

**How well is co-management working?
Perspectives, partnerships and power sharing along the way to an
Indigenous Protected Area on Giringun country**

By: Melanie Zurba

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Natural Resources Management

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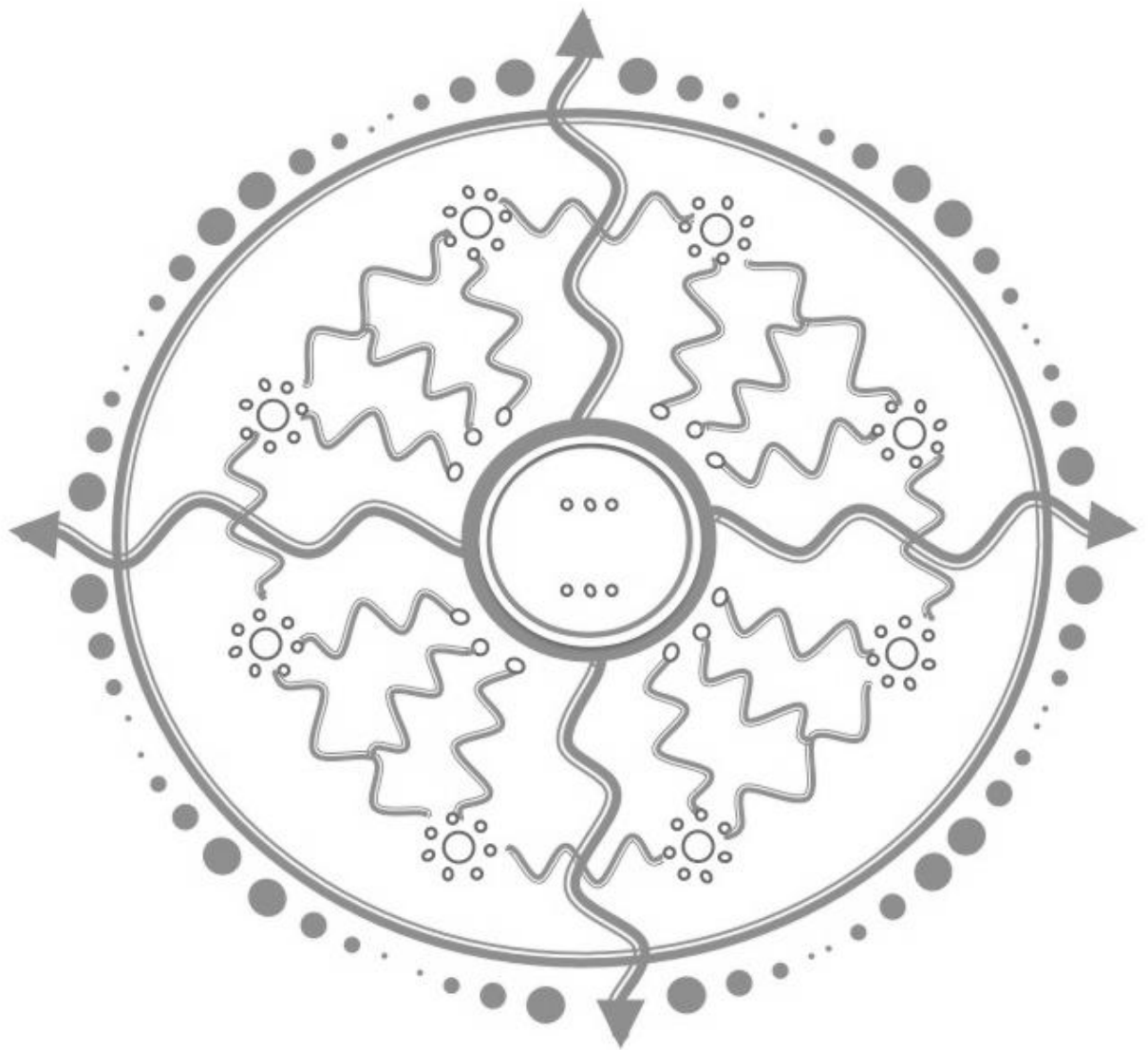
A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree
Of Master of Natural Resources Management (M.N.R.M)

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This thesis is about the thoughts and feeling that people have for their environment, their homes, people, plants, animals and the non-material. It is about the manifestations of such things and how different perspectives can sometimes create unique challenges and opportunities to find common ground and work towards a shared vision.



Abstract

Protected area management in Australia, as in Canada and elsewhere, has begun to focus on community-based management strategies. In response, governments and communities, including Indigenous groups, face the challenges of developing cooperative management arrangements with multiple interests potentially entering the appropriate arenas, and being incorporated into regional governance and management systems. The literature on co-management and participation in environmental *management* has been developed along with this movement in regional management, and has a series of associated typologies, as well as theoretical and practical implications.

The overall direction of this research is directed by the question '*How well is co-management working?*' within the context of the arrangements between government agencies and an Indigenous organization. The Giringun Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) represents the interests of nine Traditional Owner groups and has been involved in working through regional natural resources and protected areas partnerships with government over many years. These partnerships include an Indigenous ranger unit, Australia's first Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement, and the plans for an Indigenous Protected Area, which will be the first over a mainstream multi-tenure area, as well as the first to incorporate both land and sea *country*. Giringun *country* is located in Northern Queensland Australia, and is located at the coastal interface of the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef eco regions, which are World Heritage Areas represented by their respective authorities. Other tenures include public freehold lands, State forests and reserves, and National parks.

In order to answer the research question, I evaluated the partnerships between government senior managers from the departments involved in regional resources and protected areas *management* with the GAC. Qualitative methods in the form of document review and semi-structured interviews, as well as methods using a participatory approach such as participant observation, a focus group and creative workshop, were used to answer the research questions. I used an exploration of perspectives and the storyline form of discourse analysis to investigate perspectives on land and sea *governance* and *management*, past and current partnership arrangements, and how power is being shared amongst partners to the arrangements. The research is therefore divided into three main research objectives, plus one relating specifically to outcomes for the GAC: 1) Explore Traditional Owner, Giringun Aboriginal

Corporation, and government values and aspirations for *country*; 2) Identify and conceptually map the governance and management institutional arrangements on Giringun country and describe the integrity of the relationships among the different components of the arrangements; 3) Evaluate the experiences of the governance and management partners with an eye for 'lessons learned'; and 4) Work within a mutually beneficial research arrangement with the GAC.

Investigations of partnerships made it possible to consider the arrangements within the scope of typologies within the *co-management* literature. The mapped structure of the arrangements, in addition to the storylines indicating the levels of integrity within partnerships, and levels of power sharing made it possible to assert whether or not *co-management* was indeed occurring. It was determined that the Giringun case indeed a *co-management* within the given typologies in both theoretical and practical terms. The Giringun case is a good example of a grass-roots regional organization bridging mainstream and Indigenous aspirations for protected areas management, which in turn is translating into favourable on-the-ground outcomes and working arrangements for multi-party governance systems. The Giringun case demonstrates the importance of regional arrangements taking into account locally responsible management bodies, and reflects the journey that is co-management.

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Acronyms

CSIRO- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization

DEEDI- Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

DERM- Department of Environment and Resources Management

DMR- Department of Main Roads

DPI&F- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

GAC- Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

GBRMP- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

GBRMPA- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

GBRWHA- Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

GRIPA- Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Area

EPA- Environmental Protection Authority

ICCA- Indigenous and Community Conserved Area

ILUA- Indigenous Land Use Agreement

IPA- Indigenous Protected Area

IUCN- International Union for Conservation of Nature

MPA- Marine Protected Area

NRM- Natural Resources Management

QPWS- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

RAC- Regional Assessment Committee

TAMS- Text Analysis Mark-up System

TUMRA- Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHA- World Heritage Area

WTMA- Wet Tropics Management Authority

WTWHA- Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

WWF- World Wildlife Fund

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 – Study purpose and objectives

An effective *co-management* arrangement framework should provide the space in which the aspirations of multiple parties can be explored and understood, in turn having the potential lead to sustainable management practices. Therefore, *governance* structures of such arrangements need to evolve so that the perspectives of the groups enter the relevant forums and are mutually respected and appreciated. My research investigates *co-management* by looking at the integrity of partnerships and participation and power sharing within arrangements between governments and the Gerringun Aboriginal Corporation (GAC), an Indigenous organization representing the aspirations of nine Traditional Owner groups. The overall direction of the research is framed by the question '*How well is co-management working?*' within the context of the existing and developing arrangements between government agencies and the GAC. To answer the research question, I focus on evaluating the partnerships between government senior managers and the GAC. This is explored through an investigation of the partners' perspectives on land and sea *governance* and *management*, past and current partnership arrangements, and how power is being shared amongst partners to the arrangements. The research is therefore divided into three main research objectives, plus one relating specifically to outcomes for the GAC:

- 1) Explore, record and compare Traditional Owner, Gerringun Aboriginal Corporation, and government values and aspirations for *country*.

This first objective was a comparative investigation into the worldviews, values and aspirations for *caring for country* and *conservation*. This comparison set a baseline for understanding the motivations behind the partnerships, as well as why levels of participation and power sharing are in place. The recognitions of Traditional Owner values and aspirations by the GAC was also investigated.

- 2) Identify and conceptually map the governance and management institutional arrangements on Giringun country and describe the integrity of the relationships among the different components of the arrangements.

This second objective builds an understanding of the actors involved in the governance and management systems on Giringun *country*. This is an exploration of the linkages between *governance* and *management* bodies and the levels of participation and power sharing among groups involved in arrangements. This investigation explores the integrity of partnerships and in turn enables the determination of whether the structure of the arrangement fits into what is known as *co-management*, or if it is actually a different form of power sharing and responsibility arrangement.

- 3) Evaluate the experiences of the governance and management partners with an eye for 'lessons learned'.

The work being done in Canada and elsewhere shows the importance of collaboration, learning and multi-level governance in making Indigenous co-management possible (Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday 2007). Learning-by-doing is important to the continuity of *co-management* as an adaptive process (Robinson et al. 2006; Berkes 2009). My research identifies lessons learned so that they may be conceptualized and shared with other organizations in similar resource management and protected areas scenarios. It is hoped that my findings on relationships in Australia will contribute to knowledge of how to develop reciprocal, respectful and adaptive *governance* and *management* systems in other settings.

- 4) Work within a mutually beneficial research arrangement with the GAC

This was an important component of the research from an ethical standpoint. Community-based research, especially that of a participatory nature should always hold some benefit for the case study community. Therefore, it was important for my presence to positively affect the GAC as a hosting organization. During my fieldwork I made it an objective to provide the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation and the broader community with services and tools for their negotiations with government.

1.2 What is co-management?

Protected area management in Australia, as in Canada and elsewhere, has begun to focus on community-based management strategies. In response, governments and communities, including Indigenous groups, face the challenges of developing cooperative management arrangements where the interests of the various parties may enter the appropriate arenas and be incorporated into regional *governance* and *management* systems. The development of cooperative arrangements for coastal and marine resources and protected areas has been particularly challenging, as the boundaries and jurisdictions are not always clear, and coastal and marine resources are viewed differently by mainstream and Indigenous cultures. In light of the awareness of the growing need for collaboration between local and/or Indigenous peoples and government, and the array of perspectives amongst such groups, it is important to investigate such systems by looking at the attributes of partnerships that could either help or hinder regional relationships. Development of such a knowledge base concerning arrangements is therefore important so that learning is maintained and worked with progressively towards to the development of environmentally sustainable and socially just outcomes.

Different approaches have emerged and agencies are becoming required to include the values of Indigenous and local people into *conservation* efforts as various parties have been putting forward a diversity of interests for regional forms of *management*. Similarly, there are many different terms being used in many varying ways to describe the different types of decision making arrangements for natural resources and protected areas. The basic terms *management* and *governance* can carry a great deal of ambiguity and can mean different things depending on the way that an author chooses to frame discussions within the literature (Rhodes 1996; Jones, Hesterley and Bogatti 1997). These terms are often used either individually as catch all terms, or synonymously to describe the ability to direct decision making towards on-the-ground outcomes. In order to avoid such ambiguities, it is important to be specific in the terminology in relation to this particular case study. Here, the term *governance* will be used to describe the multi-level form of decision making which takes into account processes of negotiation and the possibility of several at least partially autonomous parties (Peters and Pierre

2004). The term will be used to describe forums that are capable of affecting bureaucratic processes and have the potential to ‘trickle-up’ within bureaucratic systems and shape policy.

Management when used without a prefix (i.e. “co-”) will be used here to describe the ‘trickle-down’ processes leading to on-the-ground outcomes and the ability to actualize everyday decision making, thus transforming to tangible and/or physical outcomes within the land/seascape. *Management* forums therefore include the day-to-day practical decision makers. In a broad sense, the term *co-management* will be discussed here in terms of management arrangements that have several distinct parties, including government and local resource users, making decisions about practical outcomes related to a particular resource or area (Pinkerton 1989, p.4). In historical terms, *co-management* of resources and protected areas with Indigenous communities is fairly new (since the 1970s), and there is no prescriptive format for *co-management* arrangements (Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday 2007). However, the literature on *co-management* has been continually growing and can vary depending on the political context and socio-geographic location. *Co-management* is generally thought of as being more ideally suited to descriptions rather than definitions, which would bind *co-management* into any one form of arrangement (Carlsson and Berkes 2005). Indeed, *co-management* has evolved in both theory and practice and thus has different meanings depending on the context of the institutional arrangement for regional decision making (Castro and Nielsen 2001). Therefore, in order to make the assessments here of ‘*how well co-management is working*’ it is important to discuss the different types of *co-management* within the relevant working contexts of theory and practice (i.e. the region for the case study).

In general theoretical terms, *co-management* fits within commons theory pertaining to places or resources (Pomeroy and Berkes 1997; Carlsson and Berkes 2005), has been used to describe different types of partnerships and power sharing, and has a literature of typologies that have attempted to capture the dynamics existing within such arrangements. Ross, Buchy and Proctor (2002) use a set of typologies to describe the various forms of public participation in natural resource management; namely that which involves the *agency*¹ of the parties involved, the existing tenure arrangement, the nature of the participants, the nature of the task at hand, the power sharing relationship, and the duration of the process. These typologies work towards understanding lateral power dynamics, which are indicators as to whether a top-down

¹ Meaning the capacity of an agent (i.e. individual, organization, etc.) to work in the world and make free choices

arrangement or one that is more reciprocal such as *co-management* is occurring. Pomeroy and Berkes (1997) look at *co-management* through four different typologies relating to the concept of *decentralization* to describe the possible power sharing relationships. Within this typological framework, *deconcentration* is described as the transfer of decision making authority from national government to regional agencies. The second type described is *delegation* where some authority is given to regional governance systems but the central government continues to hold the seat of authority. Third is *devolution*, in which power is transferred to local governance bodies. Within this type there is no need to refer back to the National or more centralized *governance* bodies for program endorsement. *Privatization* is the fourth type, which refers to the transfer of authority to either private enterprise, or voluntary or non-governmental organizations.

Carlsson and Berkes (2005) extend their discussion to describe four types of *co-management* relationships occurring between the state and the community. The first is “*co-management as an exchange system*” which describes a power sharing arrangement in which discrete entities of state and community collaborate. The second arrangement is “*co-management as a joint organization*” in which sectors of the state and the community intersect in order to come to understandings related to management agreements. The third arrangement is “*co-management as a State-nested system*” in which the state is the primary proprietor of rights. The fourth and final arrangement outlined by Carlsson and Berkes (2005) is “*co-management as a community-nested system*” in which the public sphere is governing the arrangement. Where a *co-management* arrangement fits within these descriptors depends on the foundations set in policy, the history of relationships, and the current situations at hand. Typologies in the *co-management* literature work to set up a framework for understanding the linkages and dynamics (i.e. channels for communication) of such partnerships. However, commons theorists working on community-based *governance* and *management* strategies are now more than ever calling for analyses of partnerships beyond the usual structurally descriptive classifications (Birner and Wittmer 2004; Ostrom 2005). Investigations as to the integrity of partnerships are therefore a next step in the *co-management* literature.

The potential structural hallmarks of *co-management* have also been described and are essentially the frameworks for understanding the qualities of arrangements as described above. Folke and colleagues (2005) describe the *co-management* structure as networks and nodes containing knowledge and resilience embodied within certain individuals or groups. These

features may be regarded as pivotal elements which test the strength of the *co-management* arrangements (Folke et al. 2005). The nodes may be in the form of fundamentally important individuals or groups within the community or may be governmental organizations or NGOs working in the *co-management* arrangement. However, while the nodes are crucial elements for the development of *co-management*, the linkages or relationships existing between nodes are equally as important, and the need for communication between nodes is an essential element to the success of *co-management* arrangements. This intermediary and communicative role is described in *co-management* literature as belonging to *boundary* and/or *bridging organizations*.

Bridging and/or boundary organizations are described as parties who work as the liaisons between, within and amongst communities and/or organizations (Folke 2005; Berkes 2009). Facilitation is considered to be essential to knowledge co-production, collaboration, social learning and building of trust between management partners (Davidson-Hunt 2006). Bridging/boundary organizations work in this capacity towards enabling the two-way flow of information between the various groups which may be involved in a given situation. They may be capable of different forms of responses such as reaction to new opportunities (Folke et al. 2005), and may also be able to fill the requirements integral to capacity building and equitable power sharing by creating forums for various forms of knowledge transmission and social learning (Berkes 2009). Within much of the *co-management* literature coming out of North America, bridging organizations are of paramount importance to *co-management* and are an essential ingredient to even-handed community-based collaboration (Davidson-Hunt 2006). Other literature coming from Australia indicates the tremendous value of facilitators in implementing participatory arrangements but do not go as far as requiring such organizations in order for *co-management* to be in place. Rather the focus is on the evaluation of participation in management through various channels (Ross, Buchy, and Proctor 2002).

Given the history of both successes and failures in regards to *co-management* it is important to see the value in learning from experience. Another direction in the *co-management* literature which needs to be accounted for here is *adaptive co-management*. *Adaptive co-management* merges theories of *co-management* and *adaptive management* to describe arrangements in terms of being able to survive in response to changes in the natural or the policy environment (Armitage et al. 2007). *Adaptive management* responds to feedback mechanisms and enables *management* systems to evolve in response to the learning outcomes

which arise from the successes and failures of past management plans (Berkes 2007). Therefore, the understanding and documenting of management process and outcomes is important for adaptive learning. Through working adaptively and building relationships and capacity among groups *adaptive co-management* processes can continue to be relevant within dynamic social-ecological systems, and are therefore worthy of investigation.

Rangan and Lane (2001) speak of *co-management* in terms of “*the ability [of resource user’s] to actively participate and influence institutional processes that shape policy development and management of resources in areas where their [resource user’s] presence and/or claims are officially recognized*”. However, in practice *co-management* as a term is also subject to regional and departmental differences within government agencies, and in some cases has become a blanket term for any kind of community consultation (Plummer and Fitzgibbon 2004). In Australia, *joint-management* is the term that is used when a government agency enters into a formal management arrangement with an Indigenous group or organization that has Native Title or some other type of official claim over a resource or area (Ross, Buchy and Proctor 2002). *Joint-management* in this regard is a legalistic term (i.e. pertaining to *Section 34 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992*), and is achieved through State legislation and policy (Haber Kern et al. 2009). Some of the more classic *joint-management* arrangements in Australia include those existing over National Parks like Kakadu, Uluru, and Kata-Tjuta (Szabo and Smyth 2004). In *joint-management* arrangements as such, Indigenous peoples have their traditional ownership recognized with the provision that government conservation agencies will be able to be engaged in managing them with government agencies as protected areas (Szabo and Smyth 2004).

In Australia *cooperative management* or *co-management* in a broad sense refers to situations in which agencies develop relationships and provisions for consultation and regional planning with community or Indigenous organizations (Szabo and Smyth 2004). The manner in which this differs from *joint-management* is dependent on the point of view of the government agency and can either be considered to be exactly the same, or used to describe arrangements where government is not prepared to enter into an equitable² power sharing relationships with the local and/or Indigenous partners (George, Innes and Ross 2004). George, Innes and Ross (2004) indicate that the regional viewpoint of co-management that has arisen between

² ‘Equitable’ differing from ‘equal’ – i.e. allocation of roles within the partnership may be different based on the strengths of management partners

government and Indigenous organizations in Queensland, Australia is that it is non-equitable. *Cooperative management* and/or *co-management* in Australia has been criticized in the past by several Indigenous groups who have expressed that their status as Traditional Owners is not adequately represented through such arrangements (Szabo and Smyth 2004).

Regardless of the particularities of the arrangement and the imposed classifications, arrangements which involve any form of decentralization require a sharing of authority and responsibility. Criticisms of the various forms of *co-management* include a scepticism that communities or organizations will be capable of managing resources sustainably (Pomeroy and Berkes 1997). This sort of scepticism may be arising from negative experiences, or from a lack of knowledge or understanding of the capacity of communities or organizations to manage resources. There are also fears with the decentralization of power, and often empowerment is viewed as a challenge to existing structures rather than an opportunity to manage systems more effectively and inclusively (Kaufman 1997; Martin 1997). Investigations into perspectives of parties involved in management partnerships are therefore relevant for understanding how such arrangements progress, and how this translates into tangible outcomes for people and the environment. McCay and Jentoft (1996) argue that partnerships that are not equal should not be deemed as *co-management*. In light of these concerns relating to power-sharing, it is particularly important to analyse management partnerships in terms of variables such as relationship, respect, responsibility, and levels of understanding. Also, with learning, relationship integrity, and institutional development *co-management* begins to become *adaptive co-management*, and may have the potential to contribute to *governance* systems eventually affecting overarching policies (Armitage et al. 2009).

Sandström (2009) identifies power sharing, participation and process as the features integral to identifying cooperative management arrangements. In addition to these elements, Berkes (2009) draws attention to the importance of institution building, practical problem solving, trust and social capital building. These are all features that should be identifiable within the linkages between partners at different levels, and such features have been regarded as the pillars of *co-management* (Berkes 2002). This study is an evaluation of a set of multi-faceted partnership arrangements in Northern Queensland, Australia. In order to evaluate 'how well *co-management* is working' I look at the perspectives on the features and quality of the arrangements, and the level of power sharing in order to evaluate the integrity of the respective

partnerships. This then makes it possible to consider the partnership arrangements within the scope of current *co-management* literature.

1.3 – Indigenous Australian coastal livelihoods, harvesting practices and resource rights

1.3.1 Indigenous Australian coastal livelihoods — Connections to the sea are present in the Indigenous Australian archaeological record and seascapes have important parts in the dreamtime stories which are the origins of customary law (Zann 2000). The relationship between land and sea is inseparable and intrinsic to what is known as *country*³ by Indigenous peoples in Australia (Ross and Innes 2005). Today, Indigenous Australians who have stayed close to their traditional territories have maintained ties with '*country*' and many individuals who left for the cities are returning to traditional estates, some of which continued to thrive throughout periods of colonization (Zann 2000). Within these contexts many Indigenous communities have been '*caring for country*', which describes a regard for a 'sentient landscape' held by Traditional Owners⁴ (Altman 2003).

The Australian government has not always acknowledged the desire or the ability of Indigenous peoples to have a thriving community on traditional territory (Altman 2003). However, Indigenous peoples are expressing long-term desires and demonstrating the social capacity required to continue traditional ways of life within traditional estates (Bourke et al. 1998). Increasingly, Indigenous peoples with ties to country are creating initiatives to maintain these ties, which enhances their degree of agency in regards to the practices which they choose to undertake (Zann 2000). Within Traditional Owner management systems, the management of resources, and the integration of cultural values are woven together by the cultural and spiritual context of the peoples in relation to their space (Altman 2003). In this sense, the practices they are taking part in define their culture, and in turn it is their culture which is being imparted on the land and sea. This is the foundation of customary law, which is quite distinct in function and

³ Refers to the both land and sea as one continuous environment. Does not imply national connections (e.g. Australia as a country).

⁴ Ownership in this sense is reciprocal in that Traditional Owners are from the land and therefore belong to the land just as the land belongs to them. Note the original meaning of this title does not imply possession as much as it does responsibility. The term refers to a reciprocal relationship with traditional territory.

structure from the policies and legislation imposed by Western government regimes (Bourke 1998).

1.3.2 Indigenous Australian customary harvesting practices — The customary laws which govern the relationship that Indigenous Australians have with *country* also constrain the practices related to subsistence hunting and gathering. Customary laws determine who may hunt, where the hunt will take place, when the hunt will occur, and who will receive what parts of the harvest (Zann 2000). Subsistence practices through customary law are therefore central to culture and Indigenous hunters have stated that the hunting of certain species is “an important expression of their Aboriginality” (Smith and Marsh 1990). A study by Naughton and colleagues (2006), also found that traditional hunting and gathering of protein from the marine environment has dietary importance to Indigenous Australians because it is low in fat and high in polyunsaturated fatty acids which have the potential to reduce the cardiovascular disease that is prevalent amongst Indigenous Australians. However, the sustainability of current harvesting practices of such species in light of feeding larger populations of people is questionable and beyond the scope of this investigation.

The traditional hunting of dugong (*Dugong dugon*) around the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) has been considered to be sustainable in some circumstances (Smith and Marsh 1990), and unsustainable in others (Heinsohn et al. 2004). Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is the other species which is hunted and is of particular interest to government agencies and the broader community because of its threatened status (Zann 2000). Most hunting activities typically make use of spears, net and line, and shellfish collecting activities generally occur in the intertidal and subtidal zones (Zann 2000). Traditional hunting is regarded by the Australian Law Reform Commission (1986) as being embedded in the motivations for hunting rather than being determined by the harvesting technique or technologies used. In this respect, Indigenous peoples may continue hunting and gathering practices within contemporary contexts. This is essential to the continuity of culture as being adaptive, self-determinant, and therefore resilient within an ever shifting physical environment (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes 2003).

Indigenous Australian harvesting practices were not considered nor controlled by the Australian Government for most of the time following colonization (Zann 2000). However, these practices are now being considered in law because the populations of harvested species such as turtle and dugong, have been severely reduced by commercial fishing practices and

environmental impacts from on-shore industries (Jackson et al. 2001). It has been suggested that species management regimes are necessary, especially in regards to species with slow reproduction rates such as dugong (Smith and Marsh 1990). Traditional marine hunting and fishing rights in Queensland are controlled by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F), respectively.

1.3.3 Indigenous Australian rights to land and sea country — The maritime culture of Indigenous Australians suffered its first blows upon the renaming of coastal attributes by the first European seafarers along the coasts of Australia (Zann 2000). This eventually followed with the declaration of *terra nullius*⁵, and a disregard for Indigenous peoples, based on Social Darwinism, as primitives who should be colonized and ‘civilized’ (Bourke et al. 1998). The early European government then proceeded to deny Indigenous culture and began to disappropriate traditional country (Bourke et al. 1998). Indigenous peoples in Australia lived with this degree of social injustice until monumental changes in international human rights legislation began to come about in the mid-1970s to early 1980s. In relation to natural resources rights, the Convention on the Law of the Seas made stipulations for Indigenous peoples marginalized by marine activities to receive compensation and payment (United Nations 1982), and in 1992 the *Rio Declaration of Environment and Development* made specific reference to the need to recognize the roles of indigenous peoples in environmental management (United Nations 1992).

Regardless of these changes to international law, Indigenous Australians have only recently been able to bring in elements of self-determination into the management of their *country* (Bourke et al 1998). Following the handing down of the *Mabo Agreement 1992* and the *Native Title Act 1993*, the Australian Government finally overthrew the idea of *terra nullius* and began to recognize Indigenous ownership and customary laws in regards to traditional territories (Bourke 1998). This meant that the Australian Government ultimately acknowledged for the first time the existence of two systems of land tenure in Australia: the colonial system based on a leasehold and freehold title system, and the Indigenous one which had been existing in Australia for thousands of years (Robinson and Mercer 2000).

The *Native Title Act* set the precedence for and influences Indigenous rights in regards to inland and offshore Australia. However, *Section 211* of the *Native Title Act*, which deals with marine resources, is fairly nondescript and there have been suggestions made by government

⁵ The notion that the land was void of human existence upon its ‘discovery’ by Europeans

that Indigenous interests in *governance* and *management* ought to be dealt with through *co-management* arrangements (Zann 2000). In 1998, an amendment to the *Native Title Act* was made by the National government of Howard and has been described as being “watering-down of some significant gains made by Aborigines” in some regards and an enhancement in other respects, such as the establishment of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (Robinson and Mercer 2000). However, regardless of these shortcomings the *Native Title Act* encourages government agencies to consult with Indigenous peoples in regards to the management of their traditional territories and new types of arrangements are beginning to take shape.

1.4 – Theoretical approaches to conservation

1.4.1 Conservation biology vs. Community-based conservation — For almost an entire century conservation biology based on the Western scientific world view has been the guiding concept for maintaining biodiversity (Soulé 1985). Within this world view is the idea that humans are a destructive force separate from nature. This is central to what Callicot and colleagues (1999) call compositionism, which is based on in evolutionary ecology and leads to conservation approaches which aim to exclude and reverse human damage in order to maintain pristine *wilderness* in isolation from human contact. *Wilderness* in itself is an abstract concept which relates to the cultural perceptions of nature and may in many cases be entirely absent from cultural lexicons (Berkes 2008). This is the philosophical approach underpinning management frameworks based on the principles of conservation biology.

A direct and probably the most obvious reflection of this worldview is the establishment of the parks and protected areas system around the world (Dowie 2006). While, this system has been fairly effective at maintaining biodiversity, it has not been successful at viewing ecosystems holistically with human beings as active and potentially beneficial components (Chapin 2004). An example of a beneficial anthropogenic influence on land may be observed in the traditional Aboriginal fire management practices around Arnhemland, Northern Australia which have been found to maintain local biodiversity and control the presence of invasive species (Yibarbuk et al. 2001). This is only one example of how a long-term connection to the environment can produce management which fosters long-term ecosystem health and sustainability.

Support for a need for community-based conservation began to surface in the early 1980s amongst *conservation* organizations in response to the marginalization of Indigenous groups inhabiting areas where *conservation* efforts were being enacted (Chapin 2004). During this period the World Wildlife Fund was the first to call for community-based conservation efforts (Chapin 2004). Indeed, prior to this any submissions for *conservation* efforts outside of the Western Science tradition were essentially ignored (Nazarea 2006). As previously mentioned, the end of the last century was an important time for changes that would affect the abilities of Indigenous peoples to re-establish self-determination in relation to their traditional territories.

1.4.2 World Heritage Areas (WHAs) & Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) — There are two main international organizations dealing with protected area designations, namely the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). UNESCO is responsible for the evaluation and designation of World Heritage Areas (WHAs) with the aims of ensuring the protection of areas with outstanding natural and/or cultural heritage (UNESCO 2009). Areas are evaluated based on the 2005 operational guidelines which are divided into cultural criteria (i-vi) and natural criteria, (vii-x). Both WHAs affecting the case study area: the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) fit within the natural heritage scheme, and are based on natural heritage criteria. These two WHAs have not yet been relisted in relation to cultural criteria.

The IUCN deals specifically with conservation purposes within protected areas and was initially set up to give advice on the designations of protected areas related to natural aspects (Phillips 2003). The advisory relationship began to change in the later end of the 20th century when the conservation world began to realize the importance of acknowledging the existence of cultural landscapes, which Davidson-Hunt defines (2003, p. 21) as “the physical expression of the complex and dynamic sets of relationships, processes and linkages between societies and environments”. The IUCN in this respect began to change its operational and conceptual perspectives to include cultural considerations. This coincides with what Beresford and Phillips (2000) describes as a “new paradigm for protected areas”, which considers the human elements of land and seascapes (Table 1). Phillips asserts (2003) that this shift in interests is significant because IUCN protected area frameworks have been used by governments internationally in the

establishment and management of protected areas. It is important to note that this is a framework that was proposed by the IUCN and is only actually occurring in some instances.

