the interior of the island by Goemulgal and invited outsiders must be sanctioned by Mabuyag Elders, and appropriate Goemulgal (as identified by the IPA Committee) should announce their visit to ancestors/spirits upon their arrival, and introduce their guest or guests. Dogs are prohibited from the island, and butchering of dugong and turtle is also not permitted.
At no time is it appropriate for non-Goemulgal to visit Pulu without the consent of the Mabuyag community. Unsanctioned visits by non-local peoples, such as landings by mariners, are rare. However, with more infrastructure developments occurring on Mabuyag, and the presence of associated contractors, inappropriate and potentially damaging visitation to Pulu may increase in frequency in the future. Unsanctioned and unguided visitation to the kod ceremonial complex can jeopardise the spiritual significance of the site and potentially damage fragile features such as bu shells via treadage (McNiven et al., 2002: 75).

In order to manage visitation to this sacred islet, the Pulu IPA Committee have decided to zone the islet into two categories, Red and Yellow. Visits to red zone areas require permission from Elders, through the IPA Committee. At present, four important traditional cultural places and significant archaeological sites have been designated red zone areas:

**KOD PRECINCT**

The kod precinct includes the kod proper (taking in the sacred bu shell shrines and clan fireplaces, and the dugong bone mounds Koey Sibuy and Moegi Sibuy), sugu (dancing ground) and surrounding rock-art sites. One of the paintings is the only known rock-art site in Australia showing a man playing a drum. The kod was established 300-400 years ago and is underlain by an old village site (midden) dating back to 1,400 years ago (McNiven et al., 2009).

**AWGADHALKULA**

This cave site was used between 1,500 and nearly 4,000 years ago and contains the earliest evidence of human use of Pulu. It is also one of the oldest archaeological sites in Torres Strait showing marine specialisation in terms of turtle hunting and reef fishing. Most significantly, the site revealed locally made red-slipped pottery dating back to 2,500 years ago. This is the first evidence for pre-contact pottery manufacture by Indigenous Australians (McNiven et al., 2006).

Areas identified as ‘Yellow zone’ include beaches and the intertidal area (including mangroves) surrounding Pulu, which have been identified as places that may be visited by Goemulgal without special permission from community Elders. Zoning of additional areas of Pulu awaits the conduct of more comprehensive surveys of its cultural and natural values, and will feature in a revised edition of the Plan of Management.
RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

Research activities undertaken by outsiders must be collaborative, and comply with Goemulgaw Research Protocols (to be finalised). The progress and results of such investigations must also be made available to Goemulgal in appropriate formats (e.g. plain English reports, posters etc.)

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Fire management has two principle concerns – conserving the spiritual importance of the islet and preserving the fabric of cultural sites. In terms of spiritual significance, Haddon and Wilkin (1904: 370) were informed by senior Goemulgal in 1898 that:

If a bush fire arose at Pulu the men always stamped it out with their feet, and not as they usually did by beating it out with branches – as the leaves on the trees signified the people of Mabuiag, and if the leaves were burnt a number of men would be killed in the next fight.

Fires have been recorded as a major destructive process impacting bu shell arrangements at the kod (McNiven et al., 2002: 74). The Plan of Management sets out general fire management protocols. Under normal circumstances, people are not permitted to light fires on Pulu, in accordance with traditional belief and management. Fires can only be lit with the permission of Mabuyag Elders, through the IPA Committee. Identified future work activities include developing a fire response action plan for the islet in association with the Mabuygiv Rangers, and ground-truthing of the existing map of vegetation communities on Pulu to allow modelling of potential impact of fires on local cultural resources and flora and fauna.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Goemulgal wish to continue to protect the cultural values and associated culturally significant sites on Pulu. Bushfires, storm surges, sea level rise, pest species and termite mounds (which can cover and damage rock art) are all potential threats to the islet’s cultural heritage, which need to be monitored and responded to appropriately. Pulu also has a number of burial sites, which Goemulgal wish to see protected and respected.

The community is also keen to learn more about the cultural heritage and history of Pulu and surrounding islets, through collaborative cultural heritage surveys and archaeological excavations. This work must comply with Goemulgaw Research Protocols (to be finalised). The Pulu Culture Site Mapping Project (McNiven et al., 2002) contained detailed information on many cultural sites on Pulu, and included recommendations for ongoing conservation and management. However, recent surveys on the islet (Hitchcock and McNiven, 2009; Hitchcock et al., 2009) suggest that additional sites will be recorded in the future.

Additional culture heritage surveys of Pulu are therefore required to produce a comprehensive inventory of sites and their cultural significance values and conservation needs. The results of this work will also allow for completion of appropriate visitation zonation of the islet. Assessments of the need for site management works at culturally significant sites, including rock-art sites, are also required. Since the declaration of the IPA, the TSRA has made funding available for minor, but necessary, site management works at Tigershark Rockshelter (TSRA, 2010-2011: 35), and it is expected that additional funding will be forthcoming in later years.

