

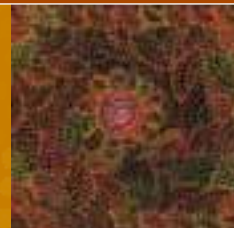
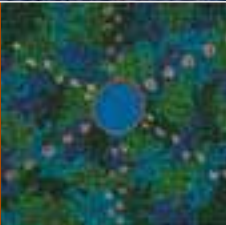


Australian Government
Department of the Environment and Heritage



The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme

2006 Evaluation by Brian Gilligan





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Yirralka ranger removing ghost net, Laynhapuy IPA.



*Tjukula Munu Kukaku Tjina
(Waterhole and Animals)
– Eunice Nungarayi Woods.*



*Nganampa Nguru (Our Land)
– Eunice Nungarayi Woods.*



*Ngura Wirura Kanyini (Caring
for Country) – Eunice Nungarayi
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Photo credits **Top:** Mt Willoughby IPA.

Middle: Young girl from Ngaanyatjarra IPA – Jo Miller.

Bottom: Bush tucker, Anindilyakwa IPA.

Economic analyses by
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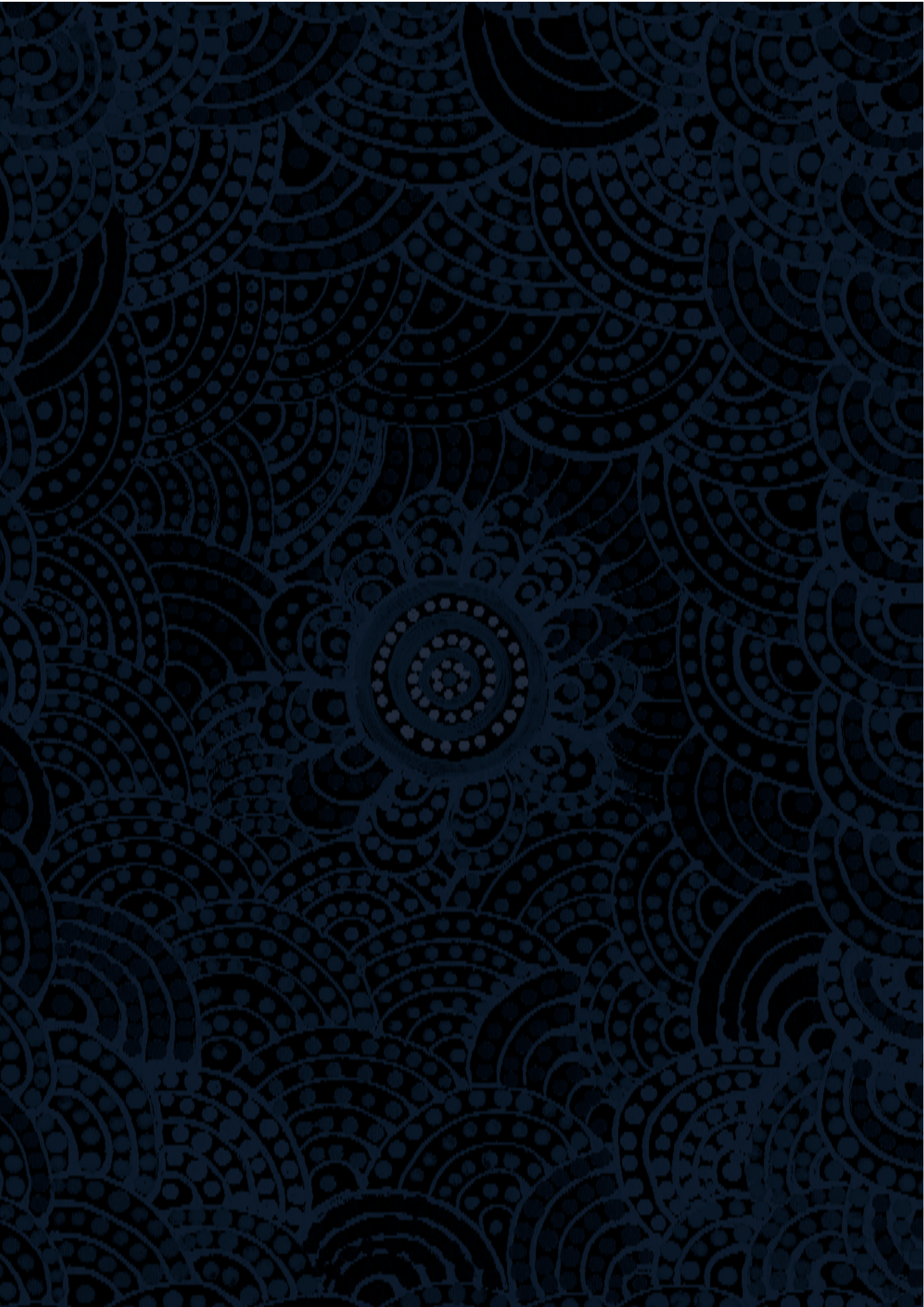