Table 1: A New Paradigm for Protected Areas (Source: Beresford and Philips 2000)

As it was: protected areas were...	As it is: protected areas are...
Planned and managed against people	Run with, for, and in some cases by local people
Run by central government	Run by many partners
Set aside for conservation	Run also with social and economic objectives
Managed without regard to local community	Managed to help meet needs of local people
Developed separately	Planned as part of national, regional and international systems
Managed as 'islands'	Developed as 'networks' (strictly protected areas, buffered and linked by green corridors)
Established mainly for scenic protection	Often set up for scientific, economic and cultural reasons
Managed mainly for visitors and tourists	Managed with local people more in mind
Managed reactively within short timescale	Managed adaptively with a long-term perspective
About protection	Also about restoration and rehabilitation
Viewed primarily as a national asset	Viewed also as a community asset
Viewed exclusively as a national concern	Viewed also as an international concern

The connection between WHAs and IUCN protected area designations are not easily deciphered because of the organic nature of how these two systems evolved. It is the structure of the operational guidelines of the World Heritage Convention that must be considered in order to understand the relationship, and when mandates overlap WHAs tend to be drawn along IUCN protected area boundaries (Patry 2007). There are other circumstances however when WHAs are nested within protected areas. The GBRWHA is an example of this and is limited to the boundaries of a protected core area within the multiple-use park (Partry 2007). However, ambiguities between WHAs and IUCN protected areas are ongoing, especially with Category V and VI (Patry 2007). The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) is an IUCN Category V protected seascape managed for conservation and recreation (Phillips 2002).

In the *IUCN Parks* issue dedicated to community conserved areas, Kothari (2006) offered the following definition for Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs): “natural or modified ecosystems with significant biodiversity, ecological or related cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities through customary laws or other effective means”. ICCAs are now an operational component of the IUCN protected areas organization and may be applied to both terrestrial and marine environments (Kothari 2006). ICCAs have categories which are similar to those outlined by the IUCN protected areas system and differ from them in one important way: that they include human interactions. ICCAs have three essential features: 1) communities must be closely related to the relative ecosystem, 2) community involvement in management must lead to conservation of ecological and cultural traits (even if it is not the initial goal), 3) communities make and implement their own decisions (Kothari 2006). Conservation models that are socially just and have proven to be some of the most effective at maintaining the conservation of biodiversity and long-term working relationships amongst interested parties (Dowie 2006).

Box 1. IUCN Categories V and VI (Source: IUCN 2010)

Category V, Protected Landscape/ Seascape – “A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant, ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.”

Category VI, Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources – “Category VI protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.”

1.4.3 Protected areas in Australia: Conservation, the National Reserve System, and Indigenous Protected Areas—National parks are some of the earliest forms of protected areas. Australia established the world’s second national park in 1876 and has since continued the tradition, most recently with the development of the Australian National Reserve System

Cooperative Program (ANRSCP), which was established in 1992 and was the product of the Rio Earth Summit Convention on Biological Diversity (Government of Australia 2009). The ANRSCP is primarily based on the scientific ideology with aims of conserving examples of landscapes, plants and animals into the future (Australian Government 2009). In Australia, the parks and protected area advisory group is the Regional Assessment Commission (RAC), which was established just prior to the ANRSCP, in 1989. The RAC provides advice to the Australian Federal Government on the use of natural resources, values to communities, and sustainability issues. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a part of the greater Commonwealth Reserves system and are managed in accordance with the reserve system's mandates.

In 2008 the Government of Australia released its plans for the *Caring for our Country* national reserve funding initiative with approximately 20% of the funding going towards developing Indigenous Protected Areas (Commonwealth of Australia 2009). The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program was established in 1997, following the bioregional survey of the Australian Government, which had goals of establishing protected areas representative of all bioregions, some of which were on Indigenous *country* (Smyth 2006). However, the IPA program is not only a device for bioregional conservation. It is also a tool for consultation with Indigenous people in regards to the designation of their lands. This is reflected in the Australian Government's description of IPAs as "one way Indigenous Australians are being supported to meet their cultural responsibility to care for their *country* and to pass on their knowledge about the land and its resources to future generations" (Australian Government 2009). The IPA implementation process provides Traditional Owners with the ability to develop their own management strategy, as well as the capacity to declare, implement and monitor the plan (Smyth 2006).

Traditional Owners are not approached by the government to develop an IPA. Rather, through Indigenous land and sea care organizations, Traditional Owners approach the federal government to initiate the IPA development process. Once the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) is aware of an Indigenous group's interest in an IPA they will begin their consultation process and may support the group in developing a management plan. Implementation is granted based on the *management* plan at which time the IPA becomes registered under the ANRSCP (Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts presentation at Murri Network Conference 2009). Among the fundamental conditions for the establishment of an IPA is that the management plan meet the IUCN *Guidelines for Protected*

Area Categories, based on the requirements of the National Reserve System (Smyth 2006). It is however important to note that the IPA program was developed primarily to bring protection to bioregions that are under-represented by the National Reserve System, and while it has evolved over time it is still driven by this as a main objective.

One of the main differences between an IPA and a National Park is that IPAs do not have legislation. Formal declaration of the IPA is made by the Traditional Owners. With this declaration comes financial and in-kind support (i.e. training and temporary staff) from DEWHA in order to implement the *management* plan and build the capacity for Traditional Owners to be managing *country*. In practical terms, this is what the IPA program does. It merges the need for broader bioregional representation in the National Reserve System with the aspirations of Traditional Owners, and in order to meet the requirements of various communities the program is becoming increasingly flexible. An example of this increased flexibility is the removal of deadlines for management plans, as well as the acceptance of the high turn-over of Indigenous rangers and other staff trained through the program (also run and supported by DEWHA) who tend to move to self-employed and other higher-paid positions. Through the IPA program, the government is attempting to achieve both *conservation* and social objectives.

While IPAs do have a spatial component to them in that the Traditional Owners draw out the area on a map on which they would like to have an IPA declared, it does not mean that such a declaration does not change the tenure of the respective area. Traditional Owners outline the area according to their traditional *country* and the *management* plan, which is submitted to the DEWHA. In this regard, the areas designated on the map as being part of the IPA are the focus of the management program (i.e. monitoring, enforcement, etc.). Traditional Owners are in the driver's seat in terms of the areas that they would like to have within the IPA. The activities within the declared IPA would be guided by the bioregional protection sought out by the National Reserve System and the guidelines set out by the IUCN category. Such activities are determined by the Traditional Owners through the liaising organization during the development of the *management* plan.

The IPA remains as a flexible system even following declaration by the respective Traditional Owners. This means that Traditional Owners can remove portions from the IPA if there were land/sea practices or development interests for an area that were inconsistent with the National Reserve System or IUCN guidelines. An example of such as an endeavour might be an Indigenous owned cattle station or other operation that does not meet the requirements of

the respective *conservation* mandates. Areas as such can be left out of the original designation and additional areas may also be taken out of the declared area if opportunities for developments arise (IPA steering committee meeting August 2009).

The IPA supports the *management* plan rather than implying a change of tenure, which enables Traditional Owners to pursue aspirations in regards to people and *country*. The tenures and the respective jurisdictional management bodies existing within an IPA may be plentiful and overlapping. There are several Indigenous groups in the Wet Tropics region that are currently exploring multi-tenure IPAs (minutes from meeting with Department of Environment and Resource Management staff, June 2009). Tenures may include public freehold lands, national parks, and World Heritage Areas, amongst others. Marine areas typically have not entered into IPA discussions of past because of the issue of tenure (interview with DEWHA senior staff June 2009). This however is changing as new agreements are being forged between marine management bodies and Traditional Owners. There is no one rigid model for IPAs, meaning that IPAs are constantly taking on different shapes and are assessed and implemented on a case-by-case basis (interview with DEWHA senior manager, June 2009).

There are however several examples of how IPAs may take shape. The first IPA declared in Australia is Nantawarrina in inland South Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 2007). This is the traditional *country* of the Adnyamathanha people. The focus of this IPA program has been to provide a balance between conservation of nature and cultural heritage, as well as economic opportunities through employment related to managing the IPA. This is a common thread found throughout the IPAs currently in place in Australia. It is not possible to assert that social wellbeing is the primary purpose of the IPA program due to the limitations of the regional bioassessment criteria. However, within the scope of individual IPAs, socio-economic factors are central to the long-term sustainability of the program and are therefore a main focus in the development and implementation of the various and diverse IPAs.

Chapter 2 – Study area and the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation

2.1 – Giringun country

2.1.1 The geographic study area – The Giringun case study area is located in Northern Queensland, Australia, on the coast in between Townsville and Cairns, and includes traditional lands which are divided into regions belonging to the nine traditional language groups. Regionally, the traditional *country* covers land from North Maria Creek South to Rollingstone, Northwest to Ravenshoe and Herberton, and West to Greenvale. This includes offshore islands and waters surrounding the Brooks, Dunk, Goold, the Family group and Hinchinbrook Island as a part of Giringun country (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map of the case study area and approximate boundaries of Giringun Traditional Owner groups (created by M. Zurba, with elements from the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation 2010 & Australian Government 2009 Websites).

Girringun *country* is focused around the coastal area at the interface of the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef (GBR) eco-regions. The terrestrial Wet Tropics region of Girringun country is primarily dominated by sclerophyll forests containing a high level of biodiversity especially in the areas of the rainforest which are at a higher altitude (Williams et al. 1996). The GBR in its entirety is known to be one of the world's most diverse, productive and complex ecosystems and is home to a number of rare, threatened and endemic species (Zann 2000). The portion of the GBR that is part of as well as adjacent to Girringun *country* is the Central GBR. This portion of the GBR is characterized by several islands with an absence of well defined reefs and coral cays, and relatively shallow and turbid waters due to terrigenous influences (i.e. sediments from erosion) from seasonal flooding (Zann 2000). Threatened species such as green sea turtle and dugong are present along coastal waters (Dobbs 2007). Substantial anthropogenic pressures in the Central GBR ecosystem include prawn and reef fisheries, tourism, and eutrophication and sedimentation due to terrestrial runoff (Zann 2000).

2.1.2 The cultural land/seascape – In relation to the Indigenous Australian peoples living by the coastal areas, the society-environment relationship would be considered as the cultural land/seascape with the land and sea country as being contiguous within the Indigenous Australian worldview (Zann 2000). This is a relationship with country which began when the first ancestors arrived, has been changing fluidly throughout time, and will continue to do so as the peoples go on relating to their surroundings in different ways. However, since colonization, Indigenous Australians have not been able to operate within customary laws but rather have had to adhere to government laws in regards to how they go about interacting with their *country*. Indigenous groups in Australia and around the world are now fighting to recolonize their traditional territories and live under customary laws (Bourke et al. 1998).

Girringun is comprised of nine Traditional Owner groups. The Bandjin, Djiru, Nywaigi, Girramay, Gulnay, and Warrgamay are the six saltwater⁶ groups, and the Gugu Badhun, Jirrbal, and Warungnu are the three inland groups (Figure 2). Each Traditional Owner group has a complex system of customary laws which in turn operates through a kinship system determining subsistence practices such as hunting and gathering, as well as other important life events such as marriage. This is not to say that Traditional Owner groups have remained segregated from one another. Even prior to colonization, they traded, intermarried, and gathered for

⁶ Saltwater groups refers to peoples whose traditional territories are coastal.

corrobores⁷. Movement around country was governed through negotiations between groups, with inland groups being able to access marine resources upon the permission of the Traditional Owner group governing the coastal area.

Girringun Traditional Owners self identify as being part of their respective groups but some also identify in a broader sense as being saltwater or rainforest peoples. This describes a connection to place based on living within a complex social-ecological system. Customary law defined the relationship with nature and practices within nature sustained the people over thousands of years. Traditional foods include fruits and other edible plants, freshwater and saltwater fish as well as other marine animals such as crocodile, dugong, and turtle, and terrestrial animals such as kangaroo. The tools used to harvest food also came from materials sourced from the rainforest such as lawyer cane, which is used for making baskets for carrying and processing foods, as well as for making eel traps. The description of the system and connections to resources is beyond the scope of this document. However, it is important to be aware that this connection exists and is important to the Traditional Owners today. There is still a desire to go on *country* and harvest materials in order to keep culture alive. This is believed to be instrumental in the 'healing' of Indigenous peoples who have been disenfranchised from their culture and have become trapped in social ailments such as drug abuse or alcoholism.

Following colonization many changes occurred within Traditional Owner societies. Many were removed from *country* and have either been permanently alienated or have returned. Mission Beach, in the traditional country of the Djiru people is the historical site of a mission colony, which was established to convert Indigenous peoples from the region into Christians, forcing them from their families and traditional lands, and virtually working towards the eradication of their language and culture (Wet Tropics Management Authority 2010a). Christian missions however were not completely successful at converting Traditional Owners. While many Traditional Owners of today are practitioners of the Christian faith, many are not, and regardless of religion many Traditional Owners still self identify strongly with traditional law and custom. This, however, is marked considerably by demographics with elders being the most knowledgeable about the customary ways. There is great concern amongst Indigenous communities in Australia that the traditional customs will be lost throughout the generations.

⁷ A corroboree is a gathering where traditional dreamtime dances are performed and disputes are settled.

Today the biggest challenge is in getting the young people⁸ back on *country* and educating them in their traditional ways. Social issues with unemployment, and alcohol and drug abuse are prevalent in many Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous organizations in Australia are working towards remedying these issues and in doing so are reconnecting Traditional Owners to *country*. Indigenous organizations play a strong role in reconnecting people to *country* through land and sea management programs, social programming, and other cultural programs such as the arts. The programs within such organizations may be symbolically divided to accommodate the perspectives of the broader society and government departments that the organizations form partnerships with, however a program will generally contribute to more than one kind of desired outcome.

2.2 – The Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

2.2.1 Girringun Aboriginal Corporation roots and structure – Girringun was originally formed and incorporated in 1996 under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976* as the *Girringun Elders Reference Group* with the chief mandate of representing the aspirations of six Traditional Owner groups in regards to land and sea *management* over traditional *country*. Girringun then went through a name change in 2002 to become the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation (GAC). Girringun has considerably broadened its scope of activities over the years while maintaining its strong connection to a grass roots way of doing business. Girringun is led by a vision for its members and is directed by a board of Traditional Owners, which includes associates from each group. The individual Traditional Owner groups determine the associates through culturally appropriate means. The board meets regularly (approximately once a month) to guide and review the activities of the GAC within a culturally appropriate context.

The Girringun Board has a Chairperson who works closely with the Executive Officer. The Chair and the Executive Officer are responsible for representing the Traditional Owners, and for negotiations with the broader community in regards to activities affecting Girringun country and Girringun people. Alongside the Executive Officer is a team of GAC staff responsible for running the GAC's core activities and maintaining the overall functionality of the organization. It is important to Girringun to have Traditional Owners employed in GAC positions because this is

⁸ It is more respectful in Traditional Owner culture to say 'young people' instead of youth.

part of the GAC's core mandates to provide Traditional Owners with meaningful and culturally appropriate employment. When a Traditional Owner is not holding a certain position in the organization there is a trainee working under that person who will eventually be promoted once their skills have been sufficiently developed. The staff members report to the Executive Officer on all activities, and the Executive Officer in turn reports back to the board. The GAC is an organization has direct and regular feedback cycles from the board, and is therefore working through processes adaptively (Figure 2).

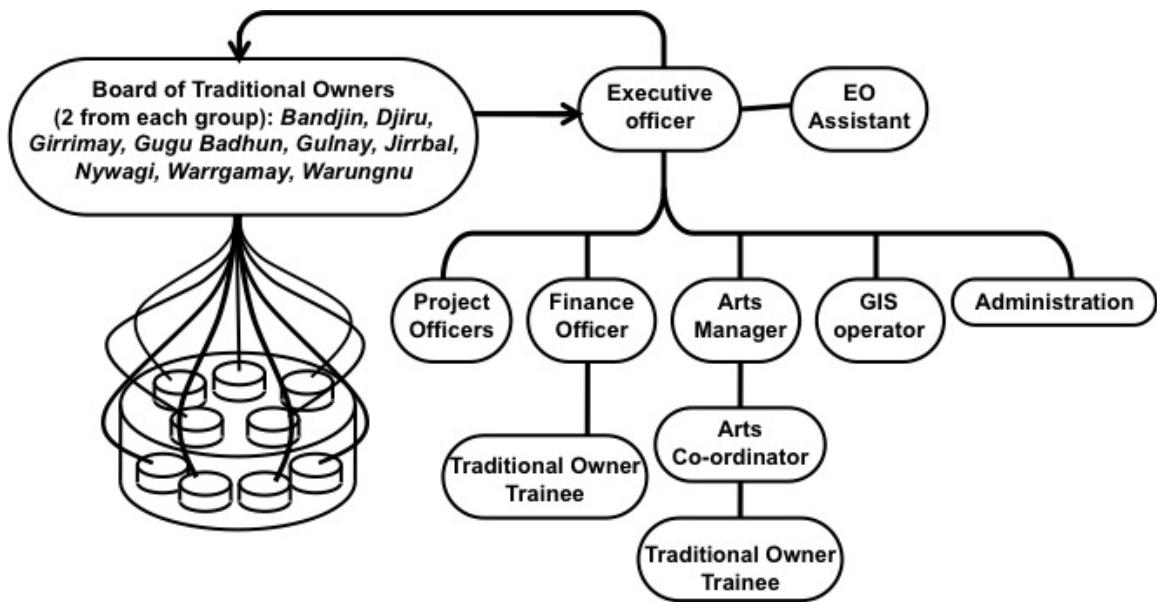


Figure 2. The Gerringun Aboriginal Corporation Structure. GAC staff work under the direction of the Executive officer who consults regularly with the board of Traditional Owners.

2.3.2 Activities and ethics – Gerringun has overcome many challenges in working towards its goals. First and foremost has been engaging and supporting the Traditional Owners from nine language groups. Gerringun's board of Traditional Owners has been the primary vehicle for facilitating the recognition of each group's distinct sets of values and unique

aspirations. Through this equally representative structure, Giringun has been able to work as a unifying force and has successfully drawn the approximate territorial boundaries for the nine groups. With these defined areas, Giringun can then negotiate in regards to policy frameworks and activities affecting Traditional Owner's groups. The framework of the organization plays a pivotal role in natural resources and protected areas *management* and *governance* processes leading to beneficial tangible outcomes for Traditional Owners. However, it is not the structure alone that permits for constructive processes. The structure is essential but requires cohesive leadership in order to allow the organization to function as a working collective.

Leadership and good governance are central to the GAC's mandates for achieving fair and favourable outcomes for Traditional Owners and the broader community. These two critical components are what fortifies the unification of the nine groups and have been credited for being responsible for program achievements (Box 2). Therefore, having accountability within the organization governed by Traditional Owners sets the foundation and brings forth the spirit and the faculties required to work through a variety of sometimes lengthy and challenging organizational processes. This adaptive approach to working maintains consistency and credibility within the organization based on rigorous consultation. In this regard, the GAC plays an important communicative role between Traditional Owners and outside interests such as government agencies, thus building possibilities for shared outcomes, maintaining culturally appropriate levels of communication between agencies and the organization, and reducing the potential for 'process exhaustion'⁹. The organization aims to provide consistent, credible, and accountable services for Traditional Owners. Thus the *governance* structure within the organization is especially important to outcomes of the organization. Ultimately, because the organization is governed by Traditional Owners, there is accountability within the organization.

⁹ Exhaustion that a community member may experience from being involved in too many bureaucratic processes.

Box 2. The Girringun Aboriginal Corporation has had many notable achievements over the years which have contributed to the overall capacity of the organization as well as the rights and wellbeing of Traditional Owners. Some of Girringun’s notable achievements include (Zurba and Rist 2009):

Fishers Creek Outstation – Established in 2000 and now maintained by a Traditional Owner. This outstation was developed out of a perceived need by the broader community. Girringun responded to this by collaborating with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Society (now DERM) who permitted the construction of the outstation in a National Park and the Cardwell Shire Council (now the Cassowary Coast Regional Council) who found an honorarium for site cleanup and maintenance. The Queensland Department of Transport also made the commitment to upgrade the boat ramp at the outstation. Fishers Creek represents a working collaborative outcome and is an important step towards bringing Traditional Owner perspectives back on country. It provides Traditional Owners with the opportunity to be on *country* and engage activities within culturally suitable contexts. It is a place for reconnecting, healing, and spending time with community and family. Places like these are important for the overall wellbeing of Traditional Owners and play an essential role in maintaining connections with *country*.

Cultural Heritage, GIS and Mapping – The GAC undertakes many projects which aim to achieve the intergenerational transmission and recording of culture. Cultural activities such as camps and *Canoe Trips* provide opportunities for Traditional Owners to pass on stories and be on *country*. Through these processes sacred sites and other sites of cultural significance may be recorded and mapped with GIS. Cultural heritage data is then stored in the Cultural Heritage Database where it can be accessed by Traditional Owners or GAC staff members for various projects. Girringun believes that this cultural information is important for guiding all projects occurring on *country* and affecting Traditional Owners. This information also provides opportunities for future economic ventures such as culturally based tourism operations.

Participation in co-management studies – The GAC has participated in a number of *co-management* studies with the University of Queensland and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in order to work towards the development of sustainable natural resources and protected areas arrangements and programs with government.

Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit – The Indigenous Saltwater Ranger Unit was established in 2004 and is a collaborative venture between the GAC and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). Under this program Indigenous rangers wear both a GAC and a QPWS badge receiving guidance and training from both organizations. This program provides meaningful employment for local Indigenous people and on the ground representation of Traditional Owner aspirations.

Box 2 continued...

Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) – Giringun established Australia’s first TUMRA in 2005 and is in the process of negotiating the next 5-year TUMRA. The TUMRA is accredited by the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Environmental Protection Agency (now also part of DERM) and is an established agreement with these agencies as well as the DERM, which makes Traditional Owner *management* of hunting of turtle and dugong possible through a permitting system within their respective traditional saltwater estates.

Giringun Aboriginal Arts Centre (GAAC) – The Giringun Aboriginal Arts Center has been growing alongside the GAC and was officially established in the latter half of 2008. The GAAC has several goals in regards to visual and other art forms including cultural preservation, artistic vibrancy, and improved social and spiritual wellbeing. Being able to participate in culture through art also provides Traditional Owners with opportunities to transfer skills and knowledge to the next generation. These practices lead to stronger connections to *country*, enhanced confidence, as well as economic stability through arts enterprises. The GAAC currently has approximately 20 regular working artists and there is opportunity for this number to increase as the centre builds up its role in the community.

Social programs – The GAC facilitates several social programs such as the *Soft Skills Certificate Program* where Traditional Owners are invited to participate in learning about nutrition and other life skills. The GAC has also been involved in providing Traditional Owners with financial and other advising services. These are just a couple of examples of the many social services, which are provided to Giringun Traditional Owners by the GAC. Programs like these contribute to the overall wellbeing of Traditional Owner individuals and households, and the broader community.

Giringun Tourism Potential Study – The GAC has been involved in marine and terrestrial tourism potential studies with the CRC Reef Research Centre and James Cook University in order to determine potential impacts from tourism activities and explore culturally appropriate enterprises. This has contributed to the GAC’s overall capacity to work with different parties in regards to activities on *country* and demonstrate ability in regards to moving through different types of multi-party processes. The studies have developed resources for Traditional Owners to be aware of and have a say over what kinds of tourism activities are occurring on *country*.

Chapter 3 – Methods for inquiry

3.1 – Research paradigm and approach

The work with Giringun provides a single case study which I have used to answer my research question (Stake 2005, Cresswell 2007). The Giringun case study is a valuable study in its own right because it provides the opportunity to look at a unique arrangement. However, it is also being used to answer the broader questions around partnerships, *co-management* and protected area systems and therefore cannot be what Stake (2005) describes as an intrinsic case study, which is used to look at the dynamics surrounding a given situation so that they may be understood simply within the context of the given scenario under investigation. Instrumental case studies on the other hand are used to represent other cases bringing about a more holistic understanding of broader questions about systems (Stake 2005). Therefore, the case study lies somewhere on the continuum between an intrinsic and instrumental case study because my case is providing a supportive role to the research question (Berg 2004). It maintains a focus on drawing from lessons learned to contribute to knowledge of protected areas systems and how partnerships affect the broader concepts around co-management.

Qualitative methods in the form of document review and semi-structured interviews, as well as methods using a participatory approach such as participant observation, a focus group and a creative workshop were used to answer the research questions (Figure 3). I spent a total of three months in the region between the months of June and September 2009 (Southern hemisphere winter). In February 2010 I returned for a short trip (a few days) to do further verification work. The approaches to the research were interactive, exploratory and theory building rather than based in “concrete theory” (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002). My investigations seek to explore the attributes of partnerships (such as reciprocity, trust, respect, etc.) in light of existing *management* frameworks that can be mapped and described. Such perspectives can be thought of as a set of personal truths belonging to many groups and/or individuals. Therefore, my research fits within the post-structuralist paradigm in that it is counter to the idea of a single or absolute ‘truth’ (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002). Results are presented critically and descriptively working towards developing an understanding of the existing partnership dynamics, the perspectives of the governance and management partners, and the power sharing occurring

between partners. Lessons learned are also reported descriptively so that management partners may assess them and incorporated into existing and future partnerships.

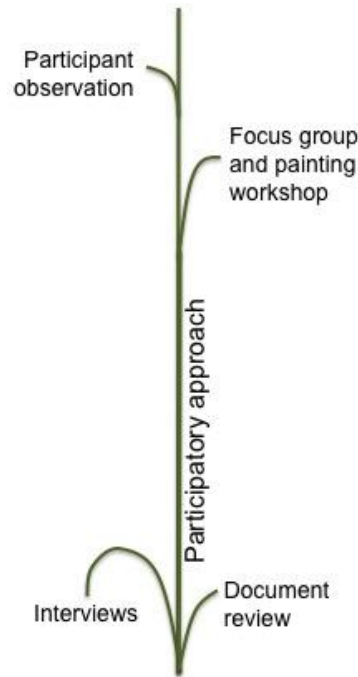


Figure 3. Depiction of the qualitative field methods used in relation to the participatory approach. Demonstrates how certain methods relate to the participatory approach.

Participatory qualitative methodologies can give a voice to research participants who would not otherwise be engaged in having their values and aspirations heard and channelled into relevant forums (Wang 2001). Participatory methods which engage members of a community can also break down some of the walls between the researcher and the participants, and in some cases can be an empowering process especially when the participants define many of the attributes of the conversation (Pink 2007). The participatory elements of my research are discrete from the non-participatory methods (Figure 3). Participatory methods can be described as being focused on research participants as being contributors to the direction of the research in a fashion that encourages and takes into account the participant's reflections upon attributes and issues affecting their community (Berg 2004). To achieve this I used an immersive approach

in which I became an active member of the GAC office, which enabled me to be an observer of forums and processes, and provided me with the opportunity to build relationships with key people in the organization, who provided on-going feedback. I positioned myself as a volunteer within the organization and made my time and skills fully available. I attended all meetings pertaining to natural resources and protected areas *governance* and *management* and took meeting minutes. I also produced computer presentations and graphics for the GAC to use at conferences. I kept regular business hours with the organization when I was not out on *country* with Traditional Owners, in the cities interviewing government officials, or conducting other forms of field work.

Open channels for communication, clear intentions for the research relationship, and demonstrations of reciprocity were critical components to the successful outcomes of the work. This was especially important because my research was dependent on being accepted and included as a trustworthy volunteer. A research agreement was given to the GAC upon my arrival and was reviewed by the Executive Officer and the Chairman of the board. Much of the initial stage of my time with Giringun was spent getting to know GAC staff and Traditional Owners who are closely involved with the organization. At this stage it was about 'putting my best foot forward' and allowing relationships to build and evaluations of myself by others to occur. My interactions with participants did not occur in the manipulative sense that Bernard (2006) discusses in *Managing Impressions*. Rather it was an opportunity for people to understand where I come from in terms of my personal values and background. This in the end made the research more comfortable. Once key people within the GAC trusted me as a person with good intentions, opportunities to discuss research ideas became easier to identify and develop.

It was also decided at the outset of the project that in order for the research to directly benefit the GAC there should be a written product produced during my time in the field. This was negotiated and was set up so that it would be mutually beneficial to the organization and to the production of my thesis. It was eventually determined through several brainstorming sessions with the Executive Officer that the document would be one that the GAC could use for recruiting core funding from government. The document was entitled *Investing in Successful Processes: Giringun Aboriginal Corporation*. It featured a history of the organization, the current organization structure, past achievements, the GAC vision and driving forces behind achievements, a cost- benefit analysis of investing in organizations like the GAC, and advice for

other Indigenous organizations trying to build credibility and work with government. Girringun is focused on moving forward with its own agendas but also has a strong desire to promote other Indigenous organizations achieving similar outcomes.

Relationship building with the arts community was another important participatory component of my research. The Girringun Aboriginal Arts Centre (GAAC) is an active and strong component of the GAC, representing both traditional and modern forms of Indigenous art from the area. My involvement with the GAAC was especially important for my work with Traditional Owners in expressing their values and aspirations for *country* through art. The location of the GAAC, being directly next to the GAC, was an important factor as it is a hub where artists meet to work on various projects regularly throughout the week. My voluntary role with the GAAC was similar to that within the GAC in that it enabled me to build a relationship with GAAC staff and set the foundation for future work together. It was important for me to establish a relationship with the GAAC staff and community for the artistic component of the research to work. Spending time with the Arts Manager and Arts Coordinator was particularly important, as they were the ‘gatekeepers’ to the GAAC and the Girringun artists. Through volunteering with the GAAC, the staff learned about my purpose for working with the GAC, my degree of sincerity, and how my research was seeking to contribute towards empowering Traditional Owners in land and sea *governance* and *management* arenas. I assisted both within the arts centre and at outside public exhibitions under the direction of the GAAC staff. Tasks varied from packaging artwork to assisting with writing grants. Spending time with Traditional Owner artists at the GAAC was also very important. I was invited to create art at times with Traditional Owners, which made for a very social environment where we could get to know one another and find common ground through creativity. Once a relationship was established with the arts community, the planning for the participatory art focus group and workshop became possible.

3.2 – Field methods

3.2.1 Documents analysis – The beginning of my research in Australia began with document review under the guidance of my liaison with Girringun (Dr. Helen Ross) as well as the CEO of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation (Phil Rist). I familiarized myself further with the Girringun resource management and protected areas arrangements and other literature

pertinent to the organization's activities. There were three main background documents: the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement*, the *Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement*, and the *Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Implementation Plan*. I also spent time reviewing literature for other arrangements around Australia that involved government agencies involved in Girringun partnerships. This enabled me to identify the characteristics of GAC programs that had been previously achieved within National and State government programs, and those that were pushing the boundaries of current frameworks.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews and storyline elicitation — Interviews were conducted with the purpose of extracting storylines, which are the narratives understood and experienced by actors giving them a common symbolic reference point for understanding common social realities (Hajer 1995). Methods involving open-ended questions about broad themes work well for obtaining stories (Marringly and Lawlor 2000). Marringly and Lawlor (2000) describe people as natural storytellers who will tell stories even if they are not being purposely elicited by the interviewer. Therefore, it was appropriate that interviews followed a semi-structured format and was not what Dunn (2005) would call an interview schedule, which uses “a list of carefully worded questions”. Interviews followed instead what Dunn (2005) calls a pyramid structure, which presents straightforward questions at the beginning of the interview proceeding with more abstract questions towards the end. Questions were also posed in a fashion to elicit descriptions (i.e. “Tell me about...”) in relation to a given theme. This allowed for the inquiry to move towards relevant directions depending on the interviewees' experiences and involvement in natural resources and protected areas *management* and *governance* processes. The theme of the interviews depended on which category the interviewee fell into. Representatives of Girringun (Traditional Owners, GAC staff, and Indigenous rangers) and government senior managers were the two study groups for the semi-structured interviews (Table 2). Government interviewees were selected based on their participation within relevant management and governance forums, and/or through identification by key informants within the GAC. A total of eight government managers were interview participants (Appendix A). Traditional Owners were also identified by GAC staff and interviews were broadly focused on the question ‘*What does caring for country mean to you?*’. Interviews with government senior managers as well as Traditional Owners investigated values and aspirations regarding land and sea governance and management issues. Girringun Indigenous rangers were interviewed in order to understand

their perspectives about the environmental, personal, and political outcomes of Indigenous on-the-ground¹⁰ *management of country*.

Table 2. Interview themes for the respective groups involved in the management of Girringun country.