A related work item is analysis of the potential impacts on cultural heritage of
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**TERRESTRIAL AND MARINE ENVIRONMENTS**

There is a need for greater understanding about the natural values of Pulu and surrounding islets, as well as near- and off-shore reefs and sea grass beds. It is also important that information on terrestrial and marine biodiversity is obtained for adjacent islets and waters as a baseline for potential expansion of the Pulu IPA in the future. The Goemulgaw want these surveys to be undertaken as a collaborative research effort that incorporates Goemulgaw traditional ecological knowledge and ethnotaxonomy. The Plan notes that all mapping and assessment work must comply also with Goemulgaw Research Protocols (to be finalised) and must be approved by the Goemulgaw RNTBC and the Pulu IPA Committee, and involve the Mabuygiw Rangers. Furthermore, the progress and results of this research must be distributed in an appropriate form to Goemulgaw (e.g. plain English reports, posters etc.).

Although the recent multi-disciplinary survey of Pulu resulted in documentation of important natural and cultural values, the Plan identifies the need for more comprehensive fauna and flora research. Surveys for weeds, pest species and marine debris are also required, as are the development and implementation of management strategies for these problems. The plan also highlights the value of detailed beach and reef flat mapping as a basis for modelling the potential impacts of projected sea level rise from global warming on cultural and natural values.

**INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION**

The Goemulgaw want to continue to pass on their knowledge of Pulu, and its special management requirements, to future generations of their people. They also want to share information about the islet with others, on their own terms, guarding that which is sacred. As such, the IPA Committee will work with the Mabuygiw Rangers to develop an Awareness Strategy for the Pulu IPA to provide culturally appropriate interpretative and educational outcomes for Goemulgaw and non-Goemulgaw alike. This strategy will see the Rangers give talks to Mabuyag school students, outlining the IPA management plan and activities. There will also be a program of school student excursions to Pulu, and fostering of school student education and participation in IPA research programs.

Interpretive signage has recently (2012) been erected at Pulu and on Mabuyag, alerting outsiders to Pulu’s protected area status, cultural significance and visitation protocols. A management protocols booklet, for Goemulgaw and other western Torres Strait communities, will also be produced in the near future.

A traditional knowledge exchange forum was also held on Pulu Islet in 2012. An audiovisual record (DVD) of the event has been produced, which will help to showcase and promote the IPA’s natural and cultural values and the role of the Mabuygiw Rangers in its management. During the forum, senior custodians narrated Pulu’s stories, history, and customary laws and traditions, creating an ethnographic, audiovisual account for the benefit of current and future generations.
CAPACITY BUILDING

The declaration of the Pulu IPA and the operation of the Mabuygiw Ranger program through the TSRA’s Land and Sea Management Unit will provide the Goemulgal with new opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to enable them to continue to monitor and manage their sacred islet, and indeed all Goemulgaw lands and seas. Wherever possible, the Rangers and IPA Committee will work to establish partnerships with other agencies to access relevant funding and training opportunities to build their capacity as protected area managers. Identified initiatives in the Plan include training and relevant equipment for the IPA Committee and Rangers, establishment of relationships with key agencies, acquisition of funding for identified cultural heritage and biodiversity studies and management schemes, and attendance at the annual National Indigenous Land and Sea Management Conference. The community would also like to establish an architect-designed, culturally- and environmentally-appropriate Ranger outstation (comprising shelter, solar power, water tank and catchment) on Pulu, to aid the implementation of conservation and management works and programs.

CONCLUSION

In the recent past, securing long-term funding commitments from governments was identified as the biggest challenge to the IPA concept (Langton et al., 2005: 37; Smyth, 2006: 19; Szabo & Smyth, 2003: 159). Although annual funding grants continue to be made available by the Commonwealth Government for governance and management, a 2006 review found that IPAs do not receive as much funding, proportionally, as other components of the NRS, and that what funding is available is largely for basic, short-term land management projects. The review called for enhancement of the IPA budget and streamlining of grant administration (Gilligan, 2006; see also Altman & Jackson, 2008; Ross et al., 2009). A number of successful IPAs have diversified their funding sources to include a range of governmental and non-governmental sources, to supplement the ‘core funding’ provided by the IPA program. While this approach can allow for an expansion of IPA operations, it can also impose additional administrative demands on local managers (Smyth, 2007: 119-120, 2008: 100-101).