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Abbreviations

AGLMF	Australia Government Land Management Facilitators
CAR	Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative
CDEP	Community Development Employment Programme
CEPANCRM	Contract Employment Program for Aborigines in Natural and Cultural Resource Management
CLC	Central Land Council
DEH	Department of the Environment and Heritage
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre
ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILMF	Indigenous Land Management Facilitator
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature / World Conservation Union
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NHT	National Heritage Trust
NIS	National Investment Stream of the National Heritage Trust
NLP	National Landcare Program
NRS	National Reserve System
NRSP	National Reserve System Programme
NRM	Natural Resource Management
(RPA)	Regional Partnership Agreement
SRA	Shared Responsibility Agreement
TWS	The Wilderness Society
TALSC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council
TAC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Council
WA CALM	Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature – Australia



Executive Summary



Photo credits **Top:** Ninghan IPA, WA.
Middle: Performance of Garma Bunggul in
Dhimurru IPA, NT. **Bottom:** Wulain ranger,
Lajamanu, NT – Central Land Council.



Executive Summary

Background

The Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Programme grew out of several Australian Government inquiries highlighting shortcomings in the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' interests in national park management; increasing interest and initiatives by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landholders to re-establish their land management traditions; and their willingness to cooperate with government conservation agencies to address contemporary environmental issues.

The Australian Government also committed, in cooperation with the States and Territories, to establish a national system of protected areas representative of all biogeographical regions across Australia.

The IPA Programme seeks to provide a planning and land management framework for Indigenous owned lands to be managed as part of the National Reserve System (NRS). It has been funded as part of the National Investment Stream (NIS) of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) since 1997. Its early development received a positive assessment as part of the 1999 Mid-Term Review of the NHT.

This review commenced in early 2006, has evaluated the IPA Programme after 10 years of operation, in parallel with evaluations of other NHT Programmes.

The evaluation has considered:

- the contribution of the IPA Programme to the National Reserve System;
- its cost-effectiveness;
- its achievement of whole-of-government social, educational and economic outcomes;
- its contribution to strategic partnerships;
- its success in meeting the needs and aspirations of Indigenous participants; and
- the effectiveness of Programme management.

The evaluation process included meetings with IPA managers, project officers and community leaders as well as reviewing Programme documentation and submissions received from partner agencies and stakeholders.

Overall assessment

“Australia’s most successful innovation in protected area management and in Indigenous engagement in environmental management.”

Dr. Dermott Smyth

Broad support for the IPA Programme

In November 2005, ITS Global completed an *“Evaluation of the National Investment Stream of the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia”* (2005). The IPA Programme was one of 17 case studies on which the evaluation was based.

The overall findings *‘strongly support the continuation of the NIS as an effective, efficient and appropriate mechanism for the Commonwealth Government to directly purchase products and services which can contribute significantly to delivering real natural systems, sustainable production and biodiversity benefits for Australia.’*

This evaluation strongly supports these findings and draws conclusions in relation to the IPA Programme which are overwhelmingly positive.



The success of the Programme is widely acknowledged, particularly in bringing bioregionally significant lands into the NRS as a voluntary contribution from Indigenous landowners without the land having to be purchased.

The 22 declared IPAs cover a total of 14.9 million hectares of land representing 66% of the total area of land added to the reserve system by the National Reserve System Program (NRSP) over the last decade. The land includes some of the most biodiverse and highly valued of all NRS properties.

The Programme is managed by a small unit in DEH of three staff. Funding for the Programme is provided from the NHT with the IPA Programme budget for 2005–06 being \$2.5 million and scheduled to increase by \$600,000 in 2006–07 to \$3.1 million.

