



(ipa) indigenous protected areas newsletter



Dr Sharman Stone speaking at the launch of Toogimbie IPA in March 2004.
Photo: I. Haskovec

A Message from Dr Sharman Stone, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage

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I am very pleased to be able to send everyone greetings through this, the first Indigenous Protected Areas Newsletter. First, let me congratulate all of the IPA managers and their organisations and partners who are doing such fantastic work on their IPAs right across Australia. The Government recognises the value of your contribution to Australia's national effort to protect and conserve the biodiversity and cultural heritage that are such an important part of our national heritage.

I have had the opportunity to visit a number of the IPAs and have been struck by the strong commitment of the Indigenous custodians to protecting their lands and their aspirations for future generations

to keep on with this important work. I am also aware of the disadvantages that many communities face in regard to access to the services which are needed to ensure healthy and sustainable communities remain on their country to manage it for all Australians.

The Commonwealth Government is committed to supporting the management of Indigenous Protected Areas into the future as part of our National Reserve System. I look forward to visiting many more of the IPAs in the future.

Sharman Stone
Parliamentary Secretary
to the Minister for the
Environment and Heritage



Sharing lessons in Alice Springs

Indigenous Protected Area managers from around Australia gathered in Alice Springs in May 2003 to share their experiences and discuss issues as part of the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Program.

The IPA Program has been operating since 1996, but this was the first time that the IPA managers had come together to discuss the challenges confronting them and the special features of their projects. The group of around 70 participants spent three days presenting details of their activities and sharing their experiences with each other to help strengthen their collective and individual plans.

The IPA Program supports Indigenous Australians to care for their country and in the process to pass on their knowledge of the land to the next generation. The program helps Indigenous landowners to manage their lands and to protect natural and cultural features for the benefit of all Australians. Traditional landowners are working with a wide range of partners and Government agencies to protect their country by implementing management plans focussing on practical work to conserve natural and cultural features and biological diversity.

Many of the IPA projects have an underlying theme of reconciliation, and are demonstrating how successful activities can be when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians work together as partners to achieve a shared goal. And while many of the projects are undertaken in isolation, they all share the same theme – a love of the land and of our country. ●



IPA Managers get together in Alice Springs in May 2003.
Photo: I. Haskovec

What is an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)?

An area of land over which the traditional Aboriginal owners have declared their intent to manage the land for the conservation of biodiversity and cultural values. The IPA program links the cultural priorities of Indigenous Australians together with biodiversity goals to ensure protected areas are conserved in accordance with the land management aspirations of Indigenous landowners.

What are the goals of the IPA program?

- To assist Indigenous landowners to establish and manage Indigenous Protected Areas on their lands as part of the National Reserve System.
- To support Indigenous engagement in the management of existing protected areas by promoting cooperative management arrangements.
- To promote and integrate Indigenous ecological and cultural knowledge into contemporary land management practices.

How are IPAs declared?

Indigenous landowners who wish to manage their lands for conservation are encouraged to participate in the IPA Program and to consider declaring their lands as protected areas. Funding and support is provided to:

- assist landowners to consider the implications of establishing an IPA (this could involve holding community meetings and seeking advice on legal, cultural or conservation aspects to ensure that informed decisions are made);
- develop a management plan for the area which identifies the Indigenous Community's land management aspirations, potential threats to the values of the land, and management activities such as weed eradication, feral animal control and cultural heritage conservation activities;
- declare the land as an IPA;
- implement the management plan; and
- monitor the effectiveness and outcomes of their land management activities.

Information for planning

The Indigenous Protected Area Program has made some big achievements in its short history. Today, the total area covered by IPA declarations is 18% of Australia's protected areas.

As well as funding support to participate in the Program, there's a big emphasis on sharing information that helps everyone involved. Bruce Rose, Program Manager with the Department of the Environment and Heritage, says a key issue is how to mix Indigenous cultural issues with conservation and biodiversity.

'There are a number of issues that government and landowners need to work though and many of them have a legal basis,' he says. 'What's important is to make sure traditional owners have access to the information and the training they need to make their IPAs work for them.'