Groups Interviewed	Themes explored
Girringun Traditional Owners, GAC staff, and Indigenous rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘What does caring for country mean to you?’</i>: Perceptions surrounding country, important resources and features of the land and sea, stories that describe the meaning and connection to the land • Experiences with the managers of traditional country including the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, government agencies, and NGOs • Exploration of ‘lessons learned’ from the <i>governance and management</i> processes of past and present • Adaptations to and knowledge of the <i>governance and management</i> processes past and present
Senior managers working for government agencies involved in natural resources and protected area arrangements over Girringun country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspective about <i>conservation</i> and the role of protected areas • Desires for the future direction of <i>governance management</i> of Girringun country • Experiences with the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation • Exploration of ‘lessons learned’ from the <i>governance management</i> processes of past and present • Adaptations to and knowledge of the <i>governance and management</i> processes past and present

¹⁰ Referring to the hands-on delivery of a program in relation to land and/or sea activities

Awareness of population demographics and cultural context contributed to the overall reliability of the interview data (Hay 2008). It was important to interview those who had the most insights into the activities occurring on *country*. Demographically, the Traditional Owner interviewees belonged to different gender and age cohorts, with a 3:1 male to female gender ratio, and an age range from mid-30s to late 70s. A total of ten men and three women were Traditional Owner interview participants, and of these participants nine were of the older generation and four were of the younger generation (Appendix A). The weight towards male interviewees is due to a higher involvement of males in land and sea *governance* and *management*, which is based on 'speaking for *country*' as being traditionally a men's pursuit for the Traditional Owner groups in the region (account by several Traditional Owners). This, however, is changing as increasingly women are becoming accepted into arenas where decisions for *country* are made (based on participant observation). The weight towards the older generation of participants was due to elders being respected as advisors within the communities (account by several Traditional Owners).

Discussions about *country* which take place *on country*¹¹ are especially relevant to Traditional Owners. This made trips out onto *country* with Traditional Owners particularly important to the research. Discussions *on country* happened with Traditional Owners from three of the Traditional Owner groups. The first occasion for this was a *Canoe Trip* (Figure 4), which was part of the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge preservation goals of the GAC. This three day trip was on the Tully River, the traditional territory of the Gulnay people. Girramay peoples were also included in this trip as the two groups are neighbours and are accustomed to trading and sharing of their cultures. The Nywaigi people own a cattle station on their traditional territory and this was the other opportunity to talk about *country* while *on country*. While the cattle station (Figure 5) did not represent traditional land management practices, it was perceived by the Nywaigi Traditional Owners in a contemporary fashion in which they could interact and reconnect with *country*. It is the sense of place and feeling of interaction with the natural environment which makes talking about *country* while *on country* so important. These were my only opportunities for this but they were meaningful and provided me with very

¹¹ This does not necessarily refer to discussions happening within traditional territories within towns. Is related to a reflection which occurs when out on the land and sea.

important insights, and built my understanding of Traditional Owner perspectives for *country*. Spending time out *on country* with all nine of the Traditional Owner groups would have been beyond the timeline of this project.



Figure 4. Gulnay Traditional Owner being interviewed and recorded during the Tully River *Canoe Trip*. Places of cultural significance and stories are recorded as part of the efforts, which the GAC is making towards the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. Being invited on this trip made for excellent opportunities to talk to Traditional Owners about country within a relevant setting (Photo: M. Zurba; July 3rd 3009).



Figure 5. *Mungalla Cattle Station: part of Nywaigi traditional territory* (Photo: M. Zurba; July 8th 2009)

3.2.3 Participant Observation— Maintaining a certain degree of naiveté in regards to the participants’ perspectives and cultural values was not difficult because it was my first time working with Indigenous Australians. This is noted to be a strength of a researcher because it may contribute to objectivity by suspending judgements about culture and place (Bernard 2006). My approach with Traditional Owners was similar to the approach that I take with any other person. I met people with open-mindedness, acceptance, respect, and sincerity. This is a personal ethic and is one that lent itself quite well to my research as I was generally accepted by those who participated, both Traditional Owners and non Traditional Owners. This is not to say that the research was without challenge. Indigenous Australians are some of the most ‘studied’ peoples in the world and as such have a history with researchers who at times have been less than considerate towards Traditional Owners involved in the research. Regardless of this, my interpersonal strengths (and this is what I believe them to be), led to the development of friendships and likings with my participants. I was aware of this when documenting my research findings and consciously made efforts to maintain objectivity by reminding myself that I am seeking information based on multiple perspectives, and that it is not about judging the “rights”

and “wrongs” of the situation. I also maintained a personal journal so that I could reflect upon personal interactions and perceptions.

I witnessed responses, interactions, and processes throughout my time in the field. In some cases I was separate from the interactions and in others I was involved and a part of the overall process. I was an official ‘minute taker’ at all of the meetings relevant to my research and was invited to attend NRM conferences where Giringun was invited to present its current and future work. These made for excellent opportunities to observe first hand the interactions between the GAC and the various government departments. It enabled me to observe the *management* and *governance* partnership processes and the respective levels of respect and reciprocity in action. Participant observation also took place within the GAC and amongst the Traditional Owners. Observing the daily ins-and-outs of the organization and the manner in which the GAC operates and works through challenges with their Traditional Owner constituents gave me genuine insights as to the level of representation that the GAC was providing for Giringun Traditional Owners. I was also able to witness conversations about *country* by spending time with Traditional Owners. This would happen on outings, during the *Canoe Trip*, and was an important part of the participatory art creative process.

3.2.4 ‘What does caring for country mean to you’: focus group & participatory painting workshop – A moderated focus group was used in order to further explore the meaning of *caring for country* with Traditional Owners. Berg (2004) states that moderated focus groups are highly suitable for exploring topics that have to do with people’s attitudes about a topic. In this sense the focus group method of inquiry is ideal for observing expressions of values and aspirations for *caring for country* amongst Giringun Traditional Owners. The focus group involved fourteen Traditional Owner participants from the Djiru, Girramay, Jirrbal, Nywaigi, and Warrgamay groups (Appendix A). Half of the participants were from the Girramay group because of a greater presence of Girramay Tradition Owners at the GAAC (account by GAAC staff). The focus group and used conceptual mapping, a technique lending itself well to the eliciting of storylines and for allowing the visions and aspirations for *caring for country* to be freely expressed (Mongan et al. 2008). The focus group was used as the initial phase to the *caring for country* participatory art workshop.

Participatory art is an emergent method in natural resources management and has roots in other participatory methods such as photo-elicitation, which is a participatory

qualitative method with central aims of giving a voice to the research participants so that their unique and often seldom heard ideas may be articulated (Wang 2001). With participatory photography/photo-elicitation, photographs are used as a means to identify and explore objects, places and events of importance, enabling community members to express how these attributes are perceived and given significance (Wang 2001). Participatory methods as such are also regarded as processes capable of breaking down some of the walls between the researcher and the community participants because it aimed at being an empowering process which allows the participants to define many of the attributes of the conversation (Pink 2007). This methodology has the potential to engage participants that would be otherwise marginalized or disregarded, and has the capacity for reflexivity amongst participants and between the researcher and participants (Finley 2003).

The theme of the participatory art workshop was an extension of the focus group theme: *'What does caring for country mean to you'*. The purpose in this endeavour was to explore the meanings of the environment and resources, and aspirations for *country* with Traditional Owners. Within this forum, Traditional Owners were able to discuss their ideas for *caring for country*, produce a visual representation of their perspectives, and then discuss the outcomes of the project within the group. In addition to exploring ideas of how the message could be spread to the broader community and other Indigenous communities experiencing similar situations in regards to land and sea *governance* and *management*. The first stage in this component of the research was identifying whether or not the Girringun case was suited for participatory art. This was fairly straightforward because the Girringun Traditional Owner groups have a vibrant artistic culture, represented by the GAAC, which is a hub for Girringun artists, making for an ideal venue for such a workshop since it is a hub for Girringun artists. This made getting interested people together to create art a realistic endeavour. Following the first focus group it was decided by the participants that a collaborative creation in the form of an acrylic on canvas painting was desired for exploring the topic.

The canvas was stretched and the background colour was decided collectively among the participants. The canvas was available in the arts centre for a period of approximately six weeks where Traditional Owners could have access to work on their pieces individually or with other Traditional Owner participants. The creative process, especially because it was of a collaborative nature, was equally important as the finished product. As participants spent time at the canvas working on their individual pieces, they would talk about their values and

aspirations for country with me and with other Traditional Owner participants further contributing to the storyline data about *caring for country* (Figures 6 & 7). The piece went through stages, and as it neared completion participants would also notice if important attributes were missing. The identification of such features was important to the overall expression of *what caring for country* means because of the fact that it highlighted the absolute necessity of certain components to appear within the painting. The workshop process was recorded in the same fashion as all other participant observations.

Time did not permit for an official debriefing focus group. However, I discussed the contributions to the painting and did a debriefing with each artist individually so that I could receive first hand interpretation of their work. One of the lead artists of the work also prepared a document outlining the discussions emerging from and around the work, as well as the language names¹² for the features of the painting.

¹² Name of features in the traditional language of the group that the participant belongs to



Figure 6. Traditional Owners planning *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas participatory painting (Photo: M. Zurba; July 22nd 2009)



Figure 7. Traditional Owner artists working on *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas participatory painting (Photo: M. Zurba; August 25th 2009)



Figure 8. Traditional Owner artists who worked on *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas (from bottom left clockwise): Gwen Hodges, Sally Murray, Theresa Beeron, Dena Leo, Christine George, Leonard Andy, John Murray, Emily Murray, and Ninney Murray. Not in the photo: Glyniss Geesu, Evelyn Ivey, Penny Ivey, Phylcia Murray, and Troy Whelan. (Photo: Rod Neilson; September 1st 2009)

3.3 – Validity and data verification

I used triangulation in order to achieve internal validity (Anfara Jr., Brown and Mangione 2002; Stake 2005), thereby verifying data pertaining to my objectives (Figure 9). This enabled me to report my findings with confidence due to the ability to cross reference my data through different methodologies and from different sources. Triangulation for the third objective was conducted in order to obtain sufficient data and to be sure that what was being recorded was the desired message to be expressed. Verification with key GAC informants was also conducted for verifying information pertaining directly to the GAC. Member checking was also informally conducted within interviews in the focus group in the form of reiteration and paraphrasing of information (Creswell and Miller 2000).

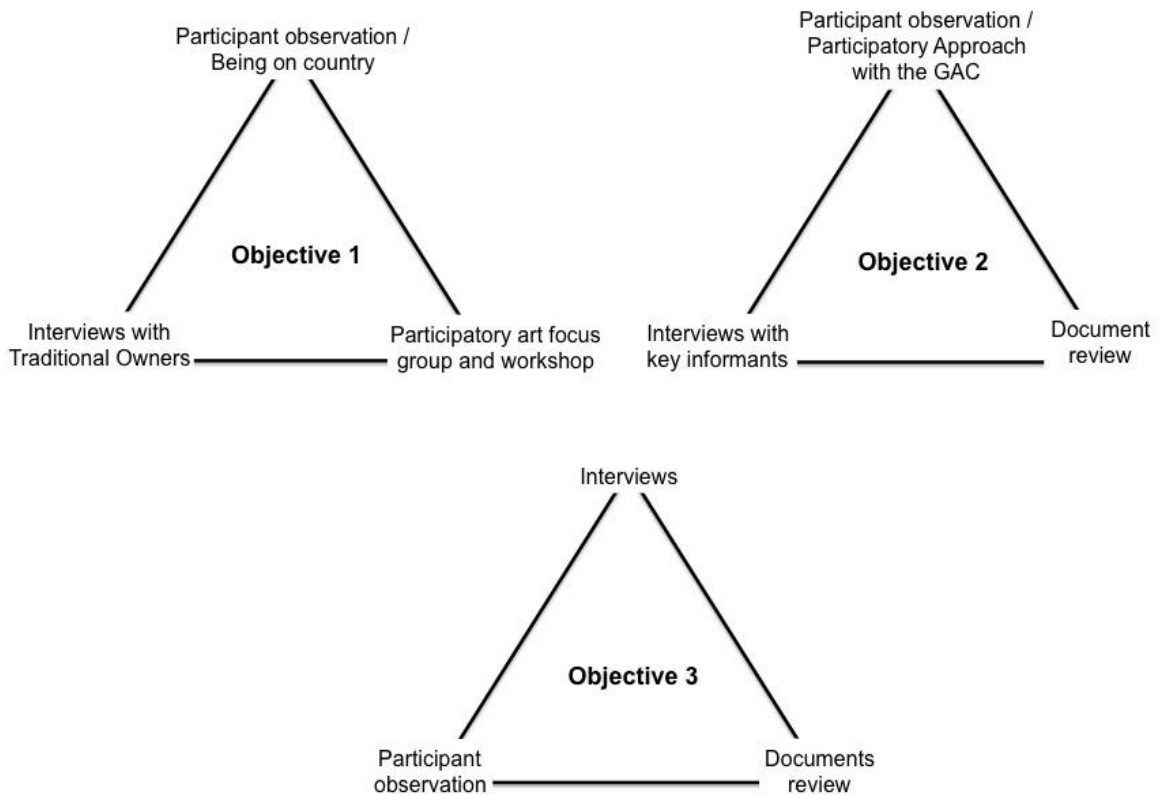


Figure 9. Data verification through triangulation for objective 1) Explore Traditional Owner values and aspirations for country, 2) Identify and conceptually map the governance and management institutional arrangements on Giringun country and describe the relationships between the different components of the arrangements, and objective 3) Evaluate the experiences of the governance and management partners with an eye for ‘lessons learned’.

3.4 – Analytical methods

3.4.1 Coding — I used computer aided qualitative data analysis software in order to organize the data in such a way that accommodated the coding of themes, data retrieval, and the creation of networks among data segments (Peace and van Hoven 2008), which are all important components of my research. Integration of data types allowed me to approach my data in different ways and was therefore a powerful tool for the exploratory research proposed here (Fielding 2008). The software also allowed for recursive working processes by facilitating the development of different versions of the ideas being considered. I decided to use *TAMS*

(free shareware for MacOS) as it was cost effective and provided me with all of the tools that I needed.

3.4.2 The storyline form of discourse analysis –Discourse can be defined as the “ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that is produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (Hajer 1995). Hajer (1995) and Dryzek (2005) advocate for the storyline method of discourse analysis to tease apart the complexities and investigate dynamics operating within and between institutions. In this sense, policy positions would not exist in the absence of storylines, and as such storylines can be explored as the prime vehicles for social change and changes in policy. Within this construction, storylines are capable of reducing discursive complexity while extending beyond hegemonic¹³ environmental discourse and discursive closure¹⁴.

Gelich and colleagues (2005) successfully applied the storyline approach to a marine commons case study in Chile. They used responses from a questionnaire in order to identify the dominant storylines. I chose to explore storylines thematically in order to study partnerships, perspectives, and power sharing, as well as lessons learned. Each objective had common subjects and responses, therefore, has a set of storyline themes, based on groupings emerging from the data common subjects and responses. Here I explain how the storyline methodology was applied to each objective and the basis for the themes explored. It is important to note that a storyline does not always imply a direct quote. Because storylines are thematic, it is possible to draw from notes taken from participant observations. Both direct quotes and other forms of data are used and are used to describe the phenomena occurring within the case study. The storyline approach was used to investigate the three broad research themes: perspective, partnerships and power sharing, as well as lessons learned.

¹³ Meaning the dominating themes and rhetoric of current and popular environmental themes known in social discourse (e.g. “humans are causing declines in endangered species populations”)

¹⁴ Loss of meaning associated with the filling in of gaps by actors associated with the interpretive-reductionist approach leading to the suppression of further communication (e.g. “species are disappearing because of Indigenous hunting”)

Theme 1: Storylines about perspectives on caring for country (Traditional Owner worldview) and conservation (Western worldview), including the GAC vision.

Storylines by their very nature require recognition of metaphors and figurative speech (Dryzek 2005). This is especially true when working with different populations, which when speaking of similar issues, may use completely different forms of imagery and semantics to express common themes or ideas. For this reason, it was important to be aware of linguistic subtleties and dissimilarities. Relevance to a given topics were revealed within the respective cultural contexts in which the investigations were taking place. Some of the Traditional Owner participants used more bureaucratic language because they had been entrenched in bureaucratic processes for many years, while other spoke about *caring for country* from a cultural and spiritual perspective, using dreamtime stories and anecdotal experiences to draw attention to areas of importance. Acknowledgement of the diversity of symbolism found in this component of the research allowed for a more in depth analysis and a more authentic representation of Traditional Owner values and perspectives within a contemporary context.

Storylines from the participatory art workshop were also important for understanding perspectives on *caring for country*. Arts based approaches are capable of reaching further and obtaining information beyond the dominant discourses that come out of more conventional research methods, such as interviewing and focus groups (Estrella and Forinash 2007). It is important to note that the data are not the actual art piece itself. The discussions that were generated out of the individual artistic contributions to the piece, as well as the work in its entirety provided the discourses contributing the storyline data. Therefore, the *Caring for country* focus groups, participant observation and debriefing data were treated as additional discourses entering the pool of discourse data on the values and aspirations for Giringun Traditional Owners. Storylines from Traditional Owners and GAC staff members about the GAC were also recorded to give context and investigate whether Traditional Owner aspirations were being adequately represented.

Theme 2: Storylines about partnerships between the GAC and government agencies and employees, including Traditional Owner and government senior management perspectives on the GAC as an organization

Storyline analysis was applied to investigate partnership attributes such as trust, reciprocity, and perspectives about arrangements and partners involved in *governance* and *management*. Storylines about partnerships were sought out through participant observation and interviews with GAC staff, Traditional Owners, Indigenous rangers, and government senior managers. The data were then categorized according to the themes that were common within and amongst groups.

Theme 3: Storylines describing power sharing in *governance* and *management* partnerships.

Foucault (1980) speaks of power in terms of the flow of knowledge and discourses surrounding time, place, domain and consciousness. He and other scholars working on such analyses describe how the discourses emerging between and within institutions can provide insights for the analysis of norms and power dynamics, thus creating the potential for practical and policy implications (Foucault 1980; Le Meur 1999; Hajer 1995; Dryzek 2005). Storylines were ideal for investigating power sharing because they are effective for exploring social capital and accountability, as well as the components and movements of power within the system (Le Meur 1999; Birner and Wittmer 2004). Storyline themes emerged from the respective inquiries about the partnerships on Giringun *country*.

Theme 4: Storylines describing lessons learned from past and present governance and management partnerships between the GAC and government agencies.

Storylines about lessons learned were mainly categorized according to their sources. Lessons learned were sought from Giringun Traditional Owners, the GAC as an organization, as well as from government senior staff members. The approach to reporting of lessons learned is more descriptive than it is analytical. All lessons factor into the bigger picture of learning and adaptation, and are therefore valid and hold value in their own rights.

Table 3. Summary of methods for inquiry and analytical methods of each research objective

Objective	Method for inquiry	Analytical methods
<p>1) Explore Traditional Owner values and aspirations for <i>country</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Traditional Owners • Participant Observation / Being on country with Traditional Owners • Participatory art focus group and workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyline form of discourse analysis; themes: relating to <i>caring for country</i> and <i>conservation</i>
<p>2) Identify and conceptually map the governance and management institutional arrangements on Girringun <i>country</i> and describe the relationships between the different components of the arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with key informants • Participant Observation / Participatory approach with the GAC • Feedback through minute taking during meetings between the GAC and government partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building of institutional models/conceptual maps • Storyline form of discourse analysis; partnerships and power sharing themes • Document review
<p>3) Evaluate the experiences of the governance and management partners with an eye for ‘lessons learned’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with government, GAC staff and Traditional Owners • Participant Observation • Feedback through minute taking during meetings between the GAC and government partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyline form of discourse analysis • Document review

3.5 – Limitations

The geographic area that Girringun encompasses is very large and Traditional Owners are very spread out (Figure 1). The main research limitation had to do with the exploration of the topic of *caring for country* with Girringun Traditional Owners because access to opportunities to talk to Traditional Owners about *country* while out on *country* were limited. This limitation was mainly due to the scope and timeframe of the research. Had the length of time spent in the field been significantly longer (i.e. a year or more), it would have been possible to have more of such outings. Interviews were, therefore, based on appointments that suited the convenience of the participants. However, as mentioned earlier, there were a couple of opportunities to *talk about country* (interview) with Traditional Owners while on country, and these experiences enhanced the data on what *caring for country* means significantly. Traditional Owner participants did make every effort to reflect on *country* during the interviews and express their unique perspectives on their values and aspirations for land and sea management. The *caring for country* focus group and workshop were also significant to expanding this pool of data and mitigated the need for such outings within the scope of this project.

There were few other limitations related to the logistics of collecting data in the field. The organization was prepared for my arrival and I was fully engaged in the research processes as it unfolded. Government senior managers were very accommodating and generous with their time and their perspectives. Had the timeline been longer and budget been more substantial, I would have travelled to Canberra to interview more federal senior managers involved in the IPA program. I, however, did interview the main liaising senior manager working on IPA implementation for all of Queensland and the Northern Territory. I believe that this was the most important person to speak with because ultimately this person was in the position to direct the development of the program on the side of government. Had more time been afforded, it would have also been ideal to include the implementation phases of the new and renewed programs that were developing. This could be a potential area for future researchers working with the GAC to explore. My research was a snapshot in time in which some programs had been on the ground running for sometime and others were just on their way and being discussed.

Chapter 4 – Results & Discussion: Perspectives on conservation strategies for Giringun country

4.1 – Traditional Owner perspectives: “What does caring for country mean to you?”

Traditional Owner storylines fell within five thematic groups. Four of the themes relating to *caring for country* were discrete: cultural, environmental, political and wellbeing. In addition, ‘holism’ was central to the discussions and was therefore made its own thematic category (Figure 10). Some of the discourses were related to one or more of the themes specifically, while others were describing holism and the broader system of *caring for country*. Visions for the future were also articulated through the interviews, focus group (Appendix B), and creative workshop data. Visions were expressed in relation to the identified themes and were voiced from both traditional and contemporary positions. These discussions revolved around the economic future of people and the associated impacts to *country*, the need for contemporary Indigenous role models to enhance the wellbeing of Traditional Owners and restore a sense of connection to *country*, and cultural preservation through *caring for country*. The desire for equity, acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples as being modern peoples, and idea that ‘ownership’ should be acknowledged by the broader community were also important visions for the future.

The ‘*What does caring for country mean to you*’ focus group was valuable for confirming the storyline themes within the overall data (Figure 10). The focus group provided an opportunity for consensus building around the themes, their importance, and their relatedness. Some of the larger storyline thematic groups had identifiable subgroups, while others were broad discussions with many unique points. The results from the focus group were available to the artists for reference and inspiration during the production of the *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas painting (Table 4). Storylines emerging from the participatory painting were accounted for as separate expression relating to the individual pieces (Figure 11; Table 4), while others were storylines about the shared values and aspirations for *caring for country*, which were representations of the collaborative painting in its entirety (Figure 12). Some pieces have a stronger emphasis on one or two of the distinctive storylines but all encompass the concept of holism and connection of all storylines, which emerged in the focus group. Thematic

connections were just as important as the themes themselves and an emphasis was made towards indicating a worldview which does not separate entities, but views cultural, environmental, wellbeing, and political systems working as a whole and affecting one another. For this reason, the artist interpretations are not categorized. Each artist's contribution was individually representing a worldview and was contributing to the broader storyline of holism, which is depicted in the complete *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas.

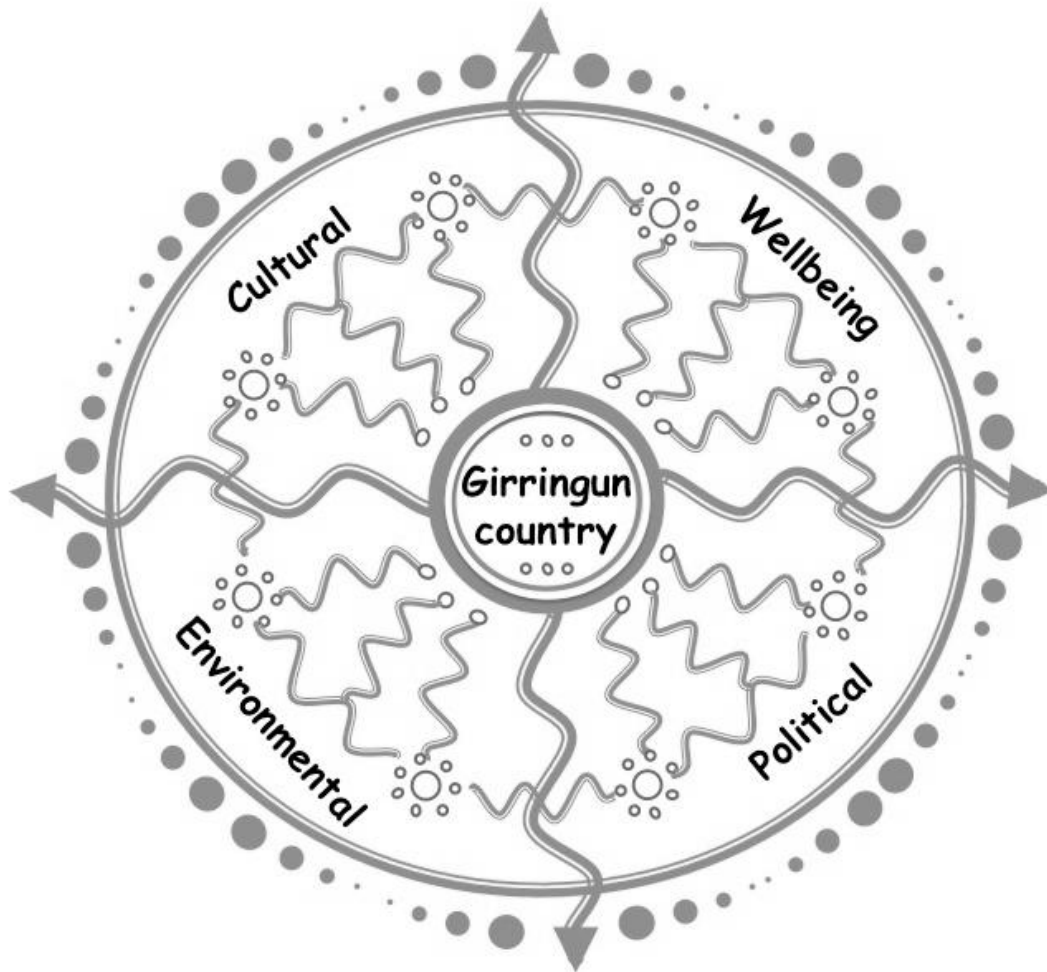


Figure 10. Author's depiction of the themes identified in the analysis of Traditional Owner discourses concerning *caring for country*. Small circles represent sub-themes within the broader themes and lines represent the connections between all themes. The circle around the themes represents holism, which is an essential component to what *caring for country* means to Girringun Traditional Owners. The arrows leaving the circle symbolize the desire to share this vision with the broader community.

Storyline 1: The **cultural** significance of caring for country

The storyline theme that emerged the most often through all forms of inquiry (i.e. *Caring for country* focus group and creative workshop, interviews, participant observation) was of the cultural significance of *caring for country*. This was often spoken of in terms of self-identity. Discourses about culture emerging from the focus groups fell into sub-groupings relating the significance and preservation of culture as well as the spiritual connection to *country*. Traditional Owners expressed the great importance of interacting with *country* in order to maintain and transmit culture through the generations. To Giringun Traditional Owners there was no divide between culture and the relationship with *country*, with *caring for country* and cultural preservation being virtually impossible in isolation from one another. All of the storylines emerging from the participatory painting were focused on culture or had cultural elements.

“Personally, it’s [caring for country] for our culture. Our culture tells us who we are. We can have country and the kids but they still won’t have the culture in it.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

Spiritual elements can be seen in the Dreamtime stories and a connection to *story places* as well as other forms of spirituality that were discussed as being important aspects of *caring for country*. A *Story place* (e.g. Plate J – Table 4) is an identifiable geographic location that has a connection to a Dreamtime story. Traditional Owners each have a story place, which is the place where their spirits come from at birth and return to upon death. Therefore, when one is *caring for country*, one is caring for that place that is connected to the spirit through dreamtime law.

“In a broad kind of sense it’s [caring for country] looking after our country. Looking after our resources both sea and land and above all our sacred sites and sites of importance.” – Traditional Owner participant (007)

“You know, our storylines all passed through here. Everyone has that connection to country and nearly all the laws are all the same to look after country.” – Traditional Owner participant (003)

Traditional Owners spoke of the importance for the transmission of culture through the generations and the importance of cultural continuity in light of the broader picture of *caring for country*. It was felt that it was important to record culture and to share culture amongst the Traditional Owner groups and the broader community in order to work towards education on the Traditional Owner worldview of *caring for country*.

“I suppose land management and the cultural side of things [is important for future programs concerning management of country]. So we're trying to make sure we have that concerted effort that even though we are living away we stay connected in that sense and every September/October school holidays we have a cultural camp where we take kids back to country.” – Traditional Owner participant (006)

Storyline 2: How caring for country translates into **wellbeing** for Traditional Owners

Caring for and *being on country* was also expressed in terms of the overall wellbeing of Traditional Owners. This was the second broad theme that emerged in the focus group and painting workshop as well as the interviews, and has direct connections to the other storyline themes about *caring for country*. Wellbeing was spoken of in terms of the maintenance of livelihoods and mental and physical health. *Healthy Country, Healthy People*¹⁵ is the expression used by Giringun Traditional Owners and the Indigenous community across Australia, and is used to describe the connection between *caring for country* and the wellbeing of people.

“They [young Traditional Owners] go on the boat and they fish, they learn to swim, hunt and how to cook whatever they caught. That's important I reckon. Survival I suppose.” – Traditional Owner participant (010)

¹⁵ Peoples' wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of country and vice versa

Many participants felt that *being on country* has the ability to increase self-esteem. In addition to activities on *country* being beneficial to physical health it was felt that *being on country* could heal social maladies such as alcoholism, violence, family disputes, and imprisonment. It was felt by many Traditional Owners that many of the social problems existing amongst Traditional Owner groups were due to disconnects from *country*. Education of young people was highlighted as being very important for the amelioration of Traditional Owner wellbeing and livelihoods.

“We talk to the kids about the importance of looking after the land. We're the custodians and we have a role even though we're not necessarily living on country we do have a role in making sure that the country is well because if the country isn't well then you're not well.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

“I think it brings back a sense of self-esteem, self-belief, you are connected both physically and spiritual to that country so you do feel a lot better mentally. Also, if you're well mentally then the physical aspects are good. I mean particularly you know there's high rates of diabetes and chronic illnesses amongst the Aboriginal community even the Giringun group. But being active, you know walking around on country. Physically, you know you're doing exercise so that's bodily wellbeing but also then you're connected. You're teaching young people or getting medicine plants or doing whatever particular activity that is cultural so that also makes you feel well. It's a whole range of things.” – Traditional Owner participant (006)

It was felt however that being on country was not something that could work in isolation to help Traditional Owners maintain and restore wellbeing. Social determinants such as meaningful employment and education were discussed in terms of being essential components for Traditional Owners being able to overcome hardships and work towards favourable futures.

“I think the social determinants, whether you've got a house or whether you've got a job or employment or training or a good education and those sorts of things impact on

peoples' mental health. Not just the spiritual and the cultural side but then sort of impacts I believe people start turning to other things like drinking or marijuana to escape the reality of their day to day. Even though you still can be living on country but you still have low self esteem and you may still be connected to country but you have low self esteem which then has all those other impacts and problems." – Traditional Owner participant (001)

There was a great deal of disappointment from older Traditional Owners when speaking of the younger generation and the challenges of engaging young people in *caring for country*. The older participants felt that while there was a need for young people to be involved in programs that could lead to further engagement in culture through being *on country*, there was a lack of interest in programs by the younger generation.

"The reality is that some of our young people are enamored with city life and for some people to go back working on country - I think there would be some but then others there wouldn't be so we're realistic about that but we try and encourage our young people." – Traditional Owner participant (012)

It was felt that the younger generation is more interested in urban activities, substance abuse, or entertainment such as television and video games. This was described in terms of a positive feedback loop in which a lack of culture predisposed young people to these tendencies, and in turn keeps young people from learning about their cultures. Young Traditional Owners were described as living in "two different worlds": the one influenced by traditional law and custom, and the one influenced by mainstream society.