The Goemulgaw vision for the Pulu IPA sees their protected area expanding, in stages, to include other nearby islets and surrounding areas of sea country, encompassing part of Kuyku Pad (the home reef) and seagrass beds. For Goemulgal, like many other maritime Indigenous peoples, ‘the separation of land and sea into terrestrial and marine protected areas is contrary to cultural beliefs and responsibilities’ (Smyth, 2006: 20). However, establishing IPAs that include marine areas can present challenges. Kwan et al. (2001: 220) suggest that sea country IPAs can be complicated to delineate in Torres Strait on account of the region’s shallow waters, shoals, reefs and sandbanks. Smyth (2008: 106) contends that:

the separation of national protected area frameworks into terrestrial and marine systems, the stringent criteria for inclusion [of IPAs] into the NRSMPA [National Reserve System of Marine Protected Areas] and the absence of Indigenous participation in the establishment and development of both the NRS and the NRSMPA provide significant barriers to the recognition and support for Sea Country IPAs.
However, the key issues for government recognition of sea country IPAs appear to be:

1. that an IPA ‘is an area of Indigenous-owned land or sea’ (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities, 2012a, emphasis added), and

2. that the Traditional Owners must be able to demonstrate that they can ‘manage and protect the Indigenous Protected Area by legal or other effective means’ (effective means can include traditional management practices and customary law) (Hill et al. 2011: 9).7

This situation presents problems for a program where the basis for recognition of, and support for, the protected area is ownership (secure tenure) and its corollary: primary responsibility for its management and operation. Most sea country in Australia cannot be owned outright by Traditional Owners. This means that all other stakeholders – e.g. State and Federal governments, commercial and recreational fishermen – would need to be consulted and agree to the declaration of an IPA over offshore areas where, for example, non-exclusive native title has been recognised (see Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities, 2012b). Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners’ management of sea country could be difficult to achieve in the face of competing interests, priorities and forms of management.8

Capacity building and the professional development of owners and managers have been identified as other issues that may impact on the success of the IPA program (Szabo & Smyth, 2003: 161). According to Langton et al. (2005: 38), there have been positive outcomes in these areas: ‘the declaration of IPAs and the provision of training and capacity building for IPA managers and annual financial assistance have in many instances had the effect of empowering communities and providing significant environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits.’ The TSRA, through the Land and Sea Management Unit’s Environmental Management Program, is committed to the support and progression of IPAs in Torres Strait (TSRA, 2009c, 2014). The Torres Strait Ranger Program it administers has substantial Commonwealth funding, and a system of ranger training and mentorship is now in place, which provides support to the Mabuygiw Rangers, including their work activities on Pulu.

A recent review of collaborative approaches to natural resource management, including IPAs in Australia, identified the program as ‘very much controlled by Western bureaucratic and knowledge structures’, and as such, not a genuine example of joint management (Ross et al., 2011: 213). It is true that the program is a combination of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches. The Pulu IPA, however, has to date demonstrated that Goemulgaw epistemologies, values and practices are respected and are, indeed, key components of the islet’s management. Further, the program has already seen funding committed to some of the activities identified in the Plan of Management: works that would otherwise not have been possible. This has included a knowledge exchange forum on the islet in November 2011, between Rangers and Elders, which involved video documentation of cultural sites and traditional ecological knowledge (TSRA, 2011). With long experience of dealing with governments, the Goemulgaw are aware of these issues, and have entered into a bicultural management regime for Pulu with a mix of optimism, realism and pride. Should the program not meet their expectations, they know that they can withdraw from it at any time. For now, the Goemulgaw are confident of their ability to manage and operate the Pulu IPA, building on the strength and continuity of Goemulgaw tradition, knowledge and
practice – in particular, their status and role as stewards of this sacred islet – and their long history of collaborative research with outsiders, begun in 1898 with the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits.

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ENDNOTES

1. The establishment of the Dugong Sanctuary was not an entirely ‘top down’ approach, as it involved consultation with Islanders in western Torres Strait (see Johannes & MacFarlane, 1991: 49-50; Williams, 1994: 43-44).

2. Compare this with the Australian Government’s definition: ‘An Indigenous Protected Area is an area of Indigenous-owned land or sea where traditional owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian Government to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation’ (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2012a). This definition places the emphasis on the agreement between the Government and Traditional Owners, while that of the Alice Springs workshop places the emphasis on Indigenous governance, and is more in keeping with the IUCN definition of ICCAs as ‘natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means’ (IUCN, 2003).

3. Goemulgal is the ethnonym (name for the people of Mabuyag); Goemulgaw is the possessive case.

4. Also known as Nietschmann’s Biocultural Axiom: ‘the concept of symbiotic conservation is that biological and cultural diversity are mutually dependent and geographically coterminous’ (Nietschmann, 1992:2; see also Nietschmann, 1991). For an overview of the emerging field of biocultural diversity, see Maffi & Woodley (2010).

5. The foundational Committee comprises: Terrence Whap (RNTBC Chair), Cygnet Repu (Goemulgaw Kod), William Gizu (Goemu), Bani Lee (Maidh), Thomas Mene (Panai/Dabangai) and Crossfield Manuel (Wagadagam/Mui).

6. A key outcome of this work was precise mapping of the vegetation communities on Pulu (Fell, 2009), with reference to earlier mapping produced through interpretation of aerial photography in light of field surveys on Mabuyag (Stanton et al., 2008; see also Stanton & Fell, 2015). This mapping will inform future management on the islet.

7. This is based on the IUCN (1994) definition of a protected area: ‘a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal and other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values’.

8. Warul Kawa IPA does in fact include offshore areas, below the island’s High Water Mark (the surrounding reef flats) (Waia et al., 2001).
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