

# Submission to Australian Marine Parks Management Planning: North Network

## Wessel Marine Park

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### Introduction

This submission is from the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, the Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation, the Yirralka Ranger Group and the Gumurr Marthakal Ranger Group for the Wessel Marine Park.

It was developed during a Forum on the marine park planning process for the North Network, by the following representatives:

<i>Representative</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Ranger Group</i>
<b>Luke Playford</b>	Project Facilitator (Sea Country)	Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation	Dhimurru Ranger Group
<b>Dave Preece</b>	IPA Manager	Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	Yirralka Ranger Group
<b>Bandibandi Wunungmurra</b>	Senior Traditional owner	Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	Yirralka Ranger Group
<b>John Wilson</b>	Coordinator		Gumurr Marthakal Ranger Group

As part of a larger forum working group consisting of:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Marine Park</i>	<i>Ranger Group Name (If Applicable)</i>
Jason	Johnson	Ranger Coordinator	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	Arnhem	Djelk Ranger Group
Matty	Ryan	Cultural Advisor	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	Arnhem	
David	Moore		Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	Arnhem	Djelk Ranger Group
Luke	Playford	Project Facilitator (Sea Country)	Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation	Wessel	Dhimurru Ranger Group
Dave	Preece	IPA Manager	Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	Wessel	Yirralka Ranger Group

Bandibandi	Wunungmurra	Senior Traditional owner	Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	Wessel	Yirralka Ranger Group
John	Wilson	Coordinator		Wessel	Gumurr Marthakal
David	Barrett	Operation Manager	Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation	Limmen	li-Anthawirryarra Sea Ranger Unit
Stephen	Barrett		Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation	Limmen	li-Anthawirryarra Sea Ranger Unit
Sammuel	Evans		Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation	Limmen	li-Anthawirryarra Sea Ranger Unit
Shaun	Evans	Li-Anthawirryarra Sea Ranger Unit Liaison officer	Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation	Limmen	li-Anthawirryarra Sea Ranger Unit
Andrew	Tipungwuti	Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Tiwi Land Council	Oceanic Shoals	
Diane	Brodie	Acting Sea Country Policy Officer	Northern Land Council	All	
Simon	Xuereb	Marine Ranger Manager	Department of Primary Industry and Resources	All	NT Fisheries
Donna	Clemmens	Adviser - Top End Tiwi Islands Region	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	All	Network - Regional Strategies and Agreements
Tony	Griffiths	Director Marine Ecosystems	Department of Environment and Natural Resources	All	Flora and Fauna Division
Samantha	Fox	Director Marine Protected Areas Management (North)	Parks Australia	All	Marine Protected Areas Branch
Zoe	Cozens	Assistant Director - Marine Protected Areas Management (North) - Indigenous Engagement	Parks Australia	All	Marine Protected Areas Branch
Andrew	Warmbrunn	Senior Marine Parks Officer - Marine Protected Areas Management (North)	Parks Australia	All	Marine Protected Areas Branch

### In terms of the **draft Management Plan**:

- We believe that the draft Plan is a good foundation for better management of the Marine Park;
- We confirm our interests in the sea country within and surrounding the Marine Park area;
- We confirm that we want to work on further collaboration with Parks Australia to better manage the area and to protect our cultural values and interests;
- We welcome confirmation that Traditional Owners (TOs) can still hunt in the marine park areas;
- We agree with zones where there can be no disturbance of the seabed;

- We strongly advise Parks Australia to get ongoing input from TOs on the zoning boundaries;
- It is important to continue cultural mapping work to determine the right people to talk to and the values and areas that have to be protected;
- There needs to be the ability to adjust zoning as more research evidence and knowledge is gathered;
- We want a clearer indication of how to have input to authorisation decisions for certain activities.