"Well yes that's what we're trying to do, get young people back on land. They're all stuck in town. Beer, the women, the smoke, can't get them out of town. I'm ashamed." – Traditional Owner participant (013)

"I believe that's a part of our cultural and spiritual wellbeing. It's about trying to stay connected and keeping the kids connected. Look, it's like everyone else you're competing and living in I suppose a mainstream world. You've got computer games and MTV and X-Boxes and stuff like that so all Traditional Owner groups I suppose we're fighting that battle but also it's about trying to make an impact or for us try to enable the kids to live in

two different worlds and be able to cross that bridge at any time and be comfortable being in both environments.” – Traditional Owner participant (006)

Disappointment, however was not the only sentiment expressed by Traditional Owners in relation to how and in what capacity younger Traditional Owners could be involved in *caring for country*. Several Traditional Owners of both the older and in particular the younger generation felt that there were different ways to get young people back onto country and learning about their cultures. Programs run through the GAC were talked about as playing a role in this and several Traditional Owners felt that the programs being run in partnership with government agencies, such as the current and emerging Indigenous ranger programs, were important for making this a reality. It was expressed that these programs are important because they provide the type of employment and education that enables young Traditional Owners to be interacting with, and working on *caring for country*. Traditional Owners presented discussions about outcomes from employment and training in the context of Traditional Owners having the ability to be engaging in *caring for country* in a cultural sense. The discussions on this were focused beyond Traditional Owners simply participating in gainful employment. The cultural connection and wellbeing achieved through such programs were reported as being equally as important, if not more important to some participants.

“A lot of our country and our rights have been taken away and we've got to get our younger people to feel like it's theirs and another responsibility through that blood connection to country. My hopes would be that I want to see more of our young people more Indigenous people in National Parks, in GBRMPA, in jobs that are caring for country. Monitoring, fishing, and enforcing fishing laws, enforcing environmental legislation and making waterways clean and all that.” – Traditional Owner participant (010)

Storyline 3: The **political** implications of caring for country

Political storylines were often tethered to environmental storylines (the fourth storyline theme considered, discretely), in which Traditional Owners spoke about the preservation of biotic and abiotic features of their environments. However, storylines about political aspects of

caring for country were also connected to the ability of Traditional Owners to be engaged in their custodial responsibilities. This political storyline emerged in the *caring for country* focus group through various subthemes and was featured in the *Caring for country* painting. One individual work of the *Caring for country* painting was especially politically driven by the clearing of forest in the artist's traditional *country*, which has been leading to declines in the local cassowary population (Plate W). Political themes relating to the environment, including those that concern policies surrounding regional economies such as the impacts of industry and agriculture were common and a source of frustration.

"It's hard here in Tully [town] because you're working with a lot of people here who have primary industry and bananas and sugar cane so it's also very hard to get out and care for country where you want to get back and do reveg and stuff like this. To see farmers to give up land is like - why should I plant that there for the environment when they can turn that land into other uses and farming production but it's slowly changing with the younger generation in the wider society of more being caring for country more than the previous generation where they used creeks and rivers as like rubbish dumps 'don't worry the water will take it away' but these younger generation now have more conscience of environmental issues" – Traditional Owner participant (011)

For me every farmer needs to make an honest dollar but sometimes it's at what cost are you going to hand down to the next generation - your kids you know. Are you going to give them a brand new shiny bike or are you going to give them an old rusty bucket wheel or what you've got now and try and keep it as best as good as you can until things maybe get better. Better farming practices and stuff like that and using nature like organic farming to help balance with nature you know. Not only that, to me you grow enough food in this world I think to feed everybody and it's the greed of the all mighty dollar that talks in anyone's language, so it's money." – Traditional Owner participant (007)

Traditional Owners also spoke of the rights to traditional hunting as well as the depletion of traditionally hunted species due to commercial harvesting practices along the coast. It was recognized that traditional harvesting was a contentious issue especially in light of threatened and endangered species. However, it was also noted that traditional harvest was not the cause of such declines and it was felt that it was unfair that Traditional Owner livelihoods had to suffer because of the actions made by the broader community.

“I was concerned about if the data started to show that the [turtle and dugong] numbers were critical then that would be a major concern. Then again anger because it's not traditional hunting that's put them at a critical place. It's loss of habitat through development. It's boats with hits in the channel. It's the netting from fisherman so you feel it and you feel a bit angry that you can't go and hunt because of the numbers but then of course those traditional foods, especially in terms of dugong and turtle are like a treat these days. It's not an essential that we have. But for weddings and special occasions it's those hunting and those foods that keep that cultural connection to the old ways and that's important I think.” – Traditional Owner participant (010)

“I think that the trawlers should be moved a little further off-shore and even though year ago they reckon they're making nets where the by-catch goes through. Oh well, that's what they say but there's things where some times of the year the crabs migrate out of the waterways.” – Traditional Owner participant (012)

Access to *country* was stated as being the essential if Traditional Owners are going to be able to *care for country*. Private land tenures in the area make access to *country* including sacred sites and *story places* impossible at times and access is often dependent on the sensitivity of the landowner. This upsets Traditional Owners because they feel that it is their responsibility and should be their right to move about freely *on country*, monitoring it for changes, and caring for it according to customary law. Traditional Owners felt that development and agriculture would be persistent and that it was more about finding ways of working cooperatively with land owners and working towards greater understanding between different groups of people with different management interests. Traditional Owners also spoke of the limitations involved with receiving and using government permits for harvesting resources or entering certain areas. They felt that these processes were very limiting and lacked cultural sensitivity.

“Hopefully we can get onto country and manage some other culturally significant sites which in some cases we haven't been able to do because the land owners won't let us on there so I think it's an ongoing process. So those are our hopes. I think they're strong in terms of our future and also once we can also get our young people involved that will also

give them a lot more insight into the history as well as the cultural side of things with country.” – Traditional Owner participant (013)

“It’s important. I think unfortunately we can’t get onto our country the way we should and we can only get there whenever we can and spend whatever time we can there. If we were living on country like the people in the Northern Territory and other places it would be different but because we’re in a white man’s world living on the East coast and so we just can’t do it. A lot of our countries are tied up by National Parks and there’s a lot of procedures that we’ve got to go through. We can’t just go on country now. We’ve got to get a permit and they can’t refuse the permit unless there’s something drastically that we do wrong and we do have to have a permit now for hunting, hunting/gathering and just camping. It gives you that limitation where you’re limited to what you can do so caring for country to us important but then as I said it’s something that’s got a lot of strings attached and a lot of limitations. We can get the permit but we can only get the permit for a certain area and that’s it. That permit covers a certain area and we’re not allowed out there, outside of that certain area, and I don’t know if you can call that caring for country or protecting our country.” – Traditional Owner participant (003)

Many Traditional Owners were interested in how partnerships with government agencies could enable Traditional Owners to access and manage aspects of *country*. While the particularities of the arrangements for returning Traditional Owners to *country* were important, it was even more important that Traditional Owners have opportunities to work *on country* within the appropriate cultural contexts. The perspectives of the participants were also geared more towards working out discrepancies between Traditional Owners and government staff while programs were in action, rather than being too concerned about how arrangements would work exactly before programs were begun. There was a strong emphasis placed on the need for non-Indigenous managers to spend time out *on country* with Traditional Owners so that they could at least understand the Traditional Owner perspective for *caring for country*. Perspectives on government partnerships are explained further in the section covering storylines about partnerships.

“These are the sort of jobs that we want to hand down to our kids, and training that we want to hand down to our kids as the next generation so that we as Traditional Owners can put our hand on this and say ‘yeah, we want to be involved in looking after our country’. We want to have that chance of being full on with caring for country managed through people or managed through Giringun with traditional people on ground in our

country looking after.” – Traditional Owner participant (006)

Traditional Owners expressed that it was important for government to understand their traditional laws governing *caring for country*. They felt that it was important that government recognize that there is cultural significance to the customary laws but that it was also important that customary laws be recognized with the same respect that mainstream law receives.

“Listening to Aboriginal people and recognizing Aboriginal peoples custom [is important] - their law and custom. Not only their culture but their law and custom.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

“I think it's got to start with the government first. They've got to come back to recognizing Aboriginal law and custom and their culture and then there will be a future for more ways to talk about the future, for the future to have. No point having a thing [agreement] in there if there is no recognition of law and custom of Aboriginal people.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

Storyline 4: Caring for country in the context of **environmental** sustainability

In addition to political/environmental storylines, Traditional Owners expressed storylines that were more directly focused on values and sentiments for the environment and the significance of sustaining the plants, animals, and other physical aspects of the environment. This was reflected in the storylines articulating aspirations for monitoring and mitigation of degraded land/seascapes and species.

“Caring for country in a physical sense is being on country - like weed control management, pest management, re-vegetation sort of involving re-vegetation to be better for our water quality - in the sense of water monitoring” – Traditional Owner participant (008)

There was a strong emphasis on the need for native re-vegetation in the area, enhancement of water quality, removal of 'feral'/invasive species, and the management of native species declines. Participants expressed that it was important for Traditional Owners to be *on country* in order to manage such aspects of *country* in a culturally appropriate way. Traditional Owners also often referred to the numbers of species and felt that it was important to have scientific data on this. Some also felt that hunting should not be occurring if the numbers were too low.

"I think in a more hands-on the ground approach [to caring for country]. Things like feral weeds and pest management. I think that's a way of staying connected but also having input on the land management side of things. Monitoring, we already sort of do that but if there's a more structured planning process or format through the IPA that might, that's another way that I think we can have an impact on some of the land issues that we're experiencing up there. Particularly things like Parthenium, there's pigs you know and there's the potential for Tilapia which is sort of a noxious fish - the rat of the river way." – Traditional Owner participant (006)

"Management of our sea animals, specifically turtle and dugong. People have categorized us and said that we're constantly killing them and we've proven we don't constantly kill them. We're looking after the numbers. The numbers are coming up really quick." – Traditional Owner participant (002)

Traditional Owners also spoke in terms of customary harvesting practices and the translation of this into environmental sustainability. The system that guides customary harvesting practices was described as one that has always been in place and one that works with the natural cycles of the environment in a fashion conserves for future generations. This system is described further in the next storyline section, which covers holism and *caring for country*.

"You only cut lawyer cane that has high water content and if it's dry cane you've try and cut it and try to split it and it's too dry, not splitting right, so you need one with a lot of water content. And you don't cut down all the lawyer cane that comes out of the ground to use for basket weaving. You don't harvest the whole lot so when you walk away there's still the main plant - is still there. And they say 'oh, you're going to go there and start

cutting boomerangs out of the tree'. Well, you don't cut the whole tree down to get a boomerang out. We was taught to just cut out of the buttress part and then we would leave the tree there 'cause later on the tree would heal and end up with a scar. A lot of shield trees - they're cut out of the big trees. You don't kill the tree to take the shield. The buttress will then heal up and it will leave the mark there where you took the shield out. The idea is that don't cut any trees unless you're going to use it for something, don't kill anything unless you're going to eat it. That's why the perspective of caring for country. That how we were taught to care for country and look after country and our resources and it's like getting that perspective across. You've got to have an open mind and get them to think the way we think." – Traditional Owner participant (007)

Storyline 5: Caring for country is **holistic**

Holism is acknowledged here as a storyline in its own respect because it was described as being at the foundation of all other storylines about *caring for country*. This storyline brings all others together into the Traditional Owner worldview, which does not separate culture, wellbeing, environment, or politics. All things work together within a system, which has roots in ancestral stories and laws from the dreamtime.

"Everything together [must be considered]. You can't separate one thing from the other because for Aboriginal people through stories it's all sort of connected interconnected with each other. If you have a protected area here and you don't have a protected area there they're not intertwining with each other. I could tell a story, a dreamtime story without saying that there are 5 events all rolled into one story." – Traditional Owner participant (004)

The system describes and governs the relationship that individuals have with each other and the environment, is acknowledged by Traditional Owners as being something that has sustained the people for thousands of years, and is considered to be of great value to maintaining connections to *country* into the future. Educating young people about this system thus is intrinsic to the education on *caring for country*. The system is also the source of the customary laws that are drawn upon for Traditional Owner land and sea management programs. The elder people of the communities who have a better knowledge of the system and

the customary laws play a strong advisory role in Traditional Owner *management* programs. It is an aspiration to have this included into partnerships with government and the broader community.

“I can go in the rainforest and see a fruit there but I can't eat it because it's not my time of the year to eat it because of that system that's been handed down to me I've got to leave it to the other people. When the other time comes around that fruit might come on he and I can't eat it but the other group can only eat it. So it sort of goes around in a system because of that name that you're given. That name tells you who you are in that system. There's a name. I know what it is and it's hard to explain and that system, it tells you who you can marry, where you can go.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

“It's like you know back then what caring for country goes way back in our customary way of collecting food. It's all done by nature when the certain trees fruit and flower and such so it works in sequence when all these things are at their peak and at their best and when there are times when it is lean we don't hunt that particular animal because it is at a time when it is not loaded with all its fat and stuff. So it's like a calendar that we harvest the fruits and animals at certain times. But like I said, that if you dig a scrub hen nest there might be like 5 or 6 eggs in there. If you dig them all up and then you find six eggs and you can't find anymore you take one egg back and you bury it so that's saying you don't want to kill your resource if you're allow hen in your own thing and she keeps on laying an egg it's all right you know - you always leave one egg behind for her to continue laying eggs you know.” – Traditional Owner participant (007)

Traditional Owners highlighted on several occasions the importance of encouraging understanding of the *caring for country* worldview. They felt that it is important for government staff including senior managers to be involved in trips out onto *country* with Traditional Owners so that more authentic discussions around the topic could occur. They felt that this was the best way for people to feel and understand the importance of *caring for country*, the connection and understanding for *country* that Traditional Owners have, and the how *country* is a holistic and dynamic system which requires understanding beyond board rooms and bureaucracies.

“Government needs to understand what it means to be on country. They need to go onto

country so that they can understand that it's not just about a piece of paper being signed. Government needs to go to these places so that they can understand the importance of these places. They need to experience something if they're going to care for it" – Traditional Owner participant (008)

Holistic perspectives for *caring for country* include the spiritual connection as well as a recognition by Traditional Owners that country is something that is alive and should be communicated with. One quote by a Traditional Owner highlights the importance of communicating or *"talking with country"* and the notion that other cultures have the ability to understand this connection to *country* and have other unique ways of expressing similar values.

"Caring for country covers that whole issue to us Aboriginal people. So it's not only the physical it's also that spiritual side of things and water holds a big spiritual impact on a lot of Aboriginal people. It's - without water you die you know. Most of our body is made out of water and creeks and rivers they say they've got water holes and they say the rainbow serpent lives there and not only water has it's property in drinking but it also has it's property in healing. You know, we have healing water where we can go out and visit and if you need healing you can go out there and swim in that water if you've got any sickness in you become well again. Aboriginal people, we talked about water that day I went down for that meeting on flood plain management and I thought I'd ask the question 'what water means to you, what's important?' You might say oh well water's important so I can have a cup of tea in the morning, I wash my clothes, you know. That's one peoples perspective of water and Aboriginal people have another perspective of water. For water we have the highest respect because maybe it has that healing power. Yeah, that's sort of it - that sense of connection. Like when we were going down the river here and we've got bends with stories on the sand. Oh yeah, and you missed that one. Sometimes there's that rainbow serpent that lives there and normally you've got to go down there and speak language to the water. So you go down there and you see this fella talking to the water but you talk to the rainbow serpent. In the early days if you didn't talk to the rainbow serpent in the big deep water it will swallow you down and suck you under the water. So it's sort of like that spiritual connection of talking to the water and then I always sort of refer back to you know the 'it's silly of Aboriginal people to talk to the water', but those who read the bible they know that Moses spoke to the water and the water parted and Jesus went out on the sea he spoke to the water and the sea became smooth so and you think 'that's silly talking to the water' but that's our spiritual connection. Water is alive it's not something that's dead. The way it becomes dead is if we don't look after it." – Traditional Owner participant (007)

One Traditional Owner focus group participant expressed the belief that Aboriginal people were the first “conservationists”, and that this was part of the cultural and spiritual connection to *country*. This was related to the ability to be able to care for country, thus tying in the political aspects of caring for country with the environmental and the social aspects.

“Aboriginal people were the first conservationists. Before that word [conservation] even existed we were caring for country. Nothing went extinct when we were able to look after our country. Now look at it [referring to the degraded state of the environment].” – Traditional Owner participant (002)

Traditional Owners associated the holistic perspective for *caring for country* with the persistence of features of country such as native species (Plates C, G, I, M, N, P, R, S, T, U, & V), as well as the use of plants and animals governed by customary law. This translated specifically to the practice of culture, which was also strongly featured on the *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas. The ability to continue to make traditional crafts such as rainforest shields (Plate E), baskets (Plate F), and eel traps (Plate K) was also articulated by Traditional Owner focus group and artistic workshop participants through their comments and individual artistic presentations. *Caring for country*, as a holistic expression, was also explicitly represented by one artist who painted a sort of ‘spiritual map’ of Warrgamay country (Plate B). In this piece, the artist represented the saltwater as well as the freshwater elements of *country*, and outlined the fluvial patterns of the landscape in relationship to the dreamtime serpent that was responsible for carving out such patterns. To this artist, caring for country related to what country is, how it became, and the spiritual connection as a Traditional Owner.



Figure 11. *Caring for country* 1.5 x 1.25 meter acrylic on country – divided plates

Table 4: Participatory painting art plate interpretations for ‘*Caring for Country*’ acrylic on canvas

Plate	Identifier	Traditional owner descriptions and interpretations
A	Pond apple & CSIRO	The participant reported that the first thing that came to mind when she thought of caring for country was the CSIRO (government research body) study on pond apple clearing. Pond apple is an invasive species and the participant felt that it was very important to learn how to manage the species like pond apple, which is responsible for choking up wetlands.
B	Warrgamay country	The participant chose to paint his country from both a spiritual and environmental perspective. The <i>Girimore</i> (snake) is a dreamtime creature which carved out the features of the land. The fine lines and background work are the geographic features found on <i>Warrgamay country</i> such as <i>Garrgul</i> (rivers) running through <i>Wabu</i> (rainforest). The blue waves represent <i>Warrangun</i> (ocean) and the green waves represent the freshwater, which are both important features of <i>Warrgamay country</i> .
C	‘ <i>Bush tucker</i> ’	<i>Jumbun</i> (means <i>witchetty grubs</i> in Girramay), <i>Mudragun</i> (quandong - blue fruit), <i>Nyuga</i> (wild tamarind – orange fruit), <i>Midun</i> (black bean), and <i>Moigin</i> (wild cherry – brown/red fruit) are important bush foods both for people and for native animals, which are important as resources and as beings.
D	Camping story	Camping and being <i>on country</i> is very important to the Girramay artist who painted this work, as it is with many of the Girramay and other Traditional Owners. In this camping story there are several elements of a traditional campsite as well as pieces of material culture. Features: <i>Joun</i> (dilly bag), <i>Boomerang</i> , <i>Bungal</i> (fish), <i>Midja</i> (shelter), <i>Bigin</i> (rainforest shield), and <i>Buni</i> (fire)
E	<i>Bigin</i>	The <i>Bigin</i> (rainforest shield) is an important piece of material culture. Rainforest shields are harvested from native trees with minimal damage in a fashion that the tree can heal and keep growing.
F	<i>Joun and Boygor</i>	The <i>Joun</i> (dilly bag) is a piece of material culture which has been created by the traditional rainforest people of Queensland for thousands of years. It is made of <i>Boygar</i> (lawyer cane) the plants also featured in this plate, which is run through a fire for processing and then evenly divided into fine strips for weaving. Weaving of such a basket may take several weeks to months. Baskets were traditionally used for holding seeds and berries, which needed to be leached of their poisons in running river water. They were also used for carrying foods, material, or a baby by placing the strap over the head and carrying the weight between the shoulders. <i>Jouns</i> today are mainly crafted for sale to museums or private collectors. They are however still important to Traditional Owners because the construction is a traditional practice which allows for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge on how to harvest and process materials according to the customary law, which guides

		activities <i>on country</i> . There are a few master weavers left amongst the Girramay and Jirrbal peoples. Access to <i>Boygor</i> is a contentious subject amongst different jurisdictions in the rainforest. Depending on the tenure and management system in place. Many Traditional Owners believe that their access to lawyer cane is restricted due to rainforest conservation strategies such as National Parks and World Heritage.
G	<i>Jubun</i>	<i>Jubun</i> (eel) is a traditional “bush-tucker” (wild food). Traditional Owners believe that it is especially important for elders because it has special oils, which cure sicknesses that exist in old people. For this reason elders are the first to have the opportunity to eat <i>Jubun</i> when it is caught.
H	<i>Girringun Aboriginal Corporation</i> logo	The group of participants decided that it was essential to have the <i>Girringun Aboriginal Corporation</i> logo on the <i>caring for country</i> painting because the GAC is responsible for liaising with the broader community to make sure that <i>caring for country</i> by Traditional Owners is possible.
I	<i>Jagabarra</i>	<i>Jagabarra</i> (<i>Xanthorrhoea</i> or ‘ <i>Black-boy</i> ’) is an important plant for health because when burned it works for keeping potentially disease-carrying insects away.
J	<i>Split-rock</i> story place	The participant painted her <i>story place</i> to represent what <i>caring for country</i> means. The story of <i>Split-rock</i> comes from the dreamtime in which a <i>Girimore</i> (snake) breaks its teeth on a rock, which is a visible feature of the landscape. <i>Story places</i> represent a spiritual connection to country in that these are the places from where peoples spirits come and where they return when they pass on.
K	<i>Wungarr</i>	The <i>Wungarr</i> (eel trap) is a piece of material culture in that it was traditionally used for the acquisition of food but is now mainly a craft, which is sold to museum and private collectors. Like the <i>Joun</i> it is also made from lawyer cane, with all of the similar political issues that come with the access to and harvest of the plant materials.
L	Generations on country Features: <i>Mildin</i> (possum) <i>Iddinjilla</i> (dragonfly) <i>Mulla</i> (hands) <i>Jinna</i> (feet)	“ <i>The centre piece speaks of the environment and how the land used to be in days gone by and now because of development, tree clearing for agriculture purposes, chemical and fertilizer run offs into streams and ocean and how these things to name a few have had a very negative impact on our environment. Some species of flora and fauna are bordering on extinction. We as a nation of peoples need to help in the healing process of our environments and what best practices we could adopt to bring an equal balance back into what were lush rainforests and healthy ecosystems, pristine waterways. We as Aboriginal people live in harmony with nature and to see such devastation is so painful to watch. Not only does this affect us as a human race but it has a bigger impact on the wildlife that inhabit the rainforests and waterways</i> ”
M	<i>Budgigull</i>	<i>Budgigull</i> (sea turtles) are important animals in spirituality and traditional ways. They are involved in the dreamtime and are a special food used in ceremonies.

N	<i>Yadar</i>	<i>Yadar</i> (stingray) are important animals in spirituality and traditional ways. They are involved in the dreamtime and are a special food used in ceremonies.
O	<i>Mulla</i>	The <i>Mulla</i> (hands) across the canvas represent <i>Mulla on country</i> and how in order to heal country people need to be <i>on country</i> , interacting and learning with it. <i>Iddinjilla</i> (dragonflies) are also featured in a similar fashion throughout the piece. They signify <i>healthy country</i> .
P	<i>Mayjala</i>	<i>Mayjala</i> (saltwater crocodile) are important animals in spirituality and traditional ways. They are involved in the dreamtime and are a special food used in ceremonies.
Q	'Caring for country' logo	The <i>Caring for Country</i> logo was included by a Traditional Owner participant who works for the GAC. The logo comes from the national <i>Caring for Country</i> conference hosted by the GAC in 2007. This was an important opportunity for Giringun to share its values and aspirations.
R	<i>Bullungull</i>	<i>Bullungull</i> (dugong) mother and calf. <i>Bullungull</i> are important animals in spirituality and traditional ways. They are involved in the dreamtime and are a special food used in ceremonies. Many conservation issues surround these animals, including traditional hunting, impacts from development and strikes from boat propellers.
S	Water lily (language name uncertain)	Water lily was eaten as a traditional food and is the <i>language name</i> for one of the children in the community.
T	<i>Bungadoo & Gujardy</i>	<i>Bungadoo</i> (freshwater turtle) and <i>Gujardy</i> (scrub turkey) are important traditional foods.
U	<i>Mulgulbay</i>	<i>Mulgulbay</i> (licuala palm) are an important cultural plant because their leaves were used to thatch <i>Midja's</i> (traditional shelters).
V	<i>Gugarra</i>	Participant sees <i>Gugarra</i> (goanna) everywhere on country and would like to continue seeing them into the future.
W	Home for Gunday	"This speaks about the tree clearing for development and how this affects the cassowary [Gunday] conservation area on tribal lands. It is getting to the point that in the future there will be no rainforest left for this endangered animal to inhabit"

"This art form helps us as Traditional Owners to promote recognition of the connection to country we have and also protecting our cultural values associated with the land and sea and everything in it" – Caring for country workshop participant (002)



Figure 12. *Caring for country* 1.5 x 1.25 meter acrylic on canvas

4.2 – Girringun Aboriginal Corporation vision, Traditional Owner representation, and internal governance

The GAC's approach to relationship building within and outside of the organization is the foundation for how it goes about working towards the Girringun core vision, which is: *“To provide leadership, direction and assistance in the provision of sustainable outcomes for the improvement and positive development of the social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic well-being of Aboriginal traditional owners and community members of Girringun for the benefit of the region”* (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2010). This GAC aims to promote the nine Traditional Owner groups in reclaiming their custodial responsibilities, including land and sea *management* according to customary law. It also supports other initiatives and has the flexibility to work within the Indigenous holistic worldview for going about business on *country*. Three storylines emerged relating specifically to the GAC as an organization. Storylines are presented here from GAC staff and board members and Girringun Traditional Owners.

Storyline 1: Long-term and strategic **vision** for regional management: perspectives from GAC staff and board members

The main storyline that emerged directly from GAC staff and board members related to long-term and *strategic vision* for the GAC as a regional service provider. The *vision* for the *management* of Girringun *country* focuses on working towards the aspirations for Girringun Traditional Owners, while also providing benefits for the mainstream Australian society. The opinion within the GAC was that by drawing upon experiences and lessons arising from collaborative regional arrangements, the organization could provide effective regional *management*, and could essentially become a regional service provider to the National government. GAC staff and board members felt that this was an important direction because it would enable the organization to have more of a say over the activities occurring on *country*, and would also contribute to the wellbeing of Traditional Owners through employment schemes.

“We want to get into a position where we turn around to the government and say ‘You don’t pay anymore money to National Park people, you pay to Giringun and we look after the National Park because that’s our country, we look after the sea because that’s our tribal country. We do it. You just pay all that money to us.’ We don’t want to have any more to do with National Parks. Now that’s a big step. It’s going to be a big step because you’ve got government cross over. So we’re working towards that day when we look at the government and say that – that is the ultimate goal of Giringun.” – GAC board member (003)

The first step in working towards this vision has been the development of the GAC *tool box*¹⁶ which is essentially the accumulation of past and present activities that have been building the capacity of the organization (Figure 13). Cultural, social (wellbeing), environmental, and political programs are all part of the GAC’s activities. The ‘*tool box*’ demonstrates the capacity of the GAC as an organization, as well as the ability to achieve success within a diversity of programs. It contains GAC activities that are independent GAC projects, as well as partnerships with government agencies. In regards to the management of Giringun land and sea *country*, the GAC currently works cooperatively within partnership arrangements with various agencies. *Co-management* to the GAC is a vehicle for a shift towards ‘*sole management*’. The shift to ‘*sole management*’ would not mean the exclusion of all government influence, but rather would reflect a different kind of regional *management* arrangement. Future arrangements would maintain certain ties between government and the GAC, however the roles within the relationships would be shifted towards the GAC potentially being a full manager and service provider.

¹⁶ Term used by the GAC to describe the projects and partnerships contributing to their involvement in management and governance

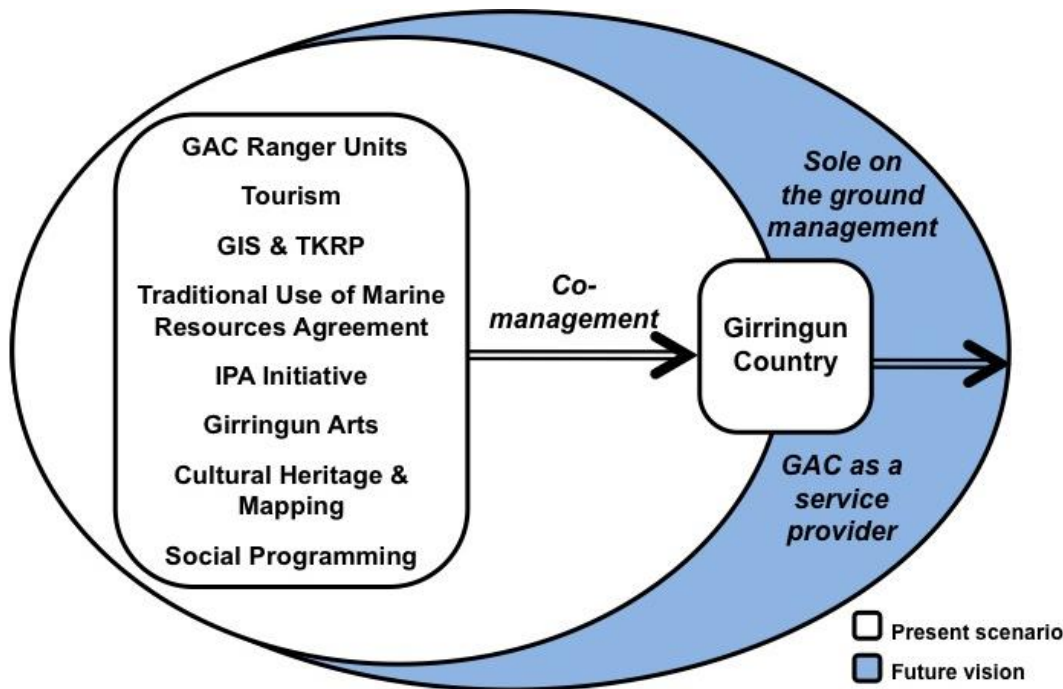


Figure 13. Giringun holistic vision for *country-based management*. Represents the present ‘*tool box*’ and future direction for management of Giringun country. *Co-management* here is described as being used as a vehicle for ‘*sole management*’.

In order to achieve the *strategic vision* the GAC envisions increasingly taking on *management* responsibilities from State management agencies (Figure 14). As the GAC moves closer towards its vision, the GAC would take on *management* responsibilities, and the government agencies would take on more of a role in training. At the present time the GAC negotiates with government agencies either individually or through steering committees but does not have a set of protocols for the regional services provided throughout project cycles. As the GAC enhances its position in regional management it will be focused on developing a set of protocols for government and other agencies looking to do business with the GAC, including a set of schedules and fees for services. The GAC is currently working towards developing such protocols and other tools for doing business. GAC staff and board members articulated that by working with government agencies and the broader community they would be continuing to work towards the *strategic vision*, which would enable Traditional Owners to have more of a say and involvement in *caring for country*.