The IPA Programme is cost effective

By any criteria, the IPA Programme has been very cost effective in contributing to the conservation aims of the NRSP. However, many submissions to the evaluation raised questions about the lack of assured funding for ongoing management of IPAs and what this means for the status of the reserves as part of a national system.

“If we were to consider this issue in purely economic terms, the cost of dedicating long-term funding to an Indigenous people’s cultural and natural resource management employment program on country would be substantially cheaper than having to buy in external expertise and fly them in to (often) remote areas to undertake the necessary fire, feral and weed management activities needed to reduce the ongoing threats to biodiversity across the Indigenous estate”.

WWF Submission to the IPA Review

The current IPA Programme budget is fully committed in support of 22 existing IPAs and nine developing IPAs. There is clearly a need for the budget to be increased purely to fund the progressive declarations of new IPAs just to maintain the existing minimal level of seed funding to keep the IPA framework in place, assuming that funding for specific projects will be forthcoming from other sources.

Broader benefits of the IPA Programme

Beyond the direct economic or financial benefits that might follow on from declaration of lands as IPAs, there are considerable social and cultural outcomes from promoting conservation activities for Indigenous communities.

For instance, the IPA Programme is a suitable vehicle for facilitating the transfer of traditional knowledge and engaging young people in positive educational experiences centred on the equitable exchange of western science and traditional knowledge.

The Dhimurru experience—a key message

The Indigenous community at Dhimurru IPA, like so many others, has grappled with the problem of under age drinking. One of the key elements of a solution is seen by community leaders to be getting young people more committed to attending school in a situation where they have come to believe there is no point in going to school because there are no jobs available and therefore no particular advantage to be gained from school education. Land management employment opportunities can help change this reality, especially in very remote areas where very few other employment opportunities are likely to arise.



Executive Summary The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme

Gainful employment through the IPA Programme also contributes to social cohesion within communities by providing for an increased sense of worth and the framework for members of the community to work together.

The following statistics, generated from internal reporting, support the argument that IPAs deliver improved social outcomes:

- 95% of IPA communities report economic participation and development benefits from involvement with the Programme;
- 60% of IPA communities report positive outcomes for early childhood development from their IPA activities;
- 85% of IPA communities report that IPA activities improve early school engagement;
- 74% of IPA communities report that their IPA management activities make a positive contribution to the reduction of substance abuse; and
- 74% of IPA communities report that their participation in IPA work contributes to more functional families by restoring relationships and reinforcing family and community structures.

“The Nantawarrina IPA is the biggest thing for us. It turned everything around. The IPA is particularly valuable in helping the community elder’s deal with young people between school and work”.

The Nepabunna Community (Nantawarrina IPA – Australia’s First IPA)

Strengthening the IPA Programme

This evaluation has identified three main areas where action could be taken to strengthen an already successful Programme. These are:

- 1) Improving collaboration to reduce administrative complexity
- 2) Improved funding arrangements
- 3) Improving links to other government Programmes

Improving collaboration to reduce administrative complexity

The administrative complexity of individual project and grant programmes which IPA owners and managers need to access to fund tasks identified in IPA management plans can be a significant impediment to Indigenous community engagement and a constraint on community land management efforts.

A concerted effort should be made to streamline administration of grants through improved collaboration between different sections of the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH). Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and a strategic partnership between DEH, The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) to deliver whole-of-government outcomes also offer significant opportunities for improvement in this regard.

Improved funding arrangements

The results of this evaluation suggest that enhancements to the IPA budget would result in significant returns to the Australian Government.



To permit essential forward planning, funding to the IPA Programme and to individual IPAs should be provided on a three or five year cycle, subject to annual monitoring and reporting.

Improving links to other Government programmes

The review has found that the IPA Programme has considerable potential to support broader government objectives to deliver social, health, education and economic benefits at a scale and in a manner particularly appropriate for Indigenous communities.

While some IPA Programme funding to date has gone to projects that expressly support capacity building and income generating activities, progress thus far has been relatively minor.

Employment in land management roles is one of the few meaningful work prospects available for Indigenous people in remote communities.