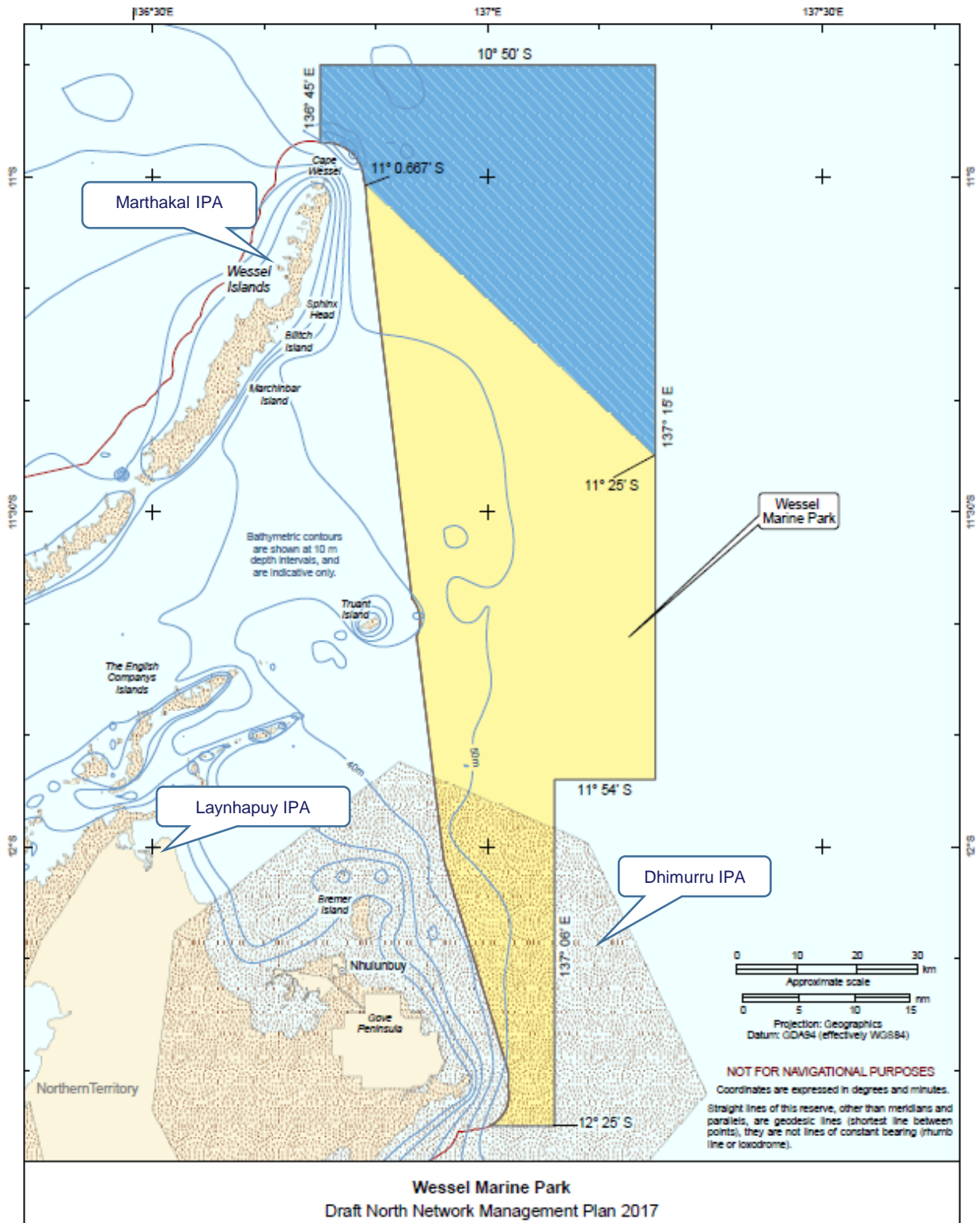
The **management and coordination** initiatives to address are:

- Increasing Coxswain training to Level 1, to build capacity;
- Applying for funding for Cert IV to boost compliance and enforcement to the level of direct appointment as Fisheries Officers;
- Accessing the Aboriginal Grants program for both capital and program funding to support the Ranger Groups;
- Organising a Ranger Forum for improved coordination.

**Collaborative management** will best progress through:

- Working in regional groupings;
- Starting with the Sea Ranger groups that are currently identified for Marine Parks;
- Using the Sea Ranger groups as a conduit to the host organisations for the Traditional Owners for our area;
- Aiming to link in with the Northern Territory Government's Coastal Strategy engagement process so that back-to-back meetings for both Coastal Strategy and Offshore Marine Parks can be held.