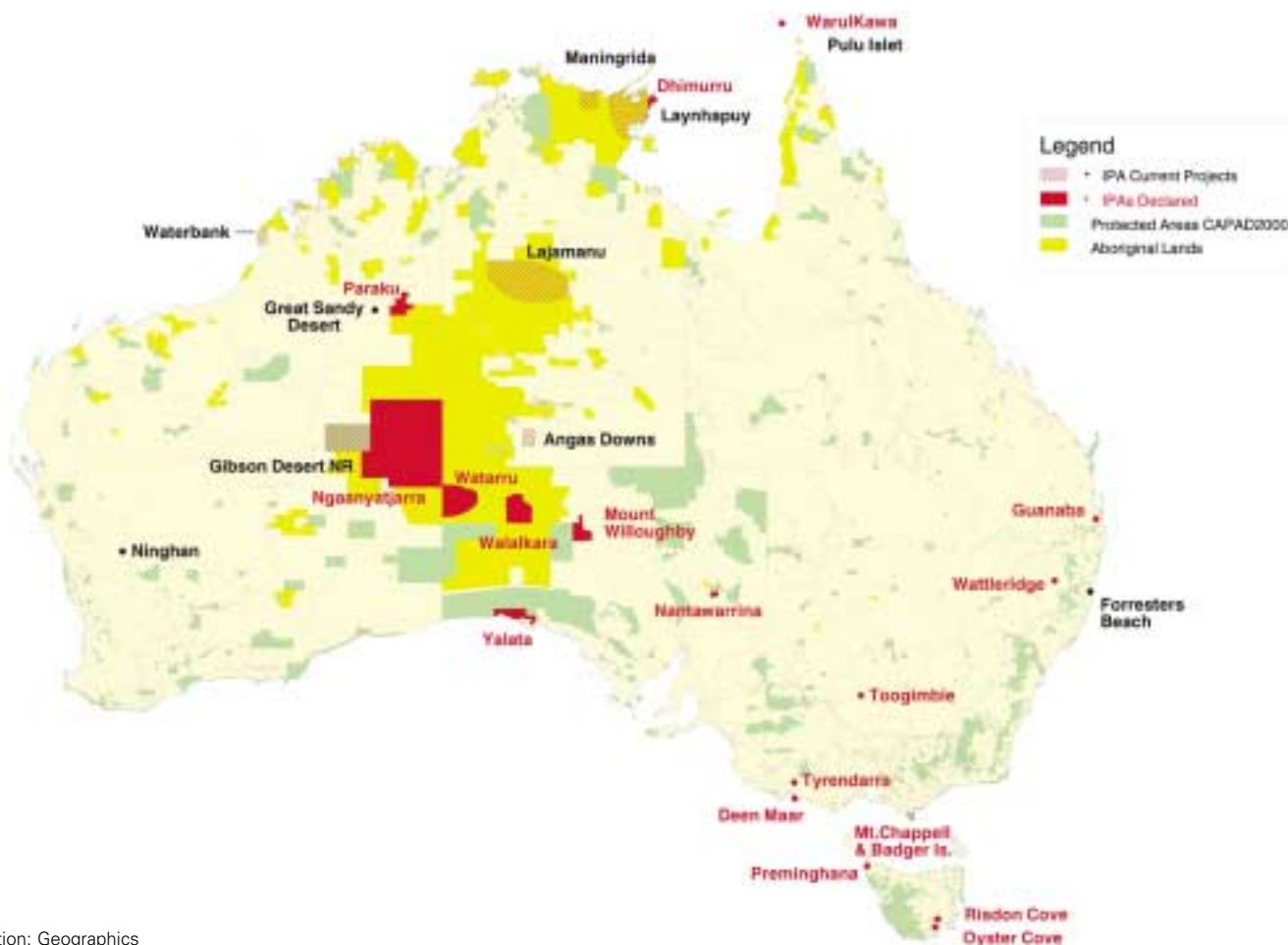
Key planning issues

Bruce says there are five top planning issues to be tackled for every IPA:

– The rights of traditional landowners and their enforcement powers. 'It's important for them to ensure the country is being accessed and treated properly by others.'