Strong positive links exist between individual and community engagement in meaningful land management work and both individual and community well-being

Growing the IPA Programme

While this base level of operation should be retained as an option for Indigenous landowners, for individual IPAs and the Programme as a whole to be able to reach their full potential, options for further development need to be identified through the following four parallel initiatives:

- Facilitating tripartite agreements between Indigenous landowners, State or Territory governments and the Australian Government based on the critical success factors identified in the first ten years of operation;
- Exploring ways of categorizing and funding different levels of management activity in individual IPAs depending on location, community circumstances, and complexity of management issues faced and specific biodiversity outcomes targeted;
- Exploring governance options which better take account of clan estate traditions in cultural resource protection and land management, seeking to apply resources for land management at a scale and in a manner most likely to deliver results; and
- Specific funding of Indigenous land managers for delivery of natural and cultural resource management services, independent of welfare-based programs, recognising the substantial task which Indigenous landowners and managers are being asked to perform on behalf of the wider community.

It is difficult to usefully speculate on the possible levels of funding needed for a fully fledged system of Indigenous managed protected areas. If however, even moderate progress can be made in tripartite negotiations for an appropriate funding of different levels of Indigenous land management activity, supported by a targeted Programme for delivery of natural and cultural resource management services, \$20–30 million per year might be able to be well invested by 2010–2011, increasing to \$50 million.

The pace at which any such escalation of the Programme occurs will depend on the progress of tripartite negotiations and Indigenous decision making as well as local land management capability that may be required for any change in management regime for individual IPAs.

Increases of this magnitude in the scale of the IPA budget should be conditional on the achievement of well defined outcomes as assessed through a consistently applied framework for monitoring and reporting on management effectiveness.



Recommendations

6.1 Status and funding

- 6.1.1 Funding to at least a minimum base level of ongoing management of IPAs should be sought, within the supportive framework of tripartite agreements between owners, State or Territory governments and the Australian Government, if their full value to the National Reserve System (NRS) is to be realised.
- 6.1.2 Management funds should be provided on the basis of three to five year forward estimates, with actual spending reviewed annually against achievements.
- 6.1.3 The recurrent funding formula applied should be reviewed over time to reflect different levels of Indigenous land management activity negotiated in tripartite agreements between Indigenous landowners, States and territories and the Australian Government.
- 6.1.4 The issue of possible recognition of IPAs as Conservation Agreements under Part 14 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) should be considered along with other options for a graduated system of Indigenous land management defined in tripartite negotiations.

6.2 Linkages with other programmes

- 6.2.1 Given the significance of land management activities to community well-being, Indigenous Coordination Centers (ICCs) should be asked to consider the value of using IPAs as a focus for integrating community based Programme delivery.
- 6.2.2 The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) should develop a policy that implements streamlined funding processes for Indigenous communities receiving DEH funding.
- 6.2.3 DEH should work with the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) and the Department of Education and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and other relevant Australian government agencies to streamline Programme delivery associated with land management and employment.
- 6.3 Management effectiveness
 - 6.3.1 IPA Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting requirements should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with emerging management effectiveness regimes.
 - 6.3.2 IPA Programme staff should be involved in the wider task of formulating management effectiveness protocols for NRS reserves to ensure that the scale and complexity of the management challenges facing IPA managers can be properly recognized; adaptive management and capacity building can be tracked; and achievements acknowledged.

6.4 Scale and ongoing support

- 6.4.1 Australian Government Natural Resource Management Facilitators should be explicitly tasked to provide support for IPAs to enhance their capacity to engage in integrated landscape management and regional NRM programmes.

6.5 Governance

- 6.5.1 Respect for Indigenous decision making and governance regimes should continue to be a fundamental operating principle for the IPA Programme and some differentiation of governance arrangements should be explored to better reflect traditional Indigenous governance.



- 6.5.2 Any escalation of the IPA Programme in an effort to maximise potential contributions to the NRS should take account of the time frames and resources required for Indigenous decision making and governance.
- 6.5.3 The development of new IPAs should take account of the optimal scale of operations to satisfy both Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance requirements.
- 6.5.4 The manner and location of funds being invested by the Australian Government for IPA land management activities should take account of traditional clan governance and land management accountabilities.

6.6 Land and sea country

- 6.6.1 The scope of IPAs with respect to sea country should be clarified to facilitate meaningful negotiations on new IPAs.

6.7 Programme management

- 6.7.1 As the number of IPAs grows, consideration should be given to the need for additional Programme staff, both to continue the engagement between IPAs and Canberra, which is valued by the IPAs, and to enhance productive linkages with other programmes at national, state and regional levels.