# Input on the Wessel Marine Park



## Existing Activities

- Marine debris clean up:
  - ghost nets and general marine debris
  - shore based collection and removal
  - could extend into marine park if we were to do microplastics monitoring;
- Marine megafauna monitoring:  
Recording sightings and strandings.
- Mangrove dieback monitoring.
- Fisheries compliance activities
- Sea grass mapping/monitoring
- Tern monitoring

## Activities to Progress

- Cultural advisors to support research;
- Building the knowledge base of benthic habitats;
- Permanent monitoring sites for important/vulnerable habitats;
- Supporting research
- Cultural landscape mapping of sea country including sites of cultural significance and TO responsibility for all identified areas.
- Development of fisheries compliance powers.
- Build on existing programs of work (eg:marine debris):
  - these are over extended now,
  - look at microplastics in the water and the likely effects,
  - look at marine megafauna management;
- Indigenous engagement in collecting samples and running trials:
  - cheaper and smarter for Commonwealth and State Governments to move forward with Sea Ranger collection and management,
  - installation of long term maintenance and presence in the area,
  - boost remote methods of turtle monitoring;
  - water quality monitoring

## Concerns

- Traditional Owner concerns about fishing in the special purpose (trawl) (IUCN VI) zone:
  - damage to the seabed from trawling,
  - sacred sites that are not mapped in this area,
  - important turtle breeding area,
  - disturbance of migratory animals;

- Not enough is known about what is on the seabed in this area; not enough evidence from which to base zoning decisions.

## Overall

- This marine park area is of interest to a number of Traditional Owner groups (Marthakal; Dhimurru and Yirralka):
  - the Marthakal IPA Committee has TOs for Wessels who can speak for cultural values,
  - however, as a former Mission area, the songlines come from everywhere and it is a complex cultural area,
  - perhaps a committee of the three TO groups, with the cultural advisors as key members;
- It would be valuable to encourage and fund better links between the Ranger Groups that have connections to this country, so that on-water activities can be coordinated and shared;
- It would be useful to look at a large scale sea country mapping project for all of the surrounding area:
  - what people know,
  - what people want to share;
- The special purpose (trawl) (IUCN VI) zone is the area of major concern for the TOs, in terms of disturbance to both the seabed and the migratory species.

## Input on Management and Coordination

### Capacity Building

- To effectively monitor and manage offshore marine parks will require:
  - an expansion of activities and capacity to operate from 5 nautical miles out to 15 nautical miles and in some cases significantly further,
  - the capacity to prosecute, rather than just report transgressions;
- Expanding capacity will involve:
  - Coxswain training to Level 1, for a number of Sea Rangers,
  - utilising the currently available vessels (eg: Fisheries, Australian Border Force) that are conducting patrols in the area;
- Expanding compliance will involve:
  - a big step up to Cert IV level (investigations) training and certification,
  - the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has good models in place for the Great Barrier Marine Park and for TSRA,
  - PM&C also has \$30m for compliance training and this initiative is ideal for this funding source;
  - there is a local model for compliance in existence now and Arnhem, Wessels and Limmen can join this and utilise Commonwealth contacts to activate vessels, particularly around ghostnets,
  - the Commonwealth is a key here as it is able to request / act in Marine Parks to activate assets there;
- In the meantime, existing Cert II and Cert III Sea Rangers can be activated by the Water Police,
- Attainment of Cert IV will lead to direct appointment as a Fisheries Officer, which is a win / win for both enforcement and employment.

### Aboriginal Grants Program

- The Northern Territory Government is committing to a \$12m program over 3 years to support Land and Sea Ranger Groups;
- In Year One, capital grants of \$3m are available with program grants of \$2m, then another \$2m each for Year Two and Year Three;
- Maximum of \$100,000 per application, but multiple applications are allowed;
- The grants close on 30 September 2017;
- The aim is to get other funding bodies on board and to build this into an ongoing funding source.

## Collaborative Management

- There is a need to be able to input to the North Network Advisory Committee which reports directly to the Director of Parks Australia;
- For Indigenous engagement, the basic steps agreed are:
  - work in regional groupings, ie:
    - Western Gulf region,
    - Arnhem region,
    - Tiwi region;
  - utilise IPA Advisory Groups where they exist and expand them for regional coverage,
  - Parks Australia to tap into existing meetings, in order to hear from TOs and to inform them of progress,
  - start from what exists now, ie: start from the Sea Ranger groups present and expand to the other Marine Parks as the process continues;
- For basic information and discussion sessions with TOs:
  - the Rangers are to run initial sessions whenever the opportunity can be created,
  - simple posters to be created as support materials, like the initial IPA marketing;
- Look to organise and fund an annual Ranger Forum to stimulate learning and operational improvement;
- Aim to link in with the Northern Territory Government's Coastal Strategy engagement process:
  - the same stakeholder group,
  - hold back-to-back meetings for both Coastal Strategy and for Offshore Strategy engagement,
  - representatives from these forums are then able to input to the Network Advisory Committee as a joint coastal / marine park voice.

## Priority Projects

- For priority projects, it was agreed that these be drawn from the extension of existing activities in the first instance.