- National Heritage Trust regional planning and funding. 'There are impacts and opportunities here for landowners to be aware of.'
- Tourism and other business building. 'With the right planning and advice, there are many opportunities to develop business initiatives.'
- Managing wildlife. 'Protecting native species and managing feral animals.'
- Training. 'We have to make sure that landowners are trained in all of these areas.'

Indigenous Protected Areas of Australia – May 2004



Projection: Geographics
Sources: CAPAD2002, AUSLIG Land Tenure
Produced by ERIN, May 2004

Working together to build skills

The Ngarang-Wal Gold Coast Aboriginal Association, which owns the Guanaba IPA, is working to protect a parcel of land for its elders and restore it to its original beauty. 'We really want a haven for our elders — our elders always come first. We had trouble getting the project up and running in the start, but by staying united we proved we can help each other to reach our goal,' says Guanaba project officer Tony Dillon.

'It's a bit like a salvage operation,' says Tony. 'Indigenous people represent about 1% of the City of Gold Coast's population and we're working to protect just under 100 hectares of land under this IPA. We're determined to protect and enhance the biodiversity of our property and the surrounding areas.'

He says funding from the Department of the Environment and Heritage as part of the IPA Program helps Guanaba to 'keep on keeping on the land. We're working to conserve this area for its traditional owners and we're working in partnership with many people and organisations to achieve our goals.'

Guanaba is located between reserves and privately owned land along the foothills of Mount Tambourine. The group hopes to purchase another tract of land adjoining the Guanaba property to ensure it too is protected from future development.

Tony says other groups looking to form IPAs need to start with a steering committee. 'People told us you can't mix black and white on the committee, but the mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together makes us really strong. Everyone wants to pitch in and help out and everyone has different talents.' Three rangers, two archaeologists and an architect are just some of the skills available as part of the committee, which helped the Land Council and the elders to revise and finalise the Guanaba IPA management plan last year.



Rainforest vegetation along the creek at Guanaba IPA.
Photo: B. Rose

Aside from ensuring community elders can access their country, a key goal is to ensure training is on the agenda so Indigenous community members can become rangers on their own land and skilled at land management activities such as improving water quality and weed eradication. 'Our goals are clear and it's really great that we're starting to achieve them,' Tony says. 'My advice to other groups is to get a good steering committee and a management plan together, then you'll be cooking with gas.' 🍲



Removing weeds such as lantana is a high priority for Guanaba IPA. Photo: B. Rose

Australia's first IPA

South Australia can lay claim to Australia's first IPA and one of only five environmental projects in Australia to be recognised by a Global 500 award from the United Nations in 2000.

The Nepabunna community at Nantawarrina recognised the disastrous state of their country in the early 90s and with help from the South Australian Lands Trust set out to stop severe soil erosion caused by goats, donkeys and overstocking. Feral animals had destroyed much of the native vegetation, and eradication and fencing were major priorities in the effort to preserve the country.

Project manager Ian Johnson says the first talk about an IPA started around 1995, but the Nepabunna people were unsure what it would mean or how they would benefit. 'We decided to go ahead with the first stage, which helped us to develop a management plan, produce some signs and remove feral animals,' he says. 'We also began rehabilitating the land.'

Discussion about the IPA concept continued until 1998 when the community decided to declare Nantawarrina as an IPA, a proud moment and one that Ian says was a big step forward. 'Since we started, we've been training our people in many areas including environmental management, fencing, safe chemical handling, tourism, feral animal control and identifying endangered species.' Nantawarrina was also declared an IPA to ensure that the community's commitment to its cultural heritage and lands could be protected.

'We hope to reintroduce some of our native animals including possums, kangaroo rats and the little black wallabies,' he says. 'Hopefully the birds will also come back to the area.'

The United Nation's Global 500 award was presented to the community in 2000, and the following year the then Minister for the Environment, Senator Robert Hill, travelled to Nantawarrina to congratulate the people and to present the Nepabunna community with a special certificate of achievement. In 2002 the community also won the Flinders Ranges Bounceback award for its management of the area.

'It's a lot of hard work, but we are really proud of what we've achieved and of how far we have come,' Ian says. 'Now we want to work with other communities who hope to start their own IPAs and support them with their projects.' 🍷



Protecting fragile ecosystems from feral animals is a high priority for Nantawarrina IPA. Photo: I. Haskovec

The Newest IPAs

Tyrendarra was officially declared as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) on 12 December at a function attended by Dr Sharman Stone, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, who signed the declaration on behalf of the Australian Government. The new IPA was registered on the Collaborative Australian Protected Area Database (CAPAD) from that date. Tyrendarra is the second IPA to be declared in Victoria.

Tyrendarra was purchased in 1998 by the ATSIC Regional Council on behalf of Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation. The property covers 248 ha in the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion, an area rated as Very High Priority for the creation of new conservation reserves, and has significant natural and cultural heritage values. Tyrendarra includes important remnants of Indigenous engineering works involving weirs, channels and eel traps as well as the remains of circular stone dwellings indicating intensive occupation and aquaculture. Tyrendarra is located on Darlot Creek, which flows from Lake Condah situated 20 km further north.

Funding from the IPA Program for the coming year will support Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation to implement their management plan for the IPA. Planned work includes fencing repair, upgrade of walking tracks, installation of signage, weed and feral animal control, and developing a revegetation program. Work will also be undertaken on the conservation of the unique cultural heritage of the property by protecting the remnant stone structures from further deterioration.

Toogimbie became the second IPA in New South Wales when it was formally declared at a ceremony on 5 March. Toogimbie is a 4858 ha property on the Murrumbidgee River about 40 km west of Hay owned and managed by the Nari Nari Tribal Council. The property contains important remnants of *Lignum* (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*) wetland,

Dhimurru – leading the way in the NT

a vegetation type not currently protected in any existing national reserve. The 35 km of Murrumbidgee River frontage on the property also supports remnants of River Red Gum forest. Toogimbie is in the Riverina bioregion, an area rated as High Priority for the creation of new conservation reserves. ●



This eel smoking tree is part of the rich cultural heritage of Tyrendarra IPA. Photo: B. Rose



River Red Gum forest on the Murrumbidgee River at Toogimbie IPA. Photo: I. Haskovec

Share your copy of IPA Newsletter with as many people as possible. If you know someone who would like to receive the IPA Newsletter, please ask them to send their name and address to Community Information Unit GPO Box 787 CANBERRA ACT 2601 or E-mail ciu@deh.gov.au

If you would like more information about the Indigenous Protected Areas Program, please contact the Community Information Unit on 1800 065 823.

Website: www.deh.gov.au/indigenous/ipa

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Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together is the key to the success of Dhimurru IPA in the Northern Territory. The Dhimurru experience is a model for the IPA program and it was the first IPA to be declared in the Northern Territory (November 2000).

The Dhimurru IPA is located in East Arnhem Land and covers around 100,000 hectares of land, which is owned as Aboriginal Freehold Title under the Northern Territory's *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976*. Dhimurru receives support from several sources, including the Natural Heritage Trust and the mining company Alcan, which it uses to help with the management of the IPA. Dhimurru also manages a permit system to control access to designated recreation areas within the IPA.

Yolngu elders believe that it is vitally important for the future to make sure the young people know the best way to look after the land. Management strategies are developed in consultation with senior community members and Dhimurru employs traditional owners as Rangers to undertake management activities. ●

A lasting legacy

We would like to acknowledge the recent and sad departure of Mr H.N. Mununggiritj. Mr Mununggiritj passed away in January 2004. Mr Mununggiritj was a central figure in the establishment of the Dhimurru IPA and an advocate for the IPA program nationally through his role on the IPA Advisory Group. The legacy of his work will benefit all Australians.



Managing sea country issues is very important for many coastal communities in the Northern Territory. Dhimurru Rangers work with the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory to undertake crocodile and turtle surveys and assist with turtle recovery work (inset). Photos: B. Rose and Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation (inset).