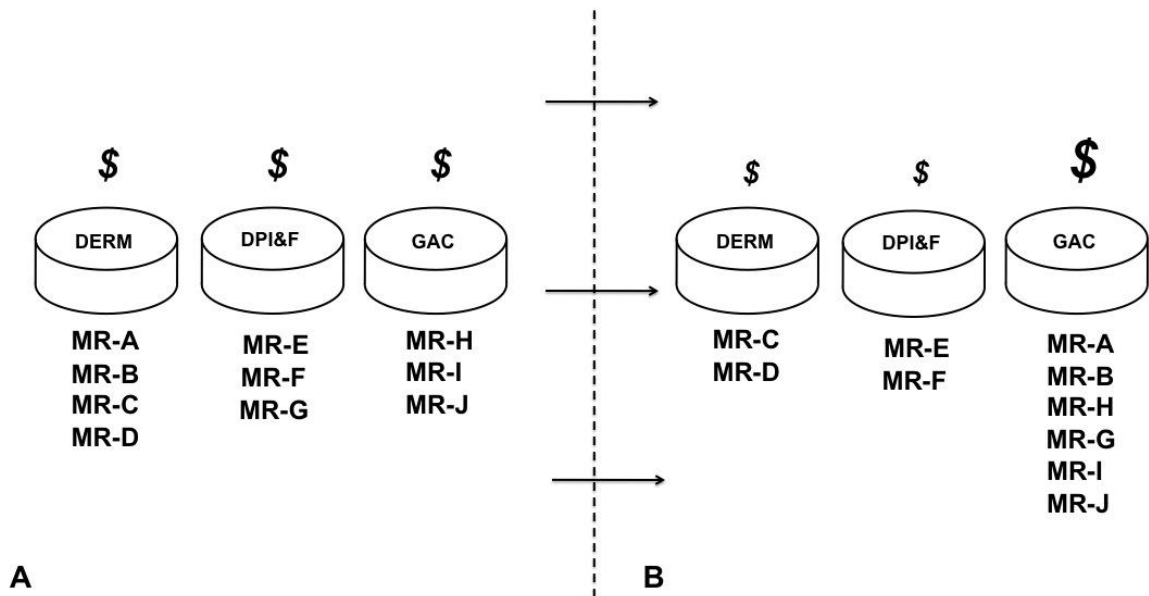


Figure 14: As explained by a key informant within the GAC, the figure depicts the shift towards the GAC increasing its capacity as a regional service provider to government (scenario A towards scenario B). This represents a shifting of management responsibilities (MR) between government agencies and the GAC, as well as increased support and capacity (\$) (letters represent hypothetical management responsibilities).

In working towards the *strategic vision*, the GAC perspective is that processes are equally as important as the outcomes of any cooperative negotiation or agreement. The people involved with the GAC believe that by working through sequential *governance* partnerships and *management* processes the GAC is able to build capacity and demonstrate the GAC's capabilities for effective partnerships, representative governance, and day-to-day *management*. The notion of working through processes with government was described in terms of working through arrangements that have not always been completely ideal in representing the aspirations of Traditional Owners, but have demonstrated the potential for moving in those directions through adaptive *management* strategies and fostering future partnerships. Programs like the Indigenous ranger units and the TUMRA are examples of how GAC is strategically working towards developing their reputation as a credible regional service provider.

The Executive Officer of the GAC presented this quote at the first Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Area (GRIPA) steering committee meeting (August 4th, 2009). It describes how the IPA could potentially work towards a partnership arrangement that is capable of incorporating the holistic Traditional Owner worldview for *caring for country*, and how this will require partners to the arrangement to work together within a shared vision that is based on righting the wrongs of the past and moving forward towards a collaborative arrangement that is inclusive of all perspectives for regional management.

“It's important to hear about those [to developing the IPA] obstacles. But more importantly is how we deal with those obstacles. We're talking about a whole brand new way of doing business. It's going to be a little bit difficult. It's going to be hard for government more so than us I suppose.

We've had to change our way a little bit. It's going to be a long hard battle but at the end of the day I'd like to think anyway that what we come up with is something that's workable, something that is right, something that is long overdue, something that is the proper thing to do as far as Traditional Owners being involved in looking after country. We have a perfect opportunity I feel here to right some of the wrongs of the past and do it in a really affective meaningful way and I think that's the common girder that will hold us all together through this whole process - this whole journey. And having that understanding and that vision that that's where we want to go and not to shy away from the challenge that we're going to face as we go along.

We've got challenges within our own structure but we're prepared to take those challenges on. We won't shy away from it we'll deal with it and we ask that from you as well because we've all agreed that this is the way that we want to go.

It's all about agreeing where we want to go and collectively taking on those challenges. If that's not the case then we need to rethink the whole process and determine where it is that we do want to go.

At the end of the day we've [the GAC] had to talk about things. In a perfect world we'd like to be managing all of the land and seas in that area by ourselves but realistically that will never happen but the next best thing - and it's probably a better way is effectively managing it together. That's probably a better outcome than ourselves just looking after it because that's the world we live in now and we'll work together.” – Phillip Rist / CEO of the GAC

Storyline 2: Traditional Owner **representation** by the GAC

Perspectives on how the GAC goes about representing Traditional Owner interests were sought out through the semi-structured interviews with Traditional Owners, some of which were members of the GAC board and others not. For the most part, Traditional Owner responses about the work and effectiveness of the GAC at moving forward Traditional Owner aspirations were positive. Participants felt that the level of consultation by the GAC was sufficient and that the board was the element of the GAC corporate structure that enabled effective outcomes and cohesion between the nine groups. Traditional Owners spoke about the GAC being able to adequately represent the aspiration for *caring for country* as well as providing other forms of support for Traditional Owners, such as advocacy.

“I think they're [the GAC] doing a good role [in caring for country]. They're consulting with the Traditional Owners about what they want to do instead of just going ahead and doing it. They're doing a reasonable job – very good job actually.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

“Girringun I believe is a very important organization for the Traditional Owner groups just in terms of providing advocacy and support.” – Traditional Owner participant (006)

Most participants felt that the GAC was providing important benefits to their respective Traditional Owner groups and that their group was better off being part of the GAC than working on its own. Participants listed many of the services that the GAC provides, and expressed that these services as well as the cohesiveness between groups provided by the GAC were valuable features for being able to work towards aspirations.

“I believe since the Gugu Badhun has joined the Girringun as a Traditional Owner group I think that Girringun has played a very valuable role in our development as an individual group. For that we're very thankful. A lot of advice because we weren't I suppose understanding of all of the sort of departments and legislation and we're still not either but we're certainly a lot wiser so in that sense Girringun has opened a lot of avenues for us.” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (006)

“They've [the GAC] certainly provided advice to us, different things to think about when we're dealing with land owners or mining interests or a whole range of this so and also in terms of providing support for some of the cultural heritage mapping that we're providing. That's been a very valuable resource for us because as a group I know there's been a lot of work been done with the coastal Girringun communities or groups but we sort have been not as advanced in comparison so that has been valuable work for us because that has impacts in terms of planning and identifying some of the areas to us that are of cultural significance and a database that we can go to especially if we get any Main Roads or anyone else like that that wants to come along. We can say 'Well, you need to go and talk to Girringun. We've got these places mapped out.’” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (013)

Storyline 3: Internal governance of the nine Traditional Owner groups within the GAC

Perspectives on the internal governance of multiple Traditional Owner groups through the GAC corporate structure was explored. Internal *governance* was explored through interviews and participant observation with Traditional Owners, as well as with GAC staff and board members. There were different definitions for the relationships amongst the groups. Some participants spoke of the challenges in coming to a consensus among the nine groups in regards to land and sea arrangements, while other participants spoke more of the unity of the groups. Some Traditional Owner participants felt that the connections between the groups had strong roots in pre-colonization times and that it was essential to maintain the ties and support between groups. This was spoken of as staying true to the spirit of the ancestors and the importance of not becoming too entrenched in the ‘white’ way of doing business. Participants holding this opinion felt that it was important to defend the relationships with neighboring groups and convey the importance of such relationships to government authorities.

“I won't say we didn't have a hard time working through our TUMRA. We did have. I think because we knew each other. We knew each other when we were young we were able to talk in a real civil manner through discussion and through some very fiery discussion. One important one was some didn't want anyone coming into their country and taking their resources, and they were saying 'Those turtle are ours, those dugong are ours, those shells

are ours. We don't want people coming in here and taking them'. I really had to push the issue of what happened to our ancestors. They've allowed different tribes to come in, enter their country and it was like that. You come into our country, we come into your country for food and they were allowed. I said we need to keep that spirit going otherwise we'll get so "whiteised", white-people ways, that's the fence you don't come any further' and that was the same with the old people. And I said if we keep the spirit of our old people and allow these people to do that even if they come and ask and we allow them." – Traditional Owner participant (001)

"They [DERM ranger] said 'this person was caught and he was caught in your country fishing out of season and he had no permission to do so. What will you do? What will you say?' And I had to go through the whole story again with that ranger to tell him that this [sharing between groups] is the spirit of the Aboriginal people." – Traditional Owner participant (003)

Some Traditional Owner participants felt very strongly that it was more important to protect species from harvesting by people outside of their respective Traditional Owner group. These participants expressed that there was a custodial obligations in maintaining the persistence of species and that other groups were wrong in letting outside Indigenous people hunt in their *sea country*. There were a few groups that shared this sentiment and demonstrated this by making assertions during the TUMRA 5-year renewal period (discussed further). These groups expressed to the GAC that there would be no hunting permits available to Indigenous peoples outside of their Traditional Owner groups. This statement was then taken forward to the GBRMPA.

"Well in some ways I haven't been [happy with the TUMRA] because we've got outsiders coming in to take turtle and dugong from our country and I mean dugong is totally banned. I know for a fact there's been a bit of poaching and it's because we're allowing other people onto our tribal areas to hunt without guidance." – Traditional Owner participant (002)

Some Traditional Owner participants were very passionate about this topic and felt that groups that permitted hunting when populations were declining were ignoring the spiritual

connection to such animals. Participants with these perspectives believed that it was more important to protect animals from harvesting and potential extinction than it was to continue traditional harvesting of species.

“I would like to see stronger commitments from all of us - all of the groups who are associated with sea country on the TUMRA. There's only one group who wants to take turtle and dugong. These animals sustained our old people for thousand upon tens of thousands of years and I won't be part of a generation that sees the declines or extinction of these animals - that's full stop - that's our obligation as a people. To go hunting these animals like with the [Traditional Owner groups removed] people - they allow other people like Torres Straight Islanders and that person's [name removed to protect individual] friends, they can get a permit to go out and hunt on country and I'm going to stop that. I swear I'm going to stop that because I would rather die or go to jail than be a part of this or be party to that - those animals are a part of my culture. What am I going to show my grandchildren or nieces and nephews pictures of dugongs. That's like part of our mob. Those animals just aren't animals. They're not separate from us. They're one and the same with us and our culture. They're part of it.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

Another common theme relating to the internal governance of groups within the GAC was the overall roles and functions of the GAC board. Some Traditional Owners spoke of their concerns about the activities of the GAC becoming too technical for the people sitting on the board. These participants felt that certain board members did not have the right understanding of the matters that were being presented at the meetings. It was felt by one participant that this was a generational limitation and that there ought to be two components of the board, one for people with the technical skills to navigate bureaucratic processes, and one comprised of elders who would guide and approve activities according to customary law. It was thought that by separating the board, the elders would be relieved of process exhaustion and would be able to engage in aspects that were more interesting to them.

“Girringun needs to move with the times and I spoke to the board a couple of years ago at an AGM [Annual General Meeting] and told the AGM that Girringun has outgrown it's board because we've got old people that don't really understand finance and how the government structure is and all that and they're not up with it.” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (003)

“I think if we get the right people on the negotiating committees - people with expertise and understanding. To be an elder that's all right, and that's to be respected but some of the elders have no skills involved - some of them don't even know their culture. They're only just finding it now. That's the reality - It clashes. There's people like myself - younger people who are keen to get involved. We have knowledge - we come home with a whole bag of tricks. There nothing I can do because I'm not an elder - I have to sit back and sit on my hands and watch this whole process. I'm not being disrespectful, I've just seen it so often to know better. Lessen the burden of issues and mundane things that our elders shouldn't have to listen to or go through - scrutinize large documents and such. A lot of them wouldn't even read large documents if they were sent to them. So these are the bane on our people and I said why don't we set up a committee of young people who will do it but with your guidance of an elder's board. We will not touch or speak with anything to do with culture unless it is done through you guys. All of the technical stuff and that we can deal with - and we just bring it to you in a condensed form or in easy way, lay terms to give it to them so they can make the best decision.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

Traditional Owners unanimously felt that input from the elders was important in terms of receiving traditional knowledge, ensuring the continuation of culture, and maintaining Aboriginal law.

“You need elders to have more input into it on how it should be. You can have all of their things in place but without the elders' traditional knowledge it's only sort of going to go one way and it's going to come back again to understanding Aboriginal law and custom.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

4.3 – Government perspectives about conservation and management

Girringun country falls under two major World Heritage designations, namely the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, which are both regional designations outlined by the National government having their own management authorities and legislation. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Wet Tropics Management Authority, and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts (DEWHA) are the National agencies with responsibility for natural resources management

on Girringun country. The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F – under the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) are the State bodies responsible for *management* according to the regional plans outlined by the National government. On land the main document guiding the management of Girringun country is the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement* (WTRA), which was signed by 18 Traditional Owner groups (including the 9 which make up Girringun) from the broader region, as well as by the ministers from the respective agencies (agencies working under different names at the time of the agreement) in 2005.

Box 3: *The Wet Tropics Regional Agreement*

The following is an excerpt from the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement* outlining the general principles and guidelines for working with Indigenous peoples of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

“The Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992 [two main pieces of regional conservation legislation], specifically require that in performing their functions, the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and the other World Heritage Management agencies consider the traditions of, and liaise and cooperate with “Aboriginal people particularly concerned with the land” for cooperative management of the WTWHA. The legislation recognizes the significant contribution that Aboriginal people have to play in the management of both cultural and natural heritage values in the WTWHA.

Rainforest Aboriginal people acknowledge and respect that the World Heritage management agencies, WTMA, the Environmental Protection Agency/Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (EPA/QPWS) [now DERM], the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNR&M) [now DEEDI], have statutory responsibilities to plan and manage the WTWHA in accordance with these and other legislative requirements.

The parties acknowledge the importance of the Regional Agreement in recognizing Rainforest Aboriginal people’s cultural and spiritual links to the land and water in the WTWHA, and in facilitating cooperative management of the WTWHA. All parties agree to uphold their legislative responsibilities for management of the WTWHA and their obligations in implementing the terms of the Regional Agreement. The parties agree to abide by its spirit and intention, although the parties recognize that the Regional Agreement is not intended to create legal relations between them.” (Wet Tropics Management Authority 2005)

The WTRA clearly outlines the benefits of including Indigenous peoples and their worldview, including culture and spirituality, into regional *management* strategies in connection to the two main pieces of legislation (i.e. *the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992*), which guides the statutory responsibilities of the government agencies working on conservation in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). Government senior manager perspectives on regional *conservation* strategies and *management* were obtained from participant observations during meetings, and from semi-structured interviews. Senior managers from the different agencies working with the GAC on regional land and sea arrangements referred to and offered perspectives reflective of their respective agencies' mandates, the WTRA and other guiding policy documents, as well as personal perspectives reflective of past experiences with cooperative management programs with the GAC. The storylines explored here deal with *conservation*, the translation of ideals for *conservation* into *management* outcomes, and what this in turn means for Traditional Owners.

Storyline: *Government perspectives on the **conservation** value of programs that involve Traditional Owners managing country*

This is an exploration of what government senior managers believe the environmental outcomes of *conservation* programs involving Indigenous peoples ought to be. Results from this inquiry were not unanimous. Some senior managers at the DERM were supportive of programs like the GRIPA, which work towards bridging social and cultural elements of managing country, but were somewhat apprehensive of how this would work in terms of on-the-ground implementation and *conservation* outcomes. DERM senior managers that were interviewed also noted that while they were supportive, this sentiment was not unanimously shared in the department and that some managers felt that such programs would not afford the same kind of *conservation* value as conventional protected area models.

“Within DERM there are people not supportive of IPAs because they believe that they do not support the same kind of protection as other Protected Areas. These are usually the people who deal with tenure in the department. I think differently in that we have a duty

of care to Traditional Owners and cultural resources.” – DERM senior manager participant (002)

DERM senior managers also spoke of the responsibility of engaging and consulting with Traditional Owners so that their livelihoods were not negatively impacted by *management* activities. In regards to traditional hunting, DERM senior managers felt that it would be insulting to make arrangements with Traditional Owners concerning endangered species because they thought that Traditional Owners would not want to harvest a species if it’s population was under threat. However, DERM is not involved in developing endangered species legislations but is more involved with day-to-day implementation of legislation in protected areas.

“We often don't need an agreement for endangered species because Traditional Owners wouldn't be harvesting those anyway. Cheeky to have that on an agreement in that respect.” – DERM senior staff participant (002)

Harvesting, extraction and use of non-endangered species for commercial use and the acceptability of certain activities in protected areas was also explored with DERM senior managers. While senior managers often referred to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, they also offered their knowledge and perspectives on Traditional Owners’ aspirations for harvesting of materials for traditional crafts.

“We allow Traditional Owners to extract certain products...You're talking about wildlife, vegetation, lawyer cane. There is a framework that says what you can and can't do.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

Harvesting agreements were spoken of as arrangements that are negotiated within the frameworks of the *Acts*, which outline the statutory responsibilities of the department. The DERM senior managers felt that there was a certain degree of flexibility within their obligations, which enables them to work with Traditional Owner aspirations in an adaptive fashion.

Consultation with the GAC appeared to be something that was very important to the DERM for development, implementation and review of *management* plans.

“We don't stop any Indigenous enterprise but there are certain things under the Nature Conservation Act that you can't do and we usually negotiate that with the community.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

One DERM senior manager articulated that harvesting within National Parks by Traditional Owners was not a major issue because traditional knowledge would guide their practices in such a fashion that leads to sustainable resource extraction. It was felt that harvesting as such would not be a problem as long as it was consistent with the *Nature Conservancy Act*.

“If they know the population is under threat they're not interested [in harvesting]. They'll take some of the more regular things. They like to access lawyer cane for making baskets, certain fruits at certain times of the year and things like that we don't have a problem with that. In World Heritage Areas it's not a permit it's a negotiated outcome between two parties. Has to be consistent with the management principles consistent with the Nature Conservancy Act.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

Senior managers from the GBRMPA were more concerned with what programs meant for the *protection* of species, in particular threatened and endangered species such as green sea turtle and dugong. They saw benefits in conservation programs involving Traditional Owners, such as the TUMRA and IPA in terms of more day-to-day *management* of species regulations, as well as more monitoring of the numbers and demographics of species.

“[Support for the TUMRA is] For the conservation of the species program and that way government knows if it's injecting dollars into a program that there's a conservation benefit. And that's the case. The case is that if we provide them with support and they have a management program that deals with turtle and dugong consumption or capture and their on record for taking four takes of turtle over four years, magnificent sort of

result considering there could have been more. But four in four years that they know of and all of those six groups can stand up and say 'we haven't decimated the population.' – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

The GBRMPA senior managers also thought that Traditional Owners would not want to hunt in the green zone of the GBRMP, which is a special conservation area that generally does not permit fishing, hunting, or other extractive activities. Green zones, however, do have special stipulations for traditional hunting under a Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2010b).

"We realize that Giringun doesn't want to fish in green zones or take threatened species" – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

The GBRMPA realized that it was not able to provide the most ideal arrangement in terms of Traditional Owner aspirations through the first TUMRA, which was established in 2005. They also realized that the initial TUMRA was an arrangement that was to be a first step in Traditional Owners being able to manage species *on country* and that this was not going to meet the aspirations of the Traditional Owners, who wanted to manage species in a broader sense (i.e. beyond green sea turtle and dugong) according to customary law. It was felt, however, that this would be a good first step and ideal way to test this kind of partnership and sea country arrangement, and to determine the outcomes for the parties involved. Through this arrangement, government was seeking mechanism that would eventually put an end to poaching through promoting traditional hunting of turtle and dugong within the greater GBR. Another intended outcome of the agreement was generation of data that would be retrieved through the permitting systems, which required permit holders to record statistics such as sex and size of the animal being harvested (Giringun Aboriginal Corporation 2005). Several TUMRAs have been established within the GBRMP since the successful implementation of the Giringun TUMRA, which was the first.

“Traditional use was supposed to cover all use and that's what it's supposed to do but the political climate didn't allow for all use. After the TUMRA was submitted GBRMPA went back to the Traditional Owners and encouraged them to just concentrate on turtle and dugong for the time being as a first step - something that could be built on later. GBRMPA considered this to be something manageable. After the first one the intent of the groups was to build a 5 year TUMRA with all uses” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

The DEWHA senior manager discussed conservation in reference to the IUCN requirements that ICCAs must lead to conservation. In the case of the IPA program, the *management* plan must have a focus on *conservation* over other aspects of Traditional Owner life such as culture or social programming. Indigenous organizations can write these aspects into the management plan but *conservation* must be the primary goal.

“Conservation needs to be in the [IPA] management plan. Programs that are focused on cultural aspects, for example, would not be funded through the IPA program. However, traditional ecological knowledge can be a key component and for many of the projects it is because very often people haven't been on country for a long time and cultural knowledge is imperative to looking after country” – DEWHA senior manager participant

The DEWHA senior manager in charge of the IPA program for the region felt that *conservation* programs that have a strong social element with outcomes leading to conservation, such as ICCAs outlined by the IUCN, are desirable frameworks that government agencies should be supporting. There was a great deal of enthusiasm communicated by the DEWHA senior manager in regards to using the IPA program as a vehicle for achieving the Giringun collective vision for *caring for country*, including environmental protection, enhanced wellbeing, and management by customary law (i.e. culture). The following quote was communicated during the first steering committee meeting by the DEWHA senior manager working with the GAC on the establishment of the GRIPA.

“I actually think it's quite inspirational to be honest [the IPA] because we keep talking about working different elements together. Looking after the country and people together

and the idea of having one plan that covers everything is absolutely inspirational. It's very different to what has been done before.

One of the things that we've documented over a number of years is the social and economic benefits of the program and while that's not formally integrated as it is here many of our projects for example have education programs working with schools and the social stuff comes in directly with engaging elders with going out on to country and traditional ecological knowledge. All of that is part of it. What Phil has done here is set it out as a vision. In reality these things happen over time. Kids attend school more regularly. They're being inspired by the rangers that are going out and working on country, engaging of the broader community - small businesses - that would be tied in with on country trips and sort of other indirect things.

There are health benefits, which have really been an outstanding thing in the IPA program. The people that engage directly but also the broader family group because of the income that's coming in. It's not just one person that benefits, it's 10 or 20 people. Just recently we've found some scientific evidence that supports that. Evidence has been provided by the communities but it's also being measured.

I really believe that this is inspirational and I really believe that by working together the benefit will not only be good for the land and sea but also there will be a great benefit for the Indigenous community as well as for the broader community as well. We're all going to benefit especially in a place like this where there are ongoing projects.” – DEWHA senior manager participant

4.4 – Comparing perspectives and knowledge about *caring for country* and conservation

A significant moment in my fieldwork highlighted what Traditional Owners wanted to express to the broader community. I was sitting on the riverbank of the traditional *country* of an Indigenous person from the Gulnay language group. We were doing an interview on what *caring for country* means to him. He was telling me about the deep connection that his people have with the water and about how this relates to a creature from dreamtime, the rainbow serpent, which you needed to talk to for safe passage over water. He compared this to the story that he knew from the bible about Moses speaking to the water so that the sea would become smooth and Jesus could walk over it. He explained how people think it's silly to talk to the water but that he felt that this type of communication is important for the spiritual connection to the environment. *“Water is alive it's not something that's dead. The way it becomes dead is if we don't look after it. It's like we're killing our own lifeline by polluting our rivers”*. This narrative

spoke volumes and was reflective of the holistic worldview, which translates into the practice of *caring for country*. What was being expressed, was that the spiritual connection to the environment is what makes us care for the environment. The communication with the environment and amongst people who are caring for the environment/*country* is of tremendous value. He expressed how what we were doing right then and there, by talking about *country*, while *on country* was fundamental to people understanding the deep connection that Traditional Owners have with *country*. Essentially the thought was that if values and aspirations could be shared in this way, then resource *management* partnerships could be based on a foundation of understanding and perhaps even compassion towards all parties.

Traditional Owners consistently expressed that *caring for country* was a holistic endeavour that required Traditional Owners to be engaged in activities *on country*. Through the ability to be engaged in decision making and to care for the environment, Traditional Owners are able to practice and learn about their culture, which in turn is important for their physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. Preservation of a place or a species often meant the preservation of their culture and their spiritual connection to the land and water. This worldview was described by Traditional Owners as something that was holistic by design and by necessity, and that it was important to share this worldview with all people for reasons relating to survival of culture, the environment and humanity. Additionally, for Traditional Owners and the GAC, being involved in the *governance* and *management* of *country* is as much about being able to be part of a custodial relationship with *country* as it is about the rights of Traditional Owners. There is a deep rooted relationship that Traditional Owners felt needed to be recognized in order for partnerships to be meaningful and away from the tokenism involved in programs in the past.

Traditional Owner participants felt that their worldview is unique and something that that is important for government managers to understand as a necessary element in the overall partnership journey towards meaningful collaborative arrangements. To this end, Traditional Owners and the GAC felt that the best outcomes would arise from day-to-day programs in which Traditional Owners and government managers and staff were able to interact. Through these interactions, the GAC believed that long-term understanding of Traditional Owner values and aspirations would develop. This is one component of the thinking behind the strategic vision the GAC is moving forward on the behalf of Giringun Traditional Owners, along with the shifting of *management* responsibilities from government to the GAC. The GAC board and staff, as well as Traditional Owners, expressed that current arrangements with government were not

ideal but were important for working towards an understanding of values and aspirations between parties.

By evaluating the perspectives of those engaged in the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement* (i.e. both senior managers and Traditional Owners), as well as other agreements such as the TUMRA, it is possible to evaluate if the spirit of acceptance and inclusion of ideals for *caring for country* compared to *conservation* values. Government perspectives and ideologies for land and sea *management* were based on departmental bureaucratic systems, legislation, and internationally accepted advisory bodies. The DERM had a notion of being capable of being flexible and working towards more desirable outcomes for Traditional Owners as long as they were fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. The World Heritage agencies were bound by their respective regional agreements such as the WTRA and the TUMRA. Flexibility in the development of the terms of reference of such agreements allowed for government departments to be somewhat more creative in developing implementation and management plans for the agreements. Because government senior managers are bound by statutory responsibilities and the need to satisfy the broader community, government perspectives were limited, and this was reflected in the limited ability of programs to satisfy the aspirations of Traditional Owners.

It is often the case that Indigenous community members engaged in management processes are not adequately understood by *co-managers* despite the best of intentions (Lloyd et al. 2005). Because managers are bound by statutory and other forms of policy obligations there are only small margins available for incorporating the “knowledge-practice-belief complex” that is traditional knowledge (Berkes 1999). This was reflected in Traditional Owners expressing that they thought they were often being consulted with so that managers could “tick-a-box” as part of the bureaucratic processes involved with managing relations on the ground, or as part of the necessity to consult with Indigenous peoples in order to avoid Native Title issues. While the “requirement to consult” was certainly one of the drivers within the various agencies for finding ways to incorporate the worldviews and customary laws of Traditional Owners, it would be an oversimplification to not consider the role of individual managers in moving forward different ideals for *conservation* and in affecting the development of policy. It has been found that managers within agencies have the ability to effect agency decisions and that agencies with more manager input are often the ones with the highest levels of program achievements (Bertrand and Schoar 2002). Therefore, the consideration of

Traditional Owner ideals for *caring for country* by senior managers is important in terms of shaping future regional frameworks.

In a broad sense, government managers understood the desire that Traditional Owners have to *care for country*. Government managers wanted to increase the level of consultation with Traditional Owners and wanted to incorporate of traditional knowledge beyond obligatory and often poorly supported formulations for consultation. This was especially reflected in the desire maintain up current programs and to develop new programs involving Traditional Owners. In regards to policy, the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement* was a first attempt to move towards arrangements that could be capable of incorporating cross-cultural worldviews into regional *management* (Wet Tropics Management Authority 2005). While this was a significant landmark in terms of Traditional Owners being acknowledged as formal partners with unique visions for management, the regional agreement is also something that is believed to be in need of review and renewal from both the Indigenous and government agency sides of the agreement.

The CIRU and TUMRA as on-the-ground *management* arrangements were fairly restrictive in their abilities to incorporate the holistic vision of *caring for country*. This is because this partnership with the GAC is bound by legislation that in many cases cannot accommodate Traditional Owner values. Also, current values for *conservation* within the DERM and GBRMPA, as well as current political climates contribute to governmental rigidity. The CIRU/Saltwater Ranger Unit is demonstrative of the discord between aspirations and actual *management* outcomes. The employment of Indigenous rangers has been important for increasing the presence of Indigenous peoples *on country* but hasn't yet afforded the degree and types of activities reflecting the interests of Traditional Owners, such as the monitoring of sacred sites. Monitoring of the TUMRA and working on *country* within a contemporary context (e.g. gathering of scientific data) was also important to Traditional Owners. This was reflected in the overarching focus group discussion about *caring for country* as well as individual discussions about government support in the form of training.

The TUMRA was not reflective of a holistic vision for managing sea *country*. Instead, what some felt that they received was a "cute and cuddlies" agreement for turtle and dugong (how the TUMRA was referred to by some of the GAC staff). The GBRMPA was seeking an agreement for traditional hunting of these species and in turn Traditional Owners received the ability to manage quotas and hunt areas according to customary law and Traditional Owner

input. The GBRMPA expressed that it could not extend the TUMRA to other species at the time of accreditation because of the ideals for conservation and the political climate within the authority at the time. GBRMPA senior managers were, however, aware and supportive of the fact that Traditional Owners wanted to expand the scope of the TUMRA to include more species and more of the traditional saltwater estates. The 2009 TUMRA renewal process was indicative of this and included an exploration of the possibility to include species such as barramundi cod (*Lates calcarifer*) and the harvesting of one dugong per year for a cultural camp where Traditional Owners would teach youth about the traditional hunting, dispatching and sharing of the animal. This was yet to be accredited at the time of this document.

The IPA is the program that suits the holistic vision for managing *country* best because of its flexibility. The program is based primarily around Western ideals, in that it requires that *conservation* of biodiversity be at the focus of any *management* plan, which is put forward by Traditional Owners. This characteristic deviates somewhat from the IUCN guidelines for ICCAs, which state that ICCAs should lead to but not necessarily be primarily focused on *conservation*. There is a trend of ongoing flexibility within the IPA program, which began as arrangements that could only occur on Indigenous owned land, and are now expanding with the DEWHA testing the waters in situations where there is an Indigenous presence in *management* but there is not widespread ownership of the proposed area (the plans for the GRIPA is an example of this). The GRIPA development process is a good example of the willingness of senior managers to incorporate Traditional Owner ideals for *caring for country* and to effect policy change within their respective departments. GAC representatives stipulated that it was necessary for senior level managers to be at the table at the steering committee because of the innovative nature of the *management* plan being put forward. It was felt that the holistic vision for *caring for country* could be expressed through the design of the GRIPA if the right people were present and were willing to move the vision even further up the chain of command within their respective agencies.

Perspectives on *caring for country* and *conservation* are the underlying drivers of the partnerships occurring for the *management* and *governance* of Giringun country. Perspectives influence the motivations of parties with respect to governance and management, and have an effect on how relationships are built up throughout the development, implementation and reviewing of arrangements. However, positionality is not the only determinant of the integrity and productivity of partnerships. There are other social drivers and/or determinants such as

historicity, personal interest, and the level of rapport that emerges from the interactions of individual personalities (Nelson et al. 1999). All of these things combined create the atmosphere and the 'shared space', which serves as the platform for collaboration (Ross and Innes 2005). The following sections explore these themes.

Chapter 5 – Results & Discussion: Partnerships and power sharing

5.1 – Current and emerging partnership frameworks for Girringun country

The structure and relationships between parties involved in Girringun land and sea *management* were conceptually mapped, illustrating the parties, the linkages, directionality of the relationships, and levels of authority as well as the influence from advisory groups (Figure 15). This information was derived through consultation with key informants at the GAC and through document analysis. At the international advisory level, the IUCN and UNESCO are the agencies that influence government mandates for *conservation* within the National Reserve System and World Heritage Areas, respectively (Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2010; Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2010a; Wet Tropics Management Authority 2010b). At the National level, the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) is currently responsible for National Parks designations, the *Caring for our Country* and *Working on Country* initiatives, and the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC) (Wet Tropics Management Authority 2009). DEWHA maintains an advisory relationship with the regional World Heritage Authorities through the AWHAC, namely the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) in relation to Girringun *country*. Consultations for the *Caring for our Country* initiatives are made with the State and regional *management* bodies, in this case the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM), and the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation (GAC).

The DERM is responsible for managing day-to-day activities within parks and protected (including WHAs) according to the mandates outlined in the *World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, which are both included in the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement* (Department of Environment and Resource Management 2010). The other State department responsible for regional management is the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) directed by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI). DPI&F is responsible for managing fisheries activities and economics (i.e. quotas and prices) in Queensland (Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries 2010), and works primarily with the DERM for on-the-ground management of such activities (participant observation).

The GAC engages in consultation with all of the groups outlined above, although in differing capacities. The GAC maintains ongoing contact with the DERM through involvement in the Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit (also known as the Saltwater Indigenous Ranger Unit) and the *management* activities involved in the TUMRA, which also includes on-going consultation with the GBRMPA. These specific arrangements are described in the next sections. The directionality of the overall natural resources and protected areas governmental institutional arrangement currently affecting Giringun country is one that is top-down. International organizations influence National and regional World Heritage policy development agencies in turn influencing the day-to-day State management agencies. This governmental bureaucratic system creates the regional arrangement, which the Giringun Traditional Owners through the GAC must navigate in order to pursue aspirations for the *governance* and *management* of *country*. Through current and future plans for arrangements with government agencies, the GAC is working towards shifting the top-down arrangement towards an arrangement that is more representative of reciprocal regional partnerships.

While the directionality of the institutional arrangement for government agencies in relation to the GAC is top-down, this direction is reversed when it comes to the institutional arrangement of the GAC governance system (Figure 15). Within this system the board of Traditional Owners who are speaking on behalf of their communities directs the GAC. This portion of the regional governance arrangement is therefore one that is bottom-up (accounts from GAC key informants). The arrangements on Giringun *country* are based on a multitude of structural arrangements and can be thought of in terms of being on a 'sliding scale' dependent on the fashion in which decisions are made amongst partners relating to both *governance* and *management* (Figure 16). The following section presents and discusses the partnership arrangements and the flows of support, decision-making, and other forms of involvement. This in turn reveals where the arrangement are positioned on the 'sliding scale' in terms of the level of power sharing and participation amongst parties involved in the governance of Giringun *country*.

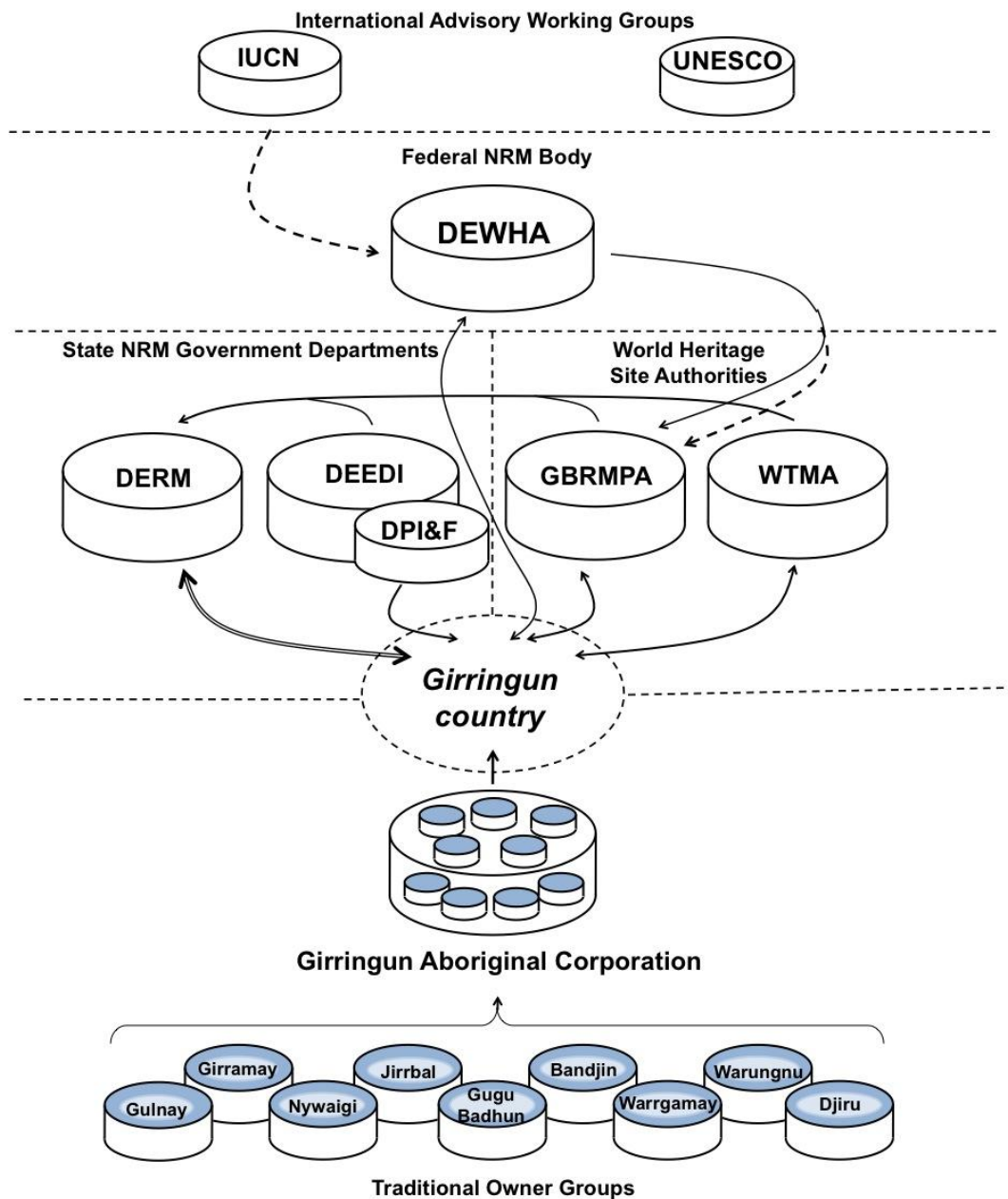


Figure 15. Institutional arrangements (i.e. relationship between governance partners) governing Giringun *country*. Demonstrates relationships in the absence of regional steering committees. The dashed line arrows indicate an advisory relationship between the International Advisory Working Groups and the government conservation agencies. Solid lines arrows and nested 'disks' indicate a direct relationship, wherein parties are directly accountable to one another's mandates. The double line arrow between the DERM and the GAC indicates a practical *management* partnership as well as a *governance* partnership arrangement.

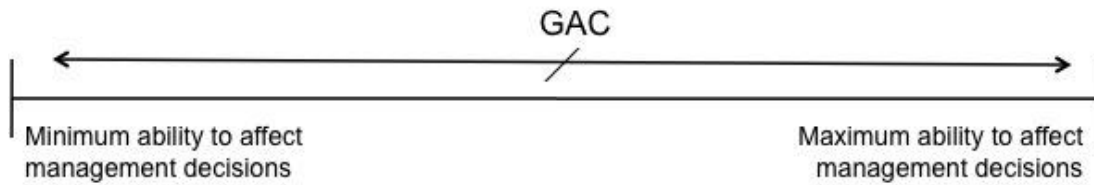


Figure 16. Conceptual ‘sliding scale’ depicting how institutional arrangements can afford a regional organization such as the GAC varying abilities to affect management decisions.

The Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit (CIRU)

The first *management* partnership established between the GAC and government began as an arrangement between the GAC and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), which went through a renaming and amalgamation to become the DERM. Planning for the Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit dates back to the 1990’s, at which time the GAC and DPI&F were concerned about non Giringun Indigenous peoples hunting dugong out on Giringun *sea country* (Izurieta Valery 2007). This concern gradually resulted in the development the Giringun Salt Water Unit co-management proposal, and eventually led to a collaborative arrangement between the GAC and the QPWS was established (Nursey-Bray and Rist 2009). The unit was originally named the Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit (CIRU) because operations were based out of the QPWS offices located in Cardwell, the same town where the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation maintains it’s office. The CIRU was established as a ‘learning-by-doing’, flexible and adaptive program, which maintained four Giringun Traditional Owners as staff holding differing levels of seniority based on experience (Izurieta Valery 2007).

CIRU/Saltwater rangers wear both QPWS (DERM) and GAC badges while working out *on country*. Indigenous rangers work with rangers from the DERM on general park maintenance, monitoring of activities in the different zones of the GBRMP, amongst other tasks. Indigenous rangers at this point do not have the authority to enforce laws. Rangers working in the program also coordinate with the GBRMPA on activities in the GBR (Figure 17). The GBRMPA are also consulted with during reviews of program outcomes. Monitoring of the TUMRA became part of the Saltwater Ranger activities following accreditation of the agreement in 2005. DERM is involved in the full cycle of the process, providing training and logistical support for the

program. The CIRU can be thought of as the first formal partnership and steering committee for the *management* of Giringun country. The development of this institutional arrangement involved participation from the GAC, and participation and support and the government agencies.

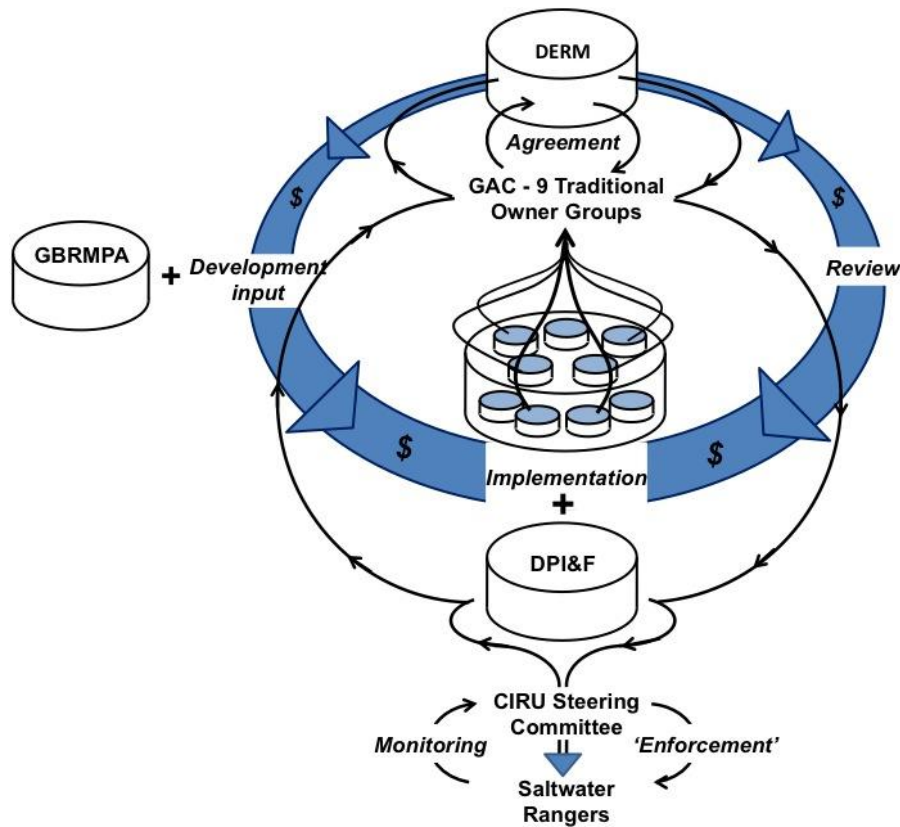


Figure 17. Cardwell Indigenous Ranger Unit steering committee institutional arrangement and phases of development. The DERM supports the agreement to work co-operatively on regional management activities with the GAC. The GBRMPA and the DPI&F are both involved in the development, however the DPI&F is involved more in the on-the-ground implementation of the program. The steering committee works within a cyclical framework where the project outcomes are reviewed. This includes feedback from Saltwater rangers as well as the other members of the steering committee. Financial support varies through the phases of the cycle.

The Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA)

The development, review and implementation of the TUMRA is guided by an *executive steering committee*, which includes senior representation from all parties involved in the initiative (Figure 18). The GAC acts on behalf of the six saltwater groups in regards to this particular arrangement. The TUMRA is the second arrangement involving the GBRMPA, which accredits and offers varying levels of support for the agreement. The DERM works with the GAC on the day-to-day management aspects of the arrangement including the activities with the Indigenous ranger unit. The Saltwater rangers work with DERM rangers on the enforcement and monitoring of harvesting within the different zones of the GBRMP. The information acquired by the Saltwater rangers working with DERM rangers is then passed back to the steering committee for their review. The first TUMRA was established in 2005 and was set for a 3-year lifecycle. The TUMRA was renewed for one year in 2008 so that the terms of reference for the next five-year TUMRA could be negotiated with the six saltwater Traditional Owner groups.

The TUMRA is essentially a permitting system that allows the saltwater groups to manage green sea turtle and dugong according to customary law within their respective saltwater estates¹⁷ (Appendix C – Map of TUMRA area in relation to traditional territories). Through this agreement, Traditional Owner groups develop the plan including the number of permits to be issued, and outline the take area on their traditional saltwater estates. Therefore the harvest numbers for green sea turtle and dugong, as well as the take areas are determined by Traditional Owners during the consultation phase. Following consultation, the GBRMPA will then indicate the portions that it can accredit in the agreement based on what is feasible within the agency at the time. The TUMRA will then be accredited according to the agreement and the Saltwater groups will then have the authority to issue permits to Indigenous hunters according to customary law. Thus the TUMRA represents a permitting system guided by customary law backed by the statutory power of the government. Traditional Owners can decide whether permits will be issued to only Traditional Owners from their own group, other Girringun Traditional Owners, and/or Indigenous hunters from other groups across Australia (who often have relocated and are living on Girringun *country*). In order to receive a permit, traditional hunters are required to agree to report back to the Traditional Owner who issued them the

¹⁷ Traditional territories

permit. The hunter must also fill in a form that is returned to the GBRMPA giving biological data on the species that was taken.

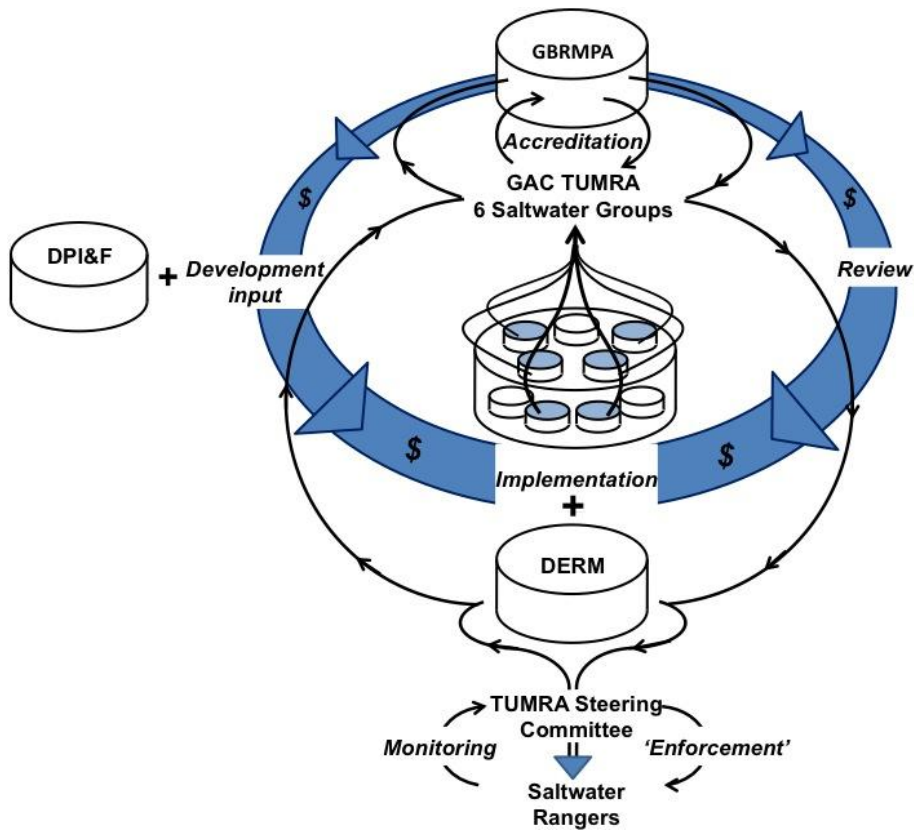


Figure 18. Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) steering committee institutional arrangement and phases of development. The GBRMPA accredits the agreement to work co-operatively on regional management activities with the GAC. The DERM and the DPI&F are both involved in the development. Both agencies are involved in the on-the-ground implementation of the program. The steering committee works within a cyclical framework where the project outcomes are reviewed. This includes feedback from Saltwater rangers as well as the other members of the steering committee. Financial support varies through the phases of the cycle.

The TUMRA essentially provides each partner with different outcomes. Saltwater Traditional Owner groups are able to manage turtle and dugong according to customary law by outlining the terms and protocols of the hunt with individual hunters. Some of the groups chose to issue a number of traditional hunting permits while others do not permit hunting on their traditional saltwater estates (Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement 2005). For the GAC the regional arrangement and the opportunity to demonstrate *governance* and *management over sea country* is the most important aspect of the TUMRA (participant observation with the GAC). The GBRMPA receives an agreement for traditional hunting within a representative section of the GBRMP, thus establishing take numbers and a framework for enforcement. The DERM benefits from the partnership through different kinds of in-kind support from the GBRMPA for the management activities that they provide. These are the logistical benefits of the agreement and do not include the outcomes related to working in long-term partnerships, such as the development of rapport. This institutional arrangement would be positioned further along the 'sliding-scale' relating to participation because of a higher level of consultation with Traditional Owners through the GAC.

The Girringun Indigenous Ranger Unit (GIRU)

The Girringun Indigenous Ranger Unit (GIRU) builds upon the experiences with CIRU and will have a new kind of *governance* structure guided by a multi-party steering committee. The existing CIRU/Saltwater Rangers will remain in their positions as DERM employees so that the new agreements provide the most opportunities in terms of ranger employment and numbers on the ground. New rangers are to be funded by two separate government programs, which will maintain their respective mandates, while working in conjunction with each respective ranger program. This cooperation between the existing Saltwater Rangers program through the DERM, the *Working on Country* program (Nationally funded through the DEWHA *Caring for our Country* program), and the new *Wild Rivers* program (State funded through the DERM) enables the resources to share training programs and build capacity amongst programs (Figure 19). The combination of the *Working on Country* rangers and *Wild Rivers* rangers was implemented beginning in January 2010 and is known collectively as the Girringun Indigenous Ranger Unit

(GIRU). The steering committee for the GIRU involves the aforementioned agencies with additional inputs from other government bodies working with the GAC, namely the DWHA, WTMA, and DPI&F. The GAC is also working on negotiations with the Department of Main Roads (DMR) towards involving the GIRU in monitoring of road alignment selections and construction on Giringun *country*. The GIRU steering committee is therefore an evolution of the CIRU steering committee, which includes new programs and different kinds of partnerships.

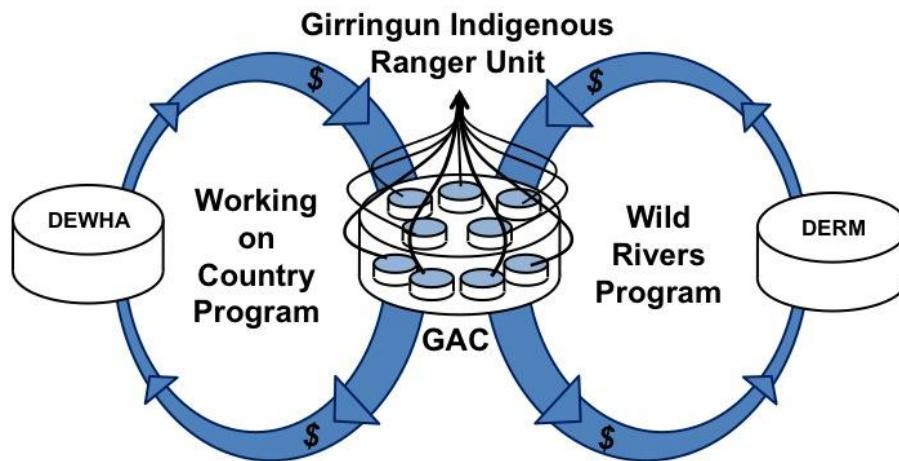


Figure 19. Giringun Indigenous Ranger Unit funding arrangement includes two programs, namely the Working on Country and Wild Rivers programs, which are DEWHA and DERM government programs, respectively. The steering committee is the same at the CIRU/Saltwater only with the addition of the DEWHA as a main funder and governance participant.

The newly expanded ranger unit will have day-to-day *management* activities guided by the GAC, with the exclusion of the two Saltwater Rangers who will receive *management* direction from the DERM as before. The *Wild Rivers* program is to contribute support for the employment of two GIRU rangers, as well as training and vessels to manage *country* around Hinchinbrook Island. The *Working on Country* program contribution is support for the employment, training, vehicles and supplies for seven rangers who will be stationed at various

locations over Giringun *country*, for a total of nine GIRU rangers. Two of the nine will be senior rangers who will be coordinators. The implementation of the new GIRU and existing Saltwater Ranger Unit would include day-to-day management of the current (i.e. the TUMRA) and future (i.e. IPA) arrangements on Giringun country. This will be integrated with existing GAC staff positions, namely coordinators, consultants and the Land and Sea Unit Coordinator. (Figure 20). Through the GIRU the GAC board and staff will be in charge of guiding the activities of the new *Working on Country* and *Wild Rivers rangers*, giving greater opportunity for on-the-ground aspirations to be met. Because the GIRU is directed by the GAC, it represents an additional step towards power-sharing, and the ability of Traditional Owners to make decisions for managing *country*.

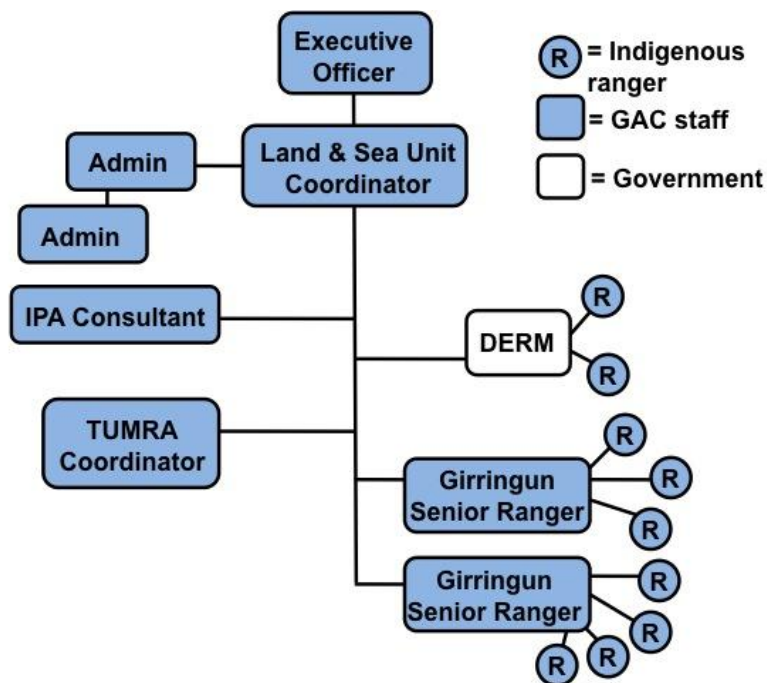


Figure 20. Practical *management* and implementation structure for both the Saltwater and Giringun Indigenous Ranger Units. All parties except for the admin staff would be involved in either the *executive* and/or *practical* steering committee(s).

The plans for the Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Area (GRIPA)

The newest arrangement currently being negotiated between the GAC and the DEWHA is the establishment of an IPA on Girringun *country*. In practice the Girringun Region IPA (GRIPA) will be a multi-party governance arrangement. The first step to this process was that Girringun approached DEWHA for support in developing a *management* plan, which was granted in 2009. At the beginning of the phase in which the *management* plan was being developed, the *executive* and *practical steering committees* were formulated. These committees provide input, which assists with the development of the *management* plan. This is important because the GRIPA would be a multi-tenure/jurisdictional protected area, which would be required to include all parties involved in regional land and sea management. This would include State as well as federal conservation agencies, World Heritage Authorities, and could also include non-governmental organizations (e.g. World Wildlife Fund) as well as regional councils and public freehold landholders.

The *executive and practical steering committee* thus far includes State and National government departments, as well as the two World Heritage Authorities (Figure 21). Conservation agencies like the World Wildlife Fund have also been invited to attend and collaborate on the steering committee. The GAC also has intentions of involving the Department of Main Roads (DMR) and the Ergon Electrical Company so that there would be more Traditional Owner involvement in the development of regional infrastructure. Such involvement would be through the GAC providing day-to-day services through the GIRU. This arrangement would be beneficial to the DMR and Ergon Electrical Co. because they are required to go through very costly consultations with Traditional Owners. As such, agencies working with the GAC realise that it is beneficial because the GAC through the structure of its board speaks for nine groups over a very large region, thus leading to substantial consultation cost savings.

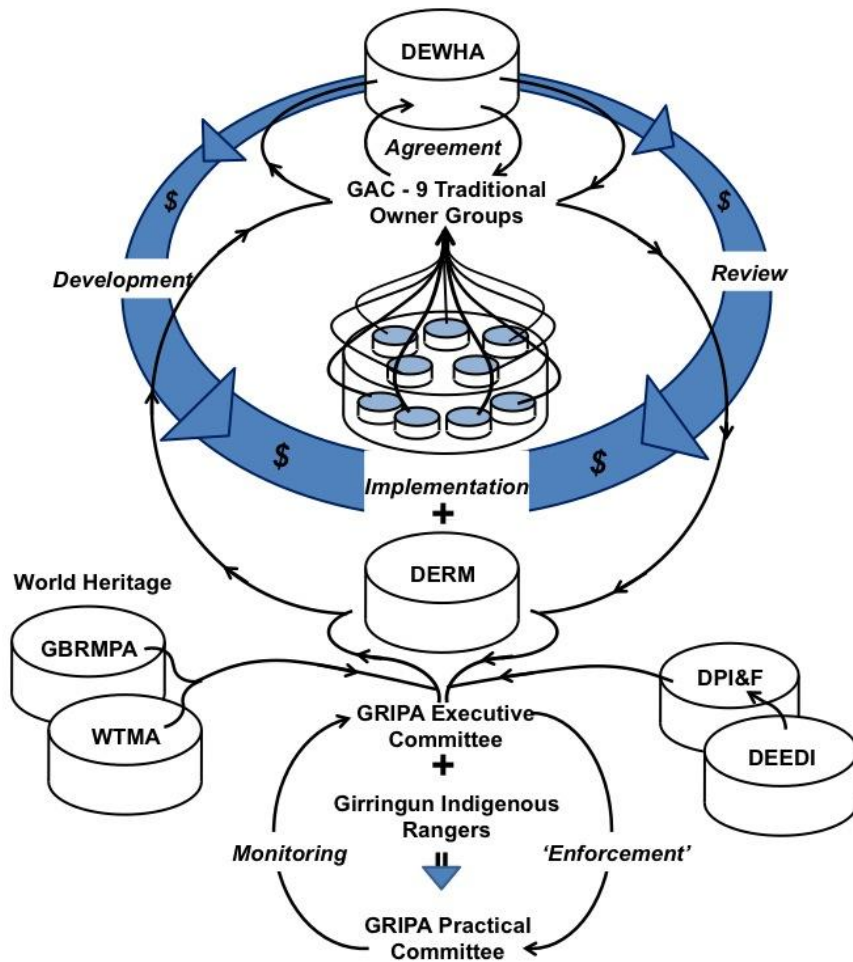


Figure 21. The Indigenous Protected Area planning *executive* and *practical* (i.e. the inclusion of Indigenous rangers) *steering committee* institutional arrangement. The DEWHA implements the agreement to support the program, which is developed by the GAC. Other agencies are involved in the development. The steering committee will work within a cyclical framework where the project outcomes are reviewed. This includes feedback from the practical steering committee, which includes the Saltwater/GIRU rangers. Financial support varies throughout the phases of the cycle.

In the past IPAs have been formally declared on land where Traditional Owners have Native Title or established *management* rights. The GRIPA would be completely different from other IPAs in two main ways. First, it would be designated over an area that is not Indigenous owned, and second it would encompass both land and sea *country*. The inclusion of sea *country*

in this instance is possible because the six saltwater Traditional Owner groups were able to outline their saltwater estates and establish management rights through the development of the TUMRA. However, management beyond the scope of what is outlined in the TUMRA would be limited because waters beyond the three nautical miles are part of the Federal Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and as such is managed by a different governance regime. This would be something that would require a separate agreement and is beyond the scope of the DEWHA IPA program.

The outline of GRIPA on a map would roughly (it is still in the process of being outlined) include the traditional lands of the nine groups and the TUMRA area (Appendix D – map of the proposed IPA area). The fact that the GRIPA would be a multi-tenure IPA over such a large area, and would include private and freehold lands makes its design quite unique. While there are other multi-tenure IPAs, this would be the first of this size and scope. For this reason, the steering committee is essential for the overall *governance* and maintenance of working partnerships in addition to guiding the direction of *management* activities. The GRIPA that is being put forward would work towards the GAC vision of providing “*social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic well-being of Aboriginal traditional owners and community members of Girringun for the benefit of the region*”. The GRIPA also contributes to the potential for the GAC of becoming a regional service provider because it brings all parties from the region to the table to discuss regional land and sea *management* within a forum inclusive of Traditional Owner values and aspirations for *caring for country*. For the different Traditional Owner groups it is also important that the IPA *management* fit in with their current and future plans for Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).

The establishment and development of the GRIPA requires commitment from all partners to work within an *adaptive management* framework rather than an inflexible protected areas structure. This also means that the nine Traditional Owner groups must work together cooperatively because the DEWHA cannot support the development of a program if there are Native Title counter claims amongst Traditional Owner groups (interview with DEWHA senior manager). The DEWHA will provide support for the program at the outset so that the GAC can be on equal footing with its government partners (interview with DEWHA senior manager). The development process can have up to two to three stages, and may take up to three years before implementation. Sustained support is therefore crucial to the IPA development process.

While the implementation of the IPA program is based on the *management* plan, there is continual review by the steering committee and by the Traditional Owners who can bring new issues or potential amendments to the steering committee at any time. For this reason, steering committee meetings are held regularly, with meetings generally occurring bi-monthly in the development phase and then quarter-annually once the IPA is operational. The steering committee includes key members such as senior managers from the respective government and conservation agencies. This typically includes one member from each agency except for the DERM, which has representatives from regional on the ground senior management as well as representatives from higher levels in the institution. Traditional Owner elders and other members of the Indigenous and broader community may be present at the steering committee meetings in order to provide input. The members of the GAC who are present include but are not limited to the executive officer, the chairman of the GAC board, and/or other GAC board members.

Decision making processes within the structure of the GRIPA steering committee will likely be similar to other steering committees in that they will be determined through negotiations and consensus (i.e. rather than by vote). In fact the various steering committees involving (and often directed by) the GAC are similar to one another and differ only in the type and number of participants as well as the scope of the respective agreement. These steering committees essentially brings together various *governance* actors in the area so that decisions can be made through partnership agreements essentially free from the imposed hierarchies that would normally exist in such a multi-tenure area. In this regard the committee serves to shifts the top-down institutional arrangement to one that is inclusive of all partners. Having senior managers at the table also creates the potential to affect the development of policies for IPAs and other regional arrangement. The regional institutional arrangement envisioned by the GAC through the development of the IPA is the furthest along the 'sliding scale' towards a power-sharing scenario where the GAC would be *managing* activities *on country* as a regional service provider to government.

5.2 – Storylines for partnerships and management on Girringun country

The integrity of partnerships existing between the GAC and government agencies, as well as amongst agencies is of paramount importance to current and future *management* plans on Girringun *country*. It was felt by the GAC staff that past conflicts between government agencies have been a major hindrance to the progression of relationships between the GAC and individual agencies. Good working partnerships are needed for negotiating arrangement and navigating processes towards desired outcomes for the parties involved. Storylines on partnerships were derived from the perspectives of all parties involved in *management* and *governance* on Girringun *country*, including from those who were involved in the practical day-to-day *management* activities (i.e. Indigenous and non-Indigenous rangers).

Storyline 1: Government perspectives on the **capacity** of the GAC as an organization

Individual senior managers recognized the potential for the GAC to act as a regional service provider. Managers also expressed that they felt that working with organizations like the GAC for the benefit of conservation and Traditional Owners together was a direction that they were keen to move towards. All senior managers from government agencies were confident in the capacity built up within the GAC as credible organization, as well as the capabilities to manage land and sea *country*. Senior managers had a desire to continue working with the GAC on existing arrangements and the establishment of new programs. The DERM spoke of good relationships in working through *management* planning and referred to the changes in the political climate in Queensland (i.e. a shift in government in the late 80s), which enabled them to engage further with Traditional Owner organizations like the GAC. The GBRMPA were particularly enthusiastic about the working relationship with the GAC. One GBRMPA senior manager spoke of the strong integrity of the GAC and their ability to work with government towards program achievements, while maintaining a focus on the wellbeing of Traditional Owners.

“Capacity is the wrong word! Girringun has increased capability to work with government to address a whole range of issues. They are a land and sea centre. They are a centre of excellence in what they provide to government. We need them. Girringun by in large have just been the shining light especially in the GBR” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

“I think the integrity of the organization is of a very high standard due to their achievements. They show a very strong interest in all matters. Not just the natural environment but the social environment as well. The support that they have for the people. It's not just about the organization accumulating assets. It's actually providing benefits to the members for the social and even economic wellbeing so by providing jobs or accessing funding for providing jobs they're looking at the social-economic factors. That's a very big achievement in of itself so the larger successes are obviously built on the smaller ones.” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Managers engaged in partnerships with the GAC had a high regard for the GAC, and felt as though they are as a reputable organization that is working very hard towards increasing the level of engagement of Traditional Owners in regional planning and towards enhancing the overall reputability of Indigenous organizations working in NRM. The GAC was often spoken of as being chosen as a partner because they were the most capable organization for achieving program success.

“The Girringun Aboriginal Corporation really has the capacity to encourage the good out of traditional knowledge. Good land management practices, by having rangers on the ground they can potentially feed that into mainstream so just having the recognition and respect for indigenous people leading by example” – WTMA senior manager participant

The board was often referred to as being at the centre of the strength of the GAC because it meant that government agencies could be confident they were working towards Traditional Owner aspirations through their negotiations with the GAC.

“Girringun has a broad recognition for being able to build capacity and relationships. What is unique about Girringun is that it is internally cohesive with its nine groups and

that creates a foundation.” – DEWHA senior manager participant

“GAC was chosen [as the first Indigenous group to explore a TUMRA with] because they were thought to be the most progressive- infrastructure, Traditional Owner board, decisions in observance of cultural protocols, capacity was assumed” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Storyline 2: Rapport between government senior managers and the GAC

The importance of rapport within relationships was stressed by the government agency partners as being crucial to the success of *management* plans involving partnerships with the GAC. This is a more general storyline in regards to *governance* and *management* partnerships. The senior manager from DEWHA believed that there were good on-the-ground relations were in place (i.e. between the GAC and the regional management partners) and emphasized the importance of this in developing the GRIPA.

“There are very good relations on the ground. Departments had thought of doing a National strategy for how to manage IPAs but decided not to do that, but to do it on a case-by-case basis. That means that we are relying very heavily on relationships. Good people on the ground equals success.” – DEWHA senior manager participant

A high level of rapport was also reflected in the statements made by DERM senior managers in regards to working cooperatively with the GAC, however it was also felt that responsibilities needed to be outlined very clearly in the development of new partnership arrangements. Some senior managers felt that verbal agreements were sufficient while others felt that there was a need for formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for certain arrangements between the DERM and the GAC.

“I believe that they [GAC] know where we’re coming from and that there is mutual understanding and intent to go in the same direction. There has been a good relationship for sometime now” – DERM senior manager participant (001)

“An MOU is needed [for the GIRU] to keep track of who is accountable for what in regards to tasks and on-the-ground management” - DERM senior manager participant (001)

The perspective of current and past rangers from the CIRU was that the level of rapport existing within working relationships was fairly strong with the DERM but there was a need for understanding of Traditional Owner culture and that cultural training as well as trips out on *country* would help in this regard.

“Relationships between the Indigenous Saltwater rangers and government are OK but there is still a cultural gap that needs to be bridged and government needs to work on this.” – Saltwater ranger participant (001)

“They're [non-Indigenous rangers] out of our hands because they're run by National Parks and a lot of the time they don't understand the importance of country and sacred sites, important sites and they just overlook that and go ahead and do what they've got to do you know: spray the grass and do things like that. But with our rangers we do have an input into it and we can ask questions. We can ask if they can do this or that. That's the only way that we can see us as Traditional Owners being satisfied of our country being looked after.” – Traditional Owner participant (013)

It was felt that exchanges, that had a focus on culture could facilitate building rapport between DERM employees (including non-Indigenous rangers) and Indigenous rangers. CIRU/Saltwater rangers felt that the best way to build rapport was to have programs that worked towards promoting cross-cultural understanding by engaging in on-the-ground management activities together. However, open forums with certain rules of engagement were also highlighted as being very important for achieving rapport and understanding between parties. For example, one Traditional Owner made the point that all parties, including Traditional Owners, should have the opportunity to express themselves freely without being hindered at the outset by the structures of existing arrangements. It was felt that the best

approach would be to hear all perspectives with an open mind, and that the most suitable directions for arrangements could be determined once everyone had a chance to give input.

“It [training] will bridge the gap if everyone has an open mind and it's really hard to get everyone out there. You get some out there that really has an open mind but you know. The answer to that question, we have to sit at that table and have an open mind about it and weed out the pros and cons about later on. Let everybody have their say first without saying 'no you can't to this or no it's already the law'. Just let everyone speak their piece and then later on weed out. To me you must have an open mind.” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (012)

Storyline 3: **Respect** for the GAC as a governance and management body

A storyline about the levels of respect existing between *governance* and *management* partners provides an even more detailed representation of the integrity of partnerships. Disappointment was expressed in regards to some of the past working relationships between CIRU rangers and DERM rangers by Traditional Owners previously involved in management. Traditional Owners, on a few occasions felt that Indigenous rangers were being given menial or degrading work.

“‘Yes this will be great for Aboriginal people’, they give a big blurb to it but at the end of the day it's about the Gerringun Rangers. The people are just laughing at us. ‘You're not a ranger what can you do? You're just up here cleaning toilets’, and I know it's part of their job but it should have been spread around a bit though.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

It was also reported by CIRU rangers that some of the DERM rangers did not care about sacred sites or other activities *on country* that were important to the Traditional Owners, as represented by the Indigenous rangers. This relates back to the desire by the GAC to have more control over ranger *management* activities. The GAC entering into a position where they would be the directors of *management* would mean that Traditional Owner interests, such as sacred sites, could be adequately represented.

“The normal rangers don't care about our sites. While I was there I made sure that was done. I was in charge of the CIRU unit. We cleaned all the sites so that the fire wouldn't damage it. As they are now there's all the grasses and you get the heat and smoke that damages it.” – former CIRU ranger participant

Past conflicts between CIRU and DERM rangers were also discussed as being problematic and inhibiting the development of respectful partnerships. CIRU rangers brought up specific instances in which there were conflicts. However, not all of the information about the respect between these kinds of partners was negative. It was also reported that the building of respectful partnerships was a worthwhile endeavour and that foundations were being built through current programs (comments noted through participant observation with the GAC).

“He [DERM ranger] went in and did work without telling Traditional Owners’. I said to him ‘You are doing the wrong thing. You need to tell the Traditional Owners’. He said ‘I don’t have to tell anybody anything’, and then he raised his voice and got right into me about it. I should have wrote down what he said. I could have taken it to the senior ranger but I didn’t” – former CIRU ranger participant

Government managers expressed respect for Traditional Owners desires to manage according to customary law. Senior managers indicated an awareness of Traditional Owner practices and/or a desire to work through partnerships in a way that is fair to the GAC and Traditional Owners. Working in a way that maintained respect for Traditional Owners was important to all government senior managers. It was expressed by DERM senior managers that consulting early in a project cycle, and across the Traditional Owner groups, was important for developing respectful partnerships.

“It's about consulting really early and widely. With a group like the Gerringun Aboriginal Corporation there's a great benefit there for Parks because Gerringun knows who we need

to consult with. It's important to make sure we don't leave people out or get too far down the track before we talk to people" – DERM senior manager participant (002)

The GBRMPA respected the GAC as being very capable and as playing a strong role in marine *management*, while maintaining that a bias towards them as the only competent Indigenous organization was not desirable. The GBRMPA was in the mindset of supporting the capacity of other Indigenous organizations working towards *management* of sea *country*. The GAC was supportive of this and its staff felt that the GAC has much to offer to other Indigenous organizations in terms of advice and support.

"We like the organization but we don't want to sort of be over-liking them if you like. We can get them to do a lot of our work but within reason too so for us they could be a marine park authority in it's own right because they do a lot of things, as well as they do. They don't need any encouragement from us. In fact they're teaching us the ways of the world so on the government side of things we're learning by their experiences so the more we can sort of encourage that we can then pass it on to all others." – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

The senior manager from the DEWHA felt that it was more important to support and respect what Traditional Owners were currently doing and working towards than to try to encourage change through programs such as the IPAs.

"It's [the IPA] more about respect than it is about changing" – DEWHA senior manager participant

Storyline 4: **Responsibilities** for management and to management partners

Personal accounts from Traditional Owners were that it was their responsibility to *care for country*, and that partnerships with government were potential mechanisms for enabling Traditional Owners to return to a custodial role. For government senior managers,

responsibilities were described in terms of a responsibility to fulfill statutory obligations, responsibilities to Traditional Owners, and responsibility to play certain roles or provide support. The sentiment within DERM was that in order for certain visions to become realities, ministers further up the chain of command had to be supportive.

“Girringun is a great resource because they speak for nine TO groups and when you're trying to manage it's fantastic for us. We've been trying to convince our local ministers, and our local members and our executive that there is a need to inject some funding in to keep that vehicle alive. Again we're subject to the same constraints as all government at the moment.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

The Commonwealth government expressed concerns in regards to the State responsibilities being offloading through the programs being developed with the GAC. Concern over the division of responsibilities was a common theme amongst most departments involved in arrangements with the GAC. There was a strong emphasis on the need for responsibilities between the parties to be outlined clearly from the outset of all arrangements.

“The Commonwealth can't be perceived as funding State responsibilities and can't be perceived as interfering with State responsibilities. That is why relationships are so important.” – DEWHA senior manager participant

The spirit at the GBRMPA was that it is more important to work creatively towards finding solutions than to become diverted from the task by whose responsibility it is. Senior managers expressed that there is always a balance between flexibility and accountability in developing new arrangements.

“I guess my thing individually is a lot different. I always look for solutions no matter who's responsibility it is because some of the work that we do isn't always a barrier created by what we do, zoning or anything else. It could be something that happens in the commercial field. It could be something that happens in coastal development, something related but not exactly in our patch but it's not 'oh, it's not marine park business so we're going away'. We tend to stay around and work on those things.” – GBRMPA senior

manager participant (001)

Storyline 5: Traditional Owner **engagement** in on-the-ground management

Traditional Owner engagement in *management* activities was discussed from several different perspectives, and a number of subthemes emerged within this storyline. Different groups of participants had different ideas about what Indigenous involvement in *management* meant. Traditional Owners spoke of becoming engaged in *caring for country*, involving cultural and spiritual practices, as well as other holistic approaches. It was expressed that hands-on experience offered by programs like the Indigenous ranger unit could be important for reestablishing a connection with and knowledge of *country*.

“We want to put our young people on country and that's where the learning is. Getting back on country. Showing where those places are because with Aboriginal people they're brought up more with hands on things out there and doing it and with today's technology they're sitting there behind a computer and that's good for young people to have that education and that background but it's also important to have them also out on country and having that hands on experience and looking and actually knowing what they're talking about.” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (001)

Traditional Owners also expressed on a few instances that important learning could come from engaging with the wider society (i.e. through government programs). They felt that mutual learning was important for building understanding of the knowledge that each party possesses and could offer to one another. Sharing perspectives and knowledge was perceived as something beneficial to Traditional Owners and valuable for building relationships.

“To get the young ones there you need to get them more out there involved in that wider society of learning, mixing both cultures together and learning how the wider society operates and how they see caring for country where we see it from a different perspective. We've got to work out a balance in between where they should consult Traditional Owners - what is the best route to put trees to plant here and what purpose does it have for the animals within the areas. There's no point planting a tree if the birds don't eat that fruit.” – Traditional Owner participant (012)

Senior managers expressed that they thought that there was much to be learned and gained through working with Indigenous peoples in on-the-ground activities. They articulated the importance of establishing programs with minimum hindrance by government bureaucratic processes and Native Title issues. Government senior managers were expressing something similar to Traditional Owners, in that the most important outcomes from partnerships are those that arise from the shared experiences afforded by partnership programs. While there are a couple of Traditional Owner groups which have expressed interest in pursuing Native Title, and one that is formally launching claims, many Traditional Owner groups have expressed that they would rather work through an ongoing series of partnership arrangements with the GAC. While, it was obvious that government senior managers were keen to work through partnership arrangements, the intentions behind the desires were not always obvious. In some instances it was difficult to decipher whether the development of short-term gains in the form of government support for jobs and short-term projects would provide the same kinds of benefits as working through legal processes, such as those involved in establishing Native Title.

“We encourage Traditional Owner access to country. We encourage them to share their knowledge with us. We know they have different customs. We develop and protect capital work projects. We will walk and talk Traditional Owners through the process because we need to get Native Title clearance. While there’s a legislative framework that says we need to get Native title clearance we never get it. We get it informally by walking and talking to the community. Walking through the project, getting a letter of agreement that the project can go ahead. We normally employ Traditional Owners to assist in that process. So we get around the official side of it by dealing with the groups on the ground, offering employment opportunities and inducement to do cultural heritage surveys.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

Traditional Owners agreed for the most part with government about increased numbers of Indigenous peoples involved in *management* leading to better outcomes, and an increased awareness in the wider population of what is important to Indigenous people. It was felt that the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners could be represented through government partnerships. Several Traditional Owners expressed that while the potential for meaningful partnerships exists, there are still many steps that need to be taken towards building

understanding amongst partners.

“I think in terms of the direction that we're going we certainly will have a lot more impact in terms of our interactions and strategic partnerships in terms of some of the land owners and land managers in the cultural heritage management side of things.” – Traditional Owner participant (011)

Understanding by the broader community (i.e. public) of Traditional Owner engagement in management was discussed by both Traditional Owners and government senior managers. Managers felt that there was great value in Traditional Owner involvement in land and sea *management*, and they thought this was an area that required further public education and that the department ought to make further investments in this regard.

“I think it goes well in terms of having Indigenous people on the ground, especially with visitors more so than locals. It's just that sense that if these people are of this country and they're there looking after it. That doesn't degrade what we're doing either but yes I think it's a positive aspect.” – DERM senior manager participant (001)

“Education is one area that we fall down badly. It's a preconceived idea of what Traditional Owner involvement means for protected areas management.” – DERM senior manager participant (002)

On several occasions, senior managers referred to the fear that people have of Traditional Owners “taking over” *country*, and that departments would need to work towards encouraging an understanding amongst the wider population. They realized that Traditional Owners simply want to have a say in managing *country*. It was also expressed by a DERM senior manager that the best way to educate people is by having more Indigenous people involved in looking after *country*.

“It’s [the development of programs like the TUMRA and the IPA] just a recognition that they were there first. Just gives a right to speak about things, not take things over, people are scared about that” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Senior managers spoke of their understanding of Traditional Owners’ values regarding harvesting practices and *management*. They were aware that there are protocols that are important to Traditional Owners, which are not always understood by the broader community or managers within the various agencies. This was an aspect that was highlighted as being an important component of the education that the DERM could provide.

“We recognizes the traditional hunting practices, for example that turtles must be butchered on land and “the blood must meet the soil” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers spoke of the lack understanding from the broader community in terms of on the ground experiences such as traditional harvesting practices, which were reported to DERM rangers. They also spoke of encountering prejudice and being mistreated by people who did not acknowledge the Indigenous ranger unit.

“So the elders cut the dugong or the turtle open so they look at its vital organs - so the liver and the things like that to look for changes to see if it’s been contaminated or not - and that’s why they leave it [explaining why hunters left their catch – public saw this and complained to DERM].” – Traditional Owner participant (002)

“Our boys go out there and they see people doing something wrong so they go over and

*talk to people and people will just tell them to go and f*** themselves. 'You're a Murri'¹⁸, you're not a qualified ranger' that's what they'll tell them. They are a qualified ranger but they've got no say." – former CIRU ranger participant*

Government acknowledged that much of the population does not understand traditional hunting especially within a contemporary context, and that this was an aspect that made working towards collaborative arrangements with Traditional Owners difficult at times. Government managers expressed several times that their abilities to effect the development of programs was restricted by the existing public perceptions.

"It's a difficult one and there are certain members of the community that are horrified that we allow traditional hunting in sea country using boats with motors and spear guns."
– DERM senior manager participant (002)

Storyline 6: The **practical application** of Indigenous engagement in management

Storylines about the practical application of Indigenous *management* emerged within the discussions relating to current and future frameworks. On-ground-activities such as managing of cultural heritage, monitoring of the TUMRA harvesting practices, as well as the gathering of scientific information associated with the TUMRA was on the minds of government, Indigenous rangers, and Traditional Owners alike. The need to involve the Indigenous ranger unit in further activities was a reoccurring theme.

"I see it [Indigenous involvement in management] in a broad sense. Feral weed and animal management, cultural heritage protection and management would be of a huge benefit. People with a closer link, heritage, and knowledge of these aspects of the area. It's a big issue that Giringun has been raising, with fire management more and more of their cultural heritage goes up in smoke. To have more people on hand with perspective on these issues is definitely a positive thing." – WTMA senior manager participant

¹⁸ Murri is a slang term (used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people) for an Indigenous person from Queensland.

“They can account for their take. They can account for anything that they do under that management system. Their activities, they can plan to do anything that they want to do and in conjunction with other parties that they want to work with. Say for instance in the research area there's going to be more recognition of the Traditional Owners and traditional knowledge so they should be included for the information that they can provide for the natural science part of it.” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

As new programs are developed, the capacity of the overall Indigenous ranger unit (i.e. CIRU and GIRU rangers) becomes enhanced through government inputs of training and equipment. Senior managers acknowledged that more responsibilities (e.g. enforcement capabilities) for Indigenous rangers were desired and also felt that more involvement would translate into more meaningful program outcomes. The GBRMPA was enthusiastic about more Indigenous rangers, working through the two new programs that would make up the GIRU, and what this would mean for *management* for that portion of the GBRMP. The DERM was also positive about the new GIRU rangers and felt that they would translate to good *management* outcomes with their department.

“New rangers - phenomenal what they can do with more people on the ground. More rangers equals increased capacity. GBRMPA doesn't have the funding to support resources like the rangers.” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

“There is a desire for rangers to be involved in as many things as possible and to be involved in activities that make use of their individual strengths and interests. Procedures could be adapted from DERM.” – DERM senior manager participant (001)

“Plans with the IPA and the rangers will mean a stronger operational element to it. It will be a partnership in doing more so than it is at the moment. I think it will be one of understanding. More pragmatic.” – DERM senior manager participant (002)

Indigenous rangers were also enthusiastic about taking on further training and responsibilities through existing and future programs, and felt that the enhanced capacity offered by government programs would contribute to better on-the-ground outcomes for their day-to-day work. They envisioned a stronger delivery of partnership outcomes because of the enhancements in their *management* roles and responsibilities.

“That's right [it's important to be involved in management and enforcement]. That way it makes it feel like we're part of the process rather than 'you can't take anymore'. So if we're not going to take anymore then no one else is going to take anymore, and the other thing is also if we're expected to do something about increasing the [dugong] population so is Port Hinchinbrook [resort/marina on Giringun country], so is the professional fisherman, so is all of the boaties [recreational boaters] and all that. There should be no one going greater than any speed to hit dugongs [with boats] and stuff.” – Traditional Owner participant (012)

“TUMRA will mean that GAC can get its own vessel. That way they can police and patrol for compliance to permits and regulations. Only one turtle is allowed per take and often people aren't being watched. Rangers and GBRMPA are not getting the information that it needs. Need to keep it more honest and give opportunities for GAC to be on country doing different things” – Saltwater ranger participant (001)

GAC and Traditional Owner participants alike described Traditional Owner involvement in *management* in terms of practical outcomes relating to holistic *management of country*. More emphasis on the monitoring and maintenance of sacred sites and sites of significance was envisioned. It was thought of in terms of being incorporated into programs that were also working towards other *management* goals, such as those focused on the *management* of species (i.e. the TUMRA) or National Parks.

“That's why we're trying to put a prospect to get our rangers in there and also it helps them to also know what sacred sites and story places. That can be a pillar for tourism and then you know they have that expertise in behind 'yes, country has values and it has this kind of fauna', but it also has this Aboriginal arts centre, it has this story place here so with Aboriginal rangers it's a plus not only having expertise on the rainforest side but they also

have that expertise on that cultural side which they also can advise people in tourism and the areas on stuff like that wherefore we haven't actually got that contact yet. People in tourism don't say 'oh, you cannot use that are because it's a sacred site'. It hasn't been approached that way." – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (003)

Consultation and involvement in planning processes was a common theme amongst *management* partners. This was expressed as being something to continually strive towards by government, who admitted that their level of consultation had not always been ideal. Traditional Owners and GAC staff also expressed that there was a need for further consultation and involvement, especially in regards to the development of new programs. One Indigenous ranger felt that it was important to revisit the *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement*, as a document that could help steer future Indigenous involvement in *management* programs in the Wet Tropics.

"There is a need to go back to the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement and implement some of the recommendations from there - consultation and involvement in planning. We need to work with QPWS towards enforcement, policing and zoning, especially enforcement over sea country." – Saltwater ranger participant (002)

Traditional Owners also spoke of the importance of having the right people in positions, such as in the Indigenous ranger units. It was articulated that it was optimal to have Traditional Owners from their respective traditional *country*. However, some Traditional Owners felt that if there were no suitable candidates for ranger positions amongst their own group that Indigenous peoples from other Giringun groups or different regions of Australia could be hired and trained. These participants felt that it was more important to maintain programs by having competent people on the job than it was to have Traditional Owners in the positions. There were also some Traditional Owner participants who felt that only Traditional Owners ought to be filling these positions, although this was the less dominant perspective.

“Absolutely! [would want to be Traditional Owners to be involved in management programs] Especially our own mob! One thing that I maintain is that they run these programs for fauna and put people in there that really made a bad impression. Along with those positions comes grave responsibilities and important position. You have to have the right people. If they are not the right people I don't care if they're Traditional Owners or not you just need the right people and if we haven't got any in our Traditional Owners groups and it's other Aboriginal people who are not Traditional Owners but will do the job then they should be afforded the opportunity.” – Traditional Owner participant (010)

Storyline 7: Support provided by the government agencies to the GAC

Support was spoken of in terms of financial and in-kind contributions to both individual programs operating in conjunction with the GAC as well as to the GAC as an organization. The support for the GAC as a *governance* body as well as for *management* activities was a dominant storyline within the GAC, and was one that revealed much about integrity of the relationships existing within the partnership frameworks. DERM managers spoke of support for agreements in terms of offering training to Traditional Owners engaged in *management* activities on *country*. The DERM was supportive of working flexibly with Indigenous rangers in a way that would work towards capacities that supported their existing strengths. Rangers and Traditional Owners felt that it was important to not only be working *on country* but to receive training so that they could be involved in *management* activities, such as scientific monitoring and enforcement. Rangers, members of the GAC and government managers also spoke of this in terms of training leading to employment beyond the scope of the ranger programs.

“We want our people to be trained on how to analyze and say 'this how much nitrogen here', is it rainforest nitrogen or is man made nitrogen. To us that would be more of a balanced understanding of how the country works and in the wider perspective.” – Traditional Owner / GAC board member participant (012)

“New elements should include the same level of training as current rangers, access to training, which leads to the creation of future employment opportunities with other government departments such as GBRMPA and customs.” – Saltwater ranger participant (002)

Operational support (i.e. equipment and infrastructure) within programs was also spoken of as being important to on-the-ground outcomes of the new GIRU. GAC staff as well as Indigenous rangers expressed this on several occasions as they related sentiments of feeling limited by current program infrastructure (e.g. the need to share vehicles and vessels). Support to develop enforcement capabilities was also a dominant theme from Traditional Owners and the GAC. One Traditional Owner, however, did speak of the difficulties in training rangers because the lower levels of education made it difficult for them to successfully complete the courses.

“They need to have a stick or be given a stick, compliancy courses in law. I understand they are quite difficult. If you haven't got an education you would find it quite hard to navigate your way through the whole process. That's what they found with Aboriginal fellows. When you put them on the course because of their low levels of education that they can't pass it.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

“We need more infrastructure like better boats, better equipment and training for our younger people to become compliance officers with fisheries so we can ask people to leave certain areas or be able to book them. Read them their rights for breaking the rules.” – Traditional Owner participant (010)

There was concern from a current ranger that the programs might not be mutually supportive and that exchanges between GIRU partners would be important. There was concern that the smaller DERM ranger unit would benefit from the new GIRU rangers but would not reciprocate and that GIRU activities could be affected. One Saltwater ranger expressed that he was happy that more rangers would coming on through the *Working on Country* and *Wild Rivers* programs and hoped that it would mean that more Indigenous issues would be addressed through *management*. There were, however, concerns in the ranger unit that DERM would be happy to borrow GAC rangers for DERM activities but would not contribute equally to GAC interests, such as culturally driven *management* activities.

“I’m a bit concerned that Parks will be happy to borrow GAC rangers for Parks activities but will not contribute in the other direction.” – Saltwater Ranger participant (001)

The GBRMPA senior managers felt that they were perceived as being supportive however they were aware that funding in the past had not been sufficient and that it was important for them to seek further funding through other avenues to maintain programs with Traditional Owners.

“When you talk to the Traditional Owners they’ll say GBRMPA’s always been there. They’ve always been progressive, recognized Traditional Owners and have always tried to do the right thing but occasionally we make mistakes” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

“A TUMRA does not come with funding except for a little bit which we can muster in terms of having some general contact with them. We’ve since picked up some funding through the federal Government’s Reef Rescue Package/Plan that we’re able to provide to them for some operational support for that TUMRA.” – GRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Funding for *governance*, however, was beginning to appear through new programs such as the *Working on Country* support for GIRU rangers, which had a portion of the budget specifically outlined as being for *governance*. This was an important landmark and the GAC hoped that it would set a precedent in the Commonwealth government and that other government agencies would take notice and see this as a new way of doing business. Senior managers from all government agencies, in addition to acknowledging the services provided by the GAC, acknowledged that the GAC could not maintain its operations without core funding. Support for GAC *governance* was important because the organization was experiencing difficulties in maintaining its overall operations, and resorted to skimming from individual program funding. Finding a solution to the core funding issue was put into action during the budget negotiation for the new GIRU, which included a line from the DEWHA specifically for GAC *governance*.

“This [funding] is a problem because these organizations don’t just manage a project. They have an important role for advocating on behalf of the community and depending on the issues of the area there may be fairly heavy demands place on those organizations” – DEWHA senior manager participant

Government managers also understood the ‘bigger picture’ of investing in core funding for the GAC. It was acknowledged that dollars spent on the GAC as an organization would translate into dollars saved in the long-term. The group cohesion provided by the GAC prevents potentially very costly (especially to government) Native Title disputes. The GAC also works as a regional social wellbeing centre for Traditional Owners, which translates into social outcomes such as employment and fewer encounters with law enforcement and time spent in jail. This was a message that GAC staff felt was very important to spread amongst government agencies and was one that was beginning to be acknowledged amongst senior managers within *management* agencies. However, in order for core funding to become a reality for the GAC, senior managers would need to work towards convincing bureaucrats in higher levels of *management* and policy development.

“Ideal future arrangement would be Giringun being a component of a bigger regional arrangement of organizations working at that sub-regional level, providing service delivery to Traditional Owners and their local organizations. Also, tapping into a higher order of advocacy and service delivery across a broader region with the capacity to actually do the job on a more sustained basis rather than having to go out and fight on a project-by-project basis. That way corporate knowledge which is built is put towards more productive work rather than having to worry about where the next dollar is going to come from. For that to happen there needs to be political and bureaucratic understanding that they are providing a good service and that it’s good value for money and an investment. It’s harder and harder to convince people with the global financial crisis. These sorts of arrangements are like positive intervention where some of that other stuff is really negative intervention. Negative in terms of investments going to more lawyers and jails and health services for unwell people. It’s a good opportunity to provide that nexus between people looking after country and health and wellbeing of indigenous people. We’re better off spending \$100,000 employing a ranger and all of the associated costs that go with that than keeping a person in jail which is about equivalent these days.” – WTMA senior manager participant

5.3 – Storylines about power-sharing

Themes about power sharing were divided into those relating to the recognition of the GAC and Traditional Owners as being party to *governance* and *management* in the region, and those relating to the *agency* of the GAC and Traditional Owner to govern and manage their traditional *country*. Power was, therefore, identified as the ability to make decisions and be capable of actualizing those decisions based on being acknowledged within decision-making arenas.

***Storyline 1: Recognition** of Traditional Owner interests, rights, and/or abilities to govern and/or manage country*

Traditional Owners expressed that it was important for their roles as the first custodians of the area and their customary laws to be acknowledged by government. Some Traditional Owners felt very passionately about this and that the elders in the communities should be acknowledged as the source for guidance in regards to customary law.

“For protected areas like National Parks as long as Aboriginal people can still use in National Parks. Still go and practice their culture in National Parks. Aboriginal people have done a lot of things. They are the first protectors of the rainforest and the country and the white man has just come along and put it into law so other white men can see that it's a national park.” – Traditional Owner participant (004)

Similarly, several senior managers, especially those within the GBRMPA felt that it was important to acknowledge that there are two governments in Australia: their form and the Traditional Owner government that is guided by customary law. While this was something that was acknowledged, senior managers did not go into detail about how this would be achieved. They felt that the GAC, with the board of Traditional Owners would be capable of making such decisions.

“Most special part of the process was relationship building between government and another form of government in Australia which is not recognized: Traditional Owner governance” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

Often recognition of Traditional Owner interests in land *management* and ownership occurs through conventional bureaucratic process such as Native Title negotiations. Storylines about recognition of rights to manage *country* outside Native Title were the focus of the narratives surrounding partnerships with the GAC mainly because the GAC has chosen not to pursue Native Title to this end. Native Title however was still a concern amongst Traditional Owners and was a possible implication of the TUMRA. The TUMRA was contentious at first for this reason and needed to be negotiated with legal advice.

“There was some concern within the agency that GBRMPA wasn't considering when they put the TUMRAs forward that there was no consideration given to the types of tenure or governance over the area - so what could happen is say we go into an agreement in the initial stages. If we had gone into the agreement as it was without the EPA input, so you've got State and Commonwealth governments plus it's an international listed World Heritage Area so you've got these 3 different layers and so what happen is if the Commonwealth, say GBRMPA goes ahead and does the TUMRA with Traditional Owners - then that leaves it open and susceptible to State prosecution.” – Traditional Owner participant (001)

Traditional Owner and GAC staff related discussions about power sharing back to the misunderstanding that government and the broader community has about the meaning of power. This was explained in reference to the fear that people have about sharing power and experiencing change, and that the point is more about looking after *country* than it is about anything else.

“We're not asking for power. Some people think 'we're giving them power'. It's that we need to get in the perspective and think that we want it not because of the power. We want it because we want to look after it and it is too different. All they can see through is that 'oh they got power so they can go out and do this and that and whatever they want' and it's not the point. The point is that we want to get back there and look after the country, care for it and so it's there for the future generation and neutralize all that material in there in the way that we was taught. Not to go and rape the country.” – Traditional Owner participant (007)

Government acknowledged the importance of arrangements outside of Native Title for recognizing the roles and rights of Traditional Owners to manage *country*, and realized that Native Title disputes often did not lead to desirable outcomes for either Traditional Owners or for government. Senior managers within the GBRMPA realized the great importance of working outside of Native Title especially because their department deals with marine tenure, which is not always straight forward, and has had experiences with working through consultations throughout the development of the Marine Park.

“Native Title is really just a recognition of the scraps that were left over after the country changed with colonization” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

“The first step was having that boundary over water. This was the recognition by the federal government saying ‘Yes, you do have some sort of management rights. It's not Native Title but it's management rights and we'll agree to work with you to manage that” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Storyline 2: The **agency** of Traditional Owners and the GAC (i.e. ability to make decisions about country)

Storylines about *agency* coming from Traditional Owners were expressed in terms of how the rangers would be able to manage *country* according customary law and the wishes of Traditional Owners through the GAC board. There were, however, other sentiments from

Traditional Owners that while these programs could deliver good outcomes (i.e. empowerment for Traditional Owners) they may also create binding agreements that in the long-term could have negative implications. This storyline relates back to the storyline about trust between Traditional Owners, the GAC, and government agencies.

“It [the Indigenous ranger program] is a step in the right direction. I think that's the only way that we can go here because it gives the rangers new access into these countries and they will go according to what the Traditional Owners here will say.” – Traditional Owner participant (011)

“Expansion of the Indigenous Ranger Unit is a good thing because it will be Giringun Aboriginal Corporation controlled. The staff is accountable to the Traditional Owners and the elders should have a stronger role in governance. Processes with new rangers should lead to self-governance and empowerment of Traditional Owners.” – Saltwater Ranger participant (012)

“Governments do have strings attached. There's always strings attached. They [government programs] hold it up as a thing but in the meantime people are suffering on the ground in reality.” –Traditional Owner participant (004)

Senior managers from government were enthusiastic about the GAC pushing boundaries and working towards arrangements that could provide desired outcomes for Traditional Owners. It was expressed at the GBRMPA that the GAC needed to prove their worthiness as a *governance* and *management* body, and that the GBRMPA under these circumstances (which currently exist) would have a responsibility to manage jointly. There was an expectation at the GBRMPA that Giringun would continue to push the boundaries of the TUMRA to include more species and further their roles as regional species managers.

“It's very exciting – the Giringun IPA is going to push boundaries because it is cross-tenure. I'm happy that everyone is here [at the IPA meeting].” – DEWHA senior manager participant

"It's [IPA] a ground breaker and water churner but that's the nature of Giringun. They like to push the envelope" – GBRMPA senior manager participant (002)

"I imagine that their scope for managing species would broaden to other species, fish, whales and other things and that's sort of the thinking within the group is to look at those things and we would expect them to think in the broader species outside of fish and outside of turtle and dugong simply because they do and simply because they can and simply because they want to." – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

Government senior managers also expressed perspectives about the agency of the GAC, as an organization capable of making its own decision about the scope and focus of projects. While new additions to the TUMRA were expected and encouraged, it was also stated that only certain parts of the desired future agreement that were perceived to be feasible would be accredited. This limitation within the GBRMPA is because of a number of factors including the agency's internal policies, management responsibilities and the political climate in which it is operating. It was also reported that the GAC could be limited by funding if it did not take on activities that were desirable to the State government.

"Don't want to dictate what's in the agreement. The way that we approach it is to have them shape the TUMRA and then we accredit parts and not others based on what is possible at that time" – GRMPA senior manager participant (002)

"Traditional use was supposed to cover all use and that's what it's supposed to do but the political climate didn't allow for all use. After the TUMRA was submitted "GBRMPA went back to the Traditional Owners and encouraged them to just concentrate on turtle and dugong for the time being as a first step - something that could be built on later GBRMPA considered this to be something manageable. After the first one the intent of the groups was to build a 5 year TUMRA with all uses" – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

The DERM indicated that the GAC was being encouraged to focus its services according to the services most valued by government agencies, such as social services like health care and employment. The perspective from the DEWHA senior manager was that the best and most successful arrangements with Traditional Owners were those that supported the Traditional Owners to develop their own *management* plan rather than trying to fit Traditional Owner aspirations into a government program framework.

“Girringun on the outside has a much wider function, and if the Commonwealth has it's way, groups like Girringun - and others federal agencies have indicated to us at a meeting that we went to with Girringun that if they are to continue they need to take on more of a social service provider role rather than just - at the moment they're narrowly focused and federal funds are drying up and they want them to look at providing services for health and other services. The main focus when the Commonwealth government got up and spoke at that meeting was provision of service to address alcohol, unemployment and a range of other social related issues and to be a service centre for health care and other stuff such as legal services, and that's not the path that Girringun wanted to take.” – DERM senior manager participant (002)

“Marine turtle and dugong programs are always the most successful programs working in Indigenous communities and this is because the government is not providing a service – they are enabling a community to develop their own consultation process and own management plan. Government funds the implementation of the plan of management but do not tell people what to do.” – DEWHA senior manager participant

5.4 – Government’s understanding and acknowledgement of Traditional Owner aspirations

Senior managers from government agencies made reference to programs being developed to suit the perspectives and aspirations of Traditional Owner, and to adapt programs to suit Traditional Owner involvement in the *management* of Girringun *country*. A senior manager from DERM stated that the department was not meeting the aspirations of Traditional Owners even though it was working hard to do so. One senior manager from the GBRMPA explained the agency’s relationship with Girringun as being one of a provider to an aspirant group of *management* practitioners (i.e. the GAC staff and Indigenous rangers). A manager from

DERM felt that support for the programs was important but that there were sometimes difficulties in meeting aspirations and fulfilling statutory responsibilities.

“It's [development of the IPA] going to be about managing expectations on both sides. For us it's going to be about influencing our culture so that we can accept other people working on what we see to be our country and similarly it's going to be about the Indigenous guys not thinking ‘oh finally we got it back, it's all ours’. Working out a management model or system in which we are all comfortable with, and can make work. I think in reality it's going to be ‘ok we're managing country and we need more people to manage it’, but I think there are going to be slightly different aspirations and expectations but none the less we sit down and do a management plan and say this is where we're at in the planning process and they agree that we're going to deliver it and then work out which parts are going to be done by who.” – DERM senior manager participant (003)

“While we are doing a good job in terms of co-operative management we never meet the Traditional Owners aspirations” – DERM senior manager participant (002)

Many senior managers from the different agencies working on Giringun country realized that the aspirations were not being met and wanted to find new ways of working towards arrangements that were more meaningful for Traditional Owners. This was discussed in terms of Traditional Owners having a right to be involved in *management* decisions and activities and the desire to keep moving in directions that afforded such opportunities.

“They're practitioners. We respect the work that they've done on it. We're the providers so we have that relationship to work with the TUMRA practitioners to work with the incoming aspirant groups and they hear it directly from the source rather from the providers so it's not what we want, it's what they need to negotiate.” – GBRMPA senior manager participant (001)

The senior manager from the WTMA had a somewhat more pointed account in that it was thought that the GAC was doing a very good job communicating Traditional Owners'

aspirations but that government did not have the willingness to understand the aspirations being communicated.

“Capacity is there for GAC to communicate TO aspirations but the government does not always have the willingness to understand them” – WTMA senior manager participant

5.5 – Discussion: Power sharing and the strength of Gerringun partnerships

Shared spaces in which public deliberation is possible have proven to deliver transformative outcomes which are more socially and environmentally sustainable (Diduck 1999; Ross and Innes 2005; Sims and Sinclair 2008). Partnership arrangements provide a platform to create ‘learning communities’, which are based on shared interests, and ‘learning-by-doing’ (Kilpatrick et al. 2003). Therefore, it was important here to map the partnership structures so that the relationships could be described, and discourses could be contextually understood. The Gerringun case demonstrates the importance of regional arrangements, which take into account locally responsible *management* bodies and a re-shifting of a top-down institutional arrangement. Each progressive partnership arrangement can be thought of as moving further along ‘sliding scale’ towards a position where the GAC increases its ability to affect management decisions (Figure 22).

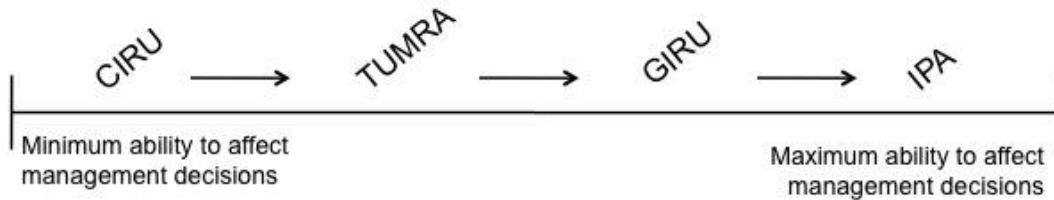


Figure 22. Conceptual ‘sliding scale’ depicting the position of different regional institutional arrangements with the GAC and the varying abilities to affect management decisions.

While some of the arrangements, such as the CIRU, maintain many aspects of the top-down arrangement, others take on formats where decision-making hierarchies are less obvious. Ultimately, the role of the GAC in decision making through the participatory forum that is the steering committee is the determinant of the type of *governance* system, be it top-down or more lateral. Therefore, the arrangements of the *executive steering committees* are the focus of this discussion because they bring all parties to the table in a fashion that is more decentralized and horizontal than the one typically found in relation hierarchies between regional organizations and government. Relationships as such are essentially what Ross, Buchy and Proctor (2002) refer to as ‘laying down the ladder’ referring to hierarchies typically found within various forms of public participation (Arnstein 1969). From this perspective *governance* and *management* forums take on a structure that do not have a hierarchical format but are based on the participation of interested and/or invested parties. Within the Giringun case, the Giringun *executive steering committees* represent *governance* arrangements that are dependent on the equal consideration of all parties in making important decisions about the future direction of the respective *management* programs.

The structure of the GAC is an important factor in its partnership arrangements with government and non-governmental agencies. Through its organizational structure, the GAC is required to consult with the board of Traditional Owners for all major decisions, and is required to integrate the monthly feedback from the board making the GAC an organization that is consistently working towards meeting the aspirations of the nine Traditional Owner groups. The maintenance and integrity of this structure of the GAC means that the organization is recognised as being an appropriate organization for implementing regional processes affecting Indigenous people. Government senior managers felt confident that by working with the GAC they were accounting for the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners, and thus could be confident about their level of consultation. This confidence predisposed senior managers towards a desire to working with the GAC to building and solidifying ongoing regional partnerships.

Senior managers respected the GAC and believed it was trustworthy and had demonstrated the capacity to play a role in regional *governance*. There was a strong desire to keep working with the organization not only because senior managers felt it was the “right” thing to do from a social justice perspective but that the partnership would afford beneficial

practical *management* outcomes within their own departments. In terms of funding, the timing of this study was relevant because of the near global economic recession that was occurring at the time of this study, which was mentioned by senior managers on several occasions. Programs being operated through the GAC come with their own sets of funding for employment of Traditional Owners and/or other Indigenous staff to work *on country*. This means that government agencies that are normally responsible for such activities would be receiving direct benefits from such programs in terms of an increased work force. Senior managers felt that by working with the GAC they would be able to save money within their respective departments. This aspect of the arrangements was discussed in terms of being a reciprocal partnership in which agencies would be willing and able to provide in-kind support to aid in the success of the program. While there were some concerns about the level of reciprocity between agencies and the GAC, there was a perspective that such arrangements could work as long as a high degree of transparency and a consistent approach to working adaptively was maintained.

The regular meeting of the *executive steering committees* involving all parties in one 'shared space' creates an atmosphere where ideas and concerns can be put forward and resolved, and relationships can be further fostered within the group (Ross and Innes 2005). The inclusion of senior level managers from the participating government agencies and Traditional Owner elders is an important component of the *executive steering committee governance* arrangement because it creates channels to the authorities on both sides of the arrangement (government and Indigenous). Schuett, Selin and Carr (2001) indicate that multiple party collaborations are most effective when key people are involved. This configuration and the short amount of time between meetings, particularly at the development phases of arrangements, maintains a high degree of transparency and an ability to work adaptively towards mutually satisfactory *management* outcomes. The inclusion of on-the-ground collaborators such as the CIRU/Saltwater rangers and new GIRU rangers through the IPA *practical steering committees* also creates potential for direct and open participation at the board level (Schuett, Selin and Carr 2001), and will be important for maintaining a strong connection to the actual on-the-ground practical details and outcomes.

The inclusion of the *practical steering committee* is important for acknowledging partnerships at the ground level. It is beyond the scope of this investigation to speculate about whether or not having a *practical steering committee* would have made a difference or would have aided in some of the issues that arose during the first years of the CIRU. However, while

there were mechanisms for dealing with issues within the CIRU, it is likely that a more direct channel between the CIRU *executive steering committee* and the Indigenous rangers involved in the program (i.e. the *practical steering committee*) would have created the potential for concerns to have been raised and directed through the appropriate channels. The day-to-day management outcomes of the TUMRA could have also been communicated through such channels. The IPA program brings together all aspects of land and sea *country management* under one larger *executive steering committee*, making this a particularly valuable arrangement which affords open and direct channels for communication amongst all parties and all levels of authority within those parties. Participation in this respect is working within a multi-institutional, multi-directional forum that works towards removing hierarchies between levels.

A complete removal of hierarchies would be virtually impossible, mainly due to the dependency of the GAC for funding from government agencies. However, the spirit and intention behind participatory forums like the *executive steering committees* make for significant contributions to institutional and practical learning (Ross, Buchy and Proctor 2002). Knowledge is generated as the parties interact and work through *governance* and *management* processes. The incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews are the main goals of the GAC in working with government through the various arrangements. However, the synthesis of traditional/local and scientific knowledge is only partly realized within many of the current arrangements between government and Indigenous organizations such as the GAC (Figure 23 - A). Indigenous knowledge can be both traditional and adaptive (Davidson-Hunt 2009), as demonstrated by arrangements such as the TUMRA and GIRU (Figure 23 - B). These programs have begun to create new ways for traditional knowledge to be incorporated into *governance*, and have set the stage for other programs like the IPA to be explored in such a way that enables Traditional Owner syntheses of knowledge to be effective at the policy level (Zurba 2009). This is because the IPA *executive steering committee* provides a forum for both Indigenous and scientific ways of knowing to be synthesized and directed through the appropriate channels. The *dual synthesis* of *scientific* and *traditional ways of knowing* also indicates an ability of Traditional Owners to affect policy, which therefore is also related to power sharing within partnership arrangements. The ability to affect policy indicates an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners into the governance forum and ultimately places Traditional Owners (through the GAC) in a position where they are making tangible decisions for managing *country*.

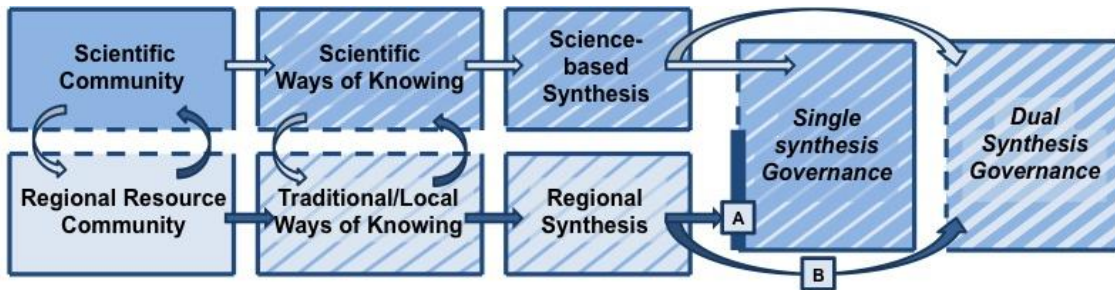


Figure 23: Depiction of two different knowledge transmission scenarios that may take place following the decision to manage a species or protected area through co-management where scientific and traditional/local ways of knowing are potentially contested (Source: Zurba 2009).

By understanding the perspectives in regards to protected areas *management* the characteristics such as reciprocity and power sharing could then be considered in relation to the *governance* structures and *management* relationships. Perspectives were varied amongst parties regarding what was required for *co-management* to be mutually arrangement working towards regional socio-ecological sustainability. However, both the GAC and the government agencies recognized that adaptability and commitment are essential components of a system working towards new forms of *governance* and the development of effective regional on-the-ground *management*. The acknowledgement of these components in turn revealed potential and existing channels for integrating Traditional Owner values and aspirations into day-to-day *management* of land and sea *country*. Flexibility of arrangements and trust building were necessary for the values and aspirations of Traditional Owner to be integrated into *governance* and *management* systems by the GAC. Central to Traditional Owners' perspective was the importance of empowering Traditional Owners to be involved in on-the-ground *management*. Traditional Owners focused on the inseparability of people, culture and *country*, with the pervasive understanding that in order to '*heal country*' people need to be '*on country*', and in turn create the potential for self-healing.

Storylines regarding relationship, respect, perceived capacity, and ideals for on-the-ground *management* were important for investigating 'how well' regional arrangements are

'working'. This investigation evaluated integrity and various degrees of connectivity between parties to the arrangements. Government agency perspectives in regards to *management* arrangements were diverse; however, they shared a common desire to continue working with the GAC towards regional arrangements and felt that the GAC has the capacity and capabilities to become a regional service provider. At the *governance* level, the high level of rapport and respect between government agencies and the GAC is an essential component to the ability to achieve mutual and individual goals within the partnerships. The agencies saw the benefits of supporting the GAC vision to become a regional *management* service provider through the IPA. Most agencies, in particular the DERM and the GBRMPA, saw this as a way to increased day-to-day *management* of species and protected areas. One DERM senior manager felt that a transfer of responsibility to the GAC as a service provider was the best direction for regional *management*. Senior managers in government were not threatened by the direction that the GAC wants to take because they felt as though there will always be a role for government, and that this shift could permit agencies to maintain the functions that are their strong suits while cutting back on activities that are more effectively conducted by the GAC.

Reflexivity is an important component of any collaboration but especially those that are cross-cultural (Easterby-Smith and Malina 1999). In terms of the levels of integrity within the day-to-day *management* of the CIRU and TUMRA, all parties felt that there was a great need for further cross-cultural collaborative experiences and education. With the plans for the GIRU to work within the *governance* structure of the IPA, there are now more direct channels for those involved in *management* to express their ideas and opinions about *management*. While the forum of the *executive steering committee* may not always be the appropriate venue for expressing personal concerns (i.e. for fear of upsets within and amongst parties to *management*), it is an ideal venue for suggestions about *management* activities and giving feedback about on-the-ground outcomes of programs. Reflexivity therefore exists both within the steering committees and through the feedback loop from the committees to the GAC board.

According to the GAC, the GBRMPA was not willing to give sufficient support for legal advice given the scope of what was required in relation to the potential implications of the TUMRA. When a statement of interest in seeking legal advice was put forward, the GBRMPA offered additional funds with the stipulation that the results of the advice be shared with the authority. The GAC felt that outside authorities ought not be privy to this sensitive information and that this was a compromising situation to be in because the legal advice had implications

for the six Traditional Owner groups that were involved in the development of the TUMRA. The GAC decided to seek the legal advice independently, and at their expense. It was then determined that the TUMRA would not impact Native Title. This very important piece of legal advice enabled the Traditional Owners through the GAC to draft the final TUMRA documents to present to the GBRMPA for accreditation. The necessity to seek legal advice without financial support, however, is demonstrative of an imbalance of power between the GAC and the GBRMPA because of the difference in capacity for each organization to obtain such advice.

The IPA steering committee structure and the strength of linkages is imperative to the future of working arrangements on Girringun *country*, and has the potential to grow to include further partners. Because the GRIPA is the first IPA to be based on a cooperative and multi-tenure agreement over both mainstream Australia and land and sea *country*, government agencies have requested that the GAC produce a written brief on the regional *governance* scenario. This document is a comprehensive compilation of the GAC's current partnership arrangements as well as a set of guidelines for new regional arrangements involving Traditional Owners (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2010). The *Girringun Regional Indigenous Protected Area Co-management Consultation Project 2009-2012* sets a precedent in terms of government requesting the terms for regional *management* from an Indigenous organization. This document is also intended to be used as a model for consultation with other Indigenous groups in Australia who do not own their land and/or sea *country* but are interested in declaring an IPA over their traditional territories.

As the GAC continues to position itself as a regional *management* authority there will be an ongoing opportunity for other parties with regional interest to work with the GAC according to the precedent, which has been set through the development of the IPA management plan and the *GRIPA Co-management Consultation Project*. This will mean new partnerships and increased capacity for the GAC and Girringun Traditional Owners to manage *country* through the board and the consultation processes embedded within the corporate structure of the GAC. Therefore, Traditional Owners' interests will be able to flow through well-established channels towards *management* outcomes and participation in *governance* forums. It will be essential that transparency and on-going consultation between agencies and the GAC be consistent if this direction is to be maintained. Borrinni-Feyerabend and Sandwith (2003) state that a large variety of partnerships are possible in regards to protected areas, and choosing the most suitable one comes down to who has the 'social legitimacy' and 'appropriate characteristics' to

facilitate partnerships. Within the Giringun case, it would appear as though the GAC is playing this facilitative role and is acting as an effective boundary organization for communicating the aspirations of local Indigenous peoples and working around/within government frameworks (Berkes 2009). At the level of the *executive steering committees*, partnerships are strong, and government senior managers understand the vision for regional *management* and appear to be committed towards helping the GAC in working towards their long-term goals.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

6.1 – Understanding of perspectives, power structures, and participation

Globally, much of the consultation with Indigenous peoples is reflective of the desire of agencies to incorporate traditional knowledge in order to contribute to existing *conservation* strategies (Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2000). Even though Girringun Traditional Owners felt as though it was important to share culture and knowledge with government staff, there was a notable degree of wariness from some Traditional Owners about how the information would be used once it was shared. Some felt that government would misuse the information or use it for their own gains without consultation with or consideration given to the Traditional Owners. This highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in regards to knowledge transmittance within partnerships. Girringun Traditional Owners for the most part wanted to share their values and aspirations for *caring for country* because they felt that it was important for the future of the environment and their culture. Similarly, government senior managers felt as though there was much to be gained from the incorporation of traditional knowledge into *conservation* programs. Forums like the steering committees were working towards providing this ‘safe’ environment for knowledge transfer and organizational learning, the ability of institutional organizations to learn and adapt over time (Brown and Duguid 1991). Clear channels for the flow of information, as such, are essential in order for parties to be able to communicate without fear of misuse or misrepresentation of information.

Indigenous involvement in NRM is also about social equity and the ability to exercise rights and obligations, and this should be reflected in the delivery of programs that are meant to engage Indigenous peoples. To this end, government sectors have a role to play in the empowerment of Indigenous organizations involved in NRM by working adaptively and finding opportunities to extend beyond existing frameworks through incorporating various perspectives on regional management (Smyth, Szabo and George 2004). Power-sharing is ranked highly as being an essential element to successful long-term arrangements involving local peoples (Pomeroy, Katon and Herkes 2001; De Urioste-Stone, McLaughlin and Sanyal 2006). Nursey-Bray and Rist (2009) argue within the context of past Girringun *co-management* arrangements that in order to achieve longevity of both environmentally sustainable and socially just agreements, there is a need to have well defined allocations of power. The attributes of power-sharing

therefore should be evaluated in order to better understand current and potential arrangements. First and foremost the socio-cultural and political context of an arrangement needs to be considered (Pomeroy, Katon and Harkes 2001). Different tools for empowerment that governments can use will work for differently for different communities and/or organizations, and special attention needs to be paid to how capacity building is conducted. Financial support is a critical aspect, and failure to support institutional arrangements at the outset may lead to program failure (Pomeroy, Katon and Harkes 2001).

Special attention also needs to be given to how to protect local people from arrangements that could affect their ability to build capacity into the future. Because the TUMRA is an agreement accredited by the federal government, it potentially could have impacted on Native Title, and the circumstances surrounding legal advice for the GAC regarding the TUMRA put the GAC in a less than empowered situation. The IPA process is somewhat different in terms of flexibility in the development and accreditation of the draft *management* plan. Because the Girringun IPA is being developed over an area that is multi-tenure, the first important component to development is the participation of all parties with regional interests. The DEWHA would not be able to support the implementation the declaration without consultation. Therefore, government and the GAC felt that it was important for the *Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Area Co-management Consultation Plan 2009-2012* to be developed. Secondly, the Girringun IPA draft *management* plan is required to fit in with the IUCN categories for ICCAs. While Girringun *country* is different from many of the existing IPAs because it is not over Indigenous owned land but is within mainstream society (i.e. townships, free-hold land, etc.), it does include a number of National Parks with ongoing conservation values and activities. This is the key ingredient to the GRIPA receiving support for implementation based on conservation values. Without the existence of National Parks, Girringun would not be able to pursue the IPA model for regional *management*.

The development phase of the IPA, however, is an exercise in power sharing because the Traditional Owners know they will not receive support for *management* activities unless their plan fits within the scope of the program, which is based on IUCN guidelines. Although the IPA does allow for a great deal of flexibility, Traditional Owners are confined in the development of the *management* plan by the requirements, and therefore can only express interests according to the given framework. Similar to the TUMRA, other interests and aspirations are therefore left out and reserved for a time when the program is ready to incorporate them.

Binding arrangements have the potential to be detrimental to Traditional Owners as they work towards building capacity in regards to involvement in *governance* and *management* over time. Adaptive *management* is built into the IPA process in that the structure and goals of the arrangement are consistently under review, parties can bring new ideas to the table at any time, as well as the IPA being a non-binding agreement on the side of the Indigenous organization. This means that the Traditional Owners are not locked into the IPA and can withdraw at any time without penalty. This kind of fluidity within the arrangement demonstrates an acknowledgement by the DEWHA of how the development of arrangements can affect the power dynamics amongst management partners. The non-binding portion of the arrangement is therefore a safeguard for the future endeavours of Traditional Owners, and works towards re-shifting the generally imposed power structure.

Lloyd and colleagues (2005) note that disappointing outcomes relating to *management* processes are often due to the reduced capacity of Indigenous peoples in regards to the Western *management* frameworks which they are being asked to fit into. However, the format of the TUMRA and the IPA are significant in regards to how a flexible *governance* and *management* structure can affect the overall process and power sharing leading up to an agreement. Both the TUMRA and the IPA planning scheme are based on a structure that requires the Indigenous organization to develop a draft *management* plan, which is then supported by the respective agency. The draft *management* plan development phase is supported financially by the agency, and the amount varies amongst the agencies and is dependent on the length of time allocated for this phase. Following this phase, the GAC submits the draft *management* plan and the appropriate agency, which then either supports parts or the whole document or will ask for a complete review. The way in which this structure relates to the *agency* of Traditional Owners and the GAC can be thought of as the parties meeting half way. Traditional Owners through the GAC can affect policy by having their desires for *management* outcomes featured in the draft *management* plan. However, if the desires are not doable in the eyes of the reviewing government agency then the desires cannot transform into on-the-ground outcomes.

Typologies that only view the presence or absence of structural hierarchies fail to notice forms of knowledge beyond power, such as those where community participation is the main goal (Tritter and McCallum 2006). Therefore, the power relations within partnerships between the individuals from the government agencies and the GAC were equally as important as the

structures of the arrangements. While these individuals may change along the way, their perspectives about participation represent the integrity of the past and the potential for future regional arrangements. Indeed, participation is the first step to multiple parties being able to enter into relevant decision making forums about places and resources (i.e. have power shared amongst groups). Therefore, the existing partnerships and attitudes and perspectives towards participation are the foundation for the long-term success of arrangements, and play a large part in determining socially just outcomes (Singleton 2000; Smith and McDonough 2001).

Government agencies are constantly challenged with navigating policy and determining the appropriate level of public/regional participation within institutions surrounding natural resources problems (Singleton 2000). Participation forums are important for reflecting on and representing interest, social learning, relationship building, the gaining of social and political responsibility, and the development and implementation of *management* plans (McColl and Guthrie 2001). The steering committees represent a forum for participation at all levels and as such are venues for deliberation over a multitude of objectives for collaboration. Partnerships at the individual level within the *executive steering committees* were reciprocal and demonstrative of a respectful and sincere desire to participate in on-going processes with the GAC. For the most part there was an acknowledgement of two kinds of law existing over the land/seascape: “white-man’s law” and *customary law*. Management partners, including the GAC also for the most part felt that the best way to fulfil individual aspirations was to work with each other towards a shared vision and develop a system that would make use of the strengths of each of the partners.

Kearney and colleagues (2007) describe participatory governance as “the effort to achieve change through actions that are more effective and equitable than normally possible through representative government and bureaucratic administration by inviting citizens to a deep and sustained participation in decision making.” Partnerships are often limited by what the individuals involved in such partnerships can do based on what is possible within their respective agencies and/or bureaucratic systems, which do not have an equal sense of what will work for regional arrangements (Agrawal 1999). Limitations to participation within the Giringun case were generally due to statutory obligations and/or regulations that senior managers needed to conform to within their positions. As discussed earlier, senior managers do have the ability to affect bureaucratic processes and policy, however this process is slow and is based on future decisions rather than those that are being resolved in current forums.

Therefore, the partnerships existing between the GAC and the senior managers should be regarded as long-term participation arrangements working with the ability and intent to affect power regimes and policy decisions within the hierarchical bureaucratic systems in which they are operating.

6.2 – But is it co-management?

Traditional Owner perspectives about *caring for country* and government senior manager perspectives about *conservation* brought forward by the GAC senior staff and government senior managers, respectively, within the relevant forums. Forums such as the *steering committees*, created ‘shared spaces’ (Ross and Innes 2005), where perspectives, visions and aspirations for *management* could be expressed and considered amongst the parties at the table (Figure 24). The structure of the *executive steering committees*, including senior managers, and being demonstrative of principles of adaptive *management*, in turn provides a venue for relationship building as well as a channel for both government (i.e. *science-based*) and Traditional Owner (i.e. *regional*) synthesis of knowledge (Zurba 2009). The *steering committees* have been sequentially built upon past relationships and ‘lessons learned’ that have come through working through regional *management* processes continually over a number of years. Government agencies have learned that they need to work flexibly and adaptively in order to achieve desirable *management* outcomes and forge relationships with Traditional Owners. The question however still remains: Is this *co-management*? And if ‘yes’, then what are the qualifiers and how does it fit into and contribute to existing *co-management* literature?

Power sharing, participation and commitment to process are the features that should be identifiable within the linkages between partners to *co-management*, and are regarded as the pillars of *co-management* (Berkes 2002; Sandström 2009). Carlsson and Berkes (2005) describe *co-management* as “a continuous problem solving process, rather than a fixed state, involving extensive deliberation, negotiation, and joint learning within problem solving networks”. In addition to these elements, Berkes (2009) draws attention to the importance of institution building, practical problem solving, trust and social capital building. Within these broader types of descriptions, the Giringun process of working through arrangements on existing and developing arrangements with government would be considered to be *co-*

management. If we use these qualifiers and take Berkes' (2009) view of *co-management* as an ongoing process then it is easy to assert that *co-management* is indeed taking place in the case of partnerships between the GAC and government conservation agencies.



Figure 24. Indigenous Protected Area *executive and practical steering committee* meeting

Adhering to the view that *co-management* is occurring, we can then go further to define the Giringun *co-management* system within a typology. Within the Carlsson and Berkes (2005) typologies, the current partnership structures associated with the holistic plans for the GRIPA would indicate *co-management as a joint organization*, in which the multiple partners are meeting through the steering committees to reach desired outcomes. The existing foundation established by the Indigenous ranger program and the TUMRA created the potential for the multi-party *governance* system that would be the IPA. This entails the 'State' and the 'community' contributing symmetrically to the development of IPA through the steering

committees, in turn neutralizing the regional top-down *management* arrangement. The power-sharing scenario within this typology would be currently in a state of *devolution* where government is incrementally transferring decision-making authority for regional *management* to the GAC. This *devolution* of power is hallmarked by the GAC working through arrangement with government wherein the GAC, upon attaining its goals, would eventually attain a state of *privatization*, meaning the GAC would become a service provider to government. The Girringun Regional IPA brings in regional partners from all sectors and as such is an avenue for broad-scale regional *co-management*, which is capable of continually bringing in new *co-management* partners.

However, the engagement of Indigenous communities in *management* systems has been complicated by the misinterpretations and context depending nature of *co-management* (Tipa and Welch 2006), as well as the many theoretical perspectives and qualifiers of *co-management* that exist. It could be argued, in the Girringun case, that because government supports only the portion of agreements that are deemed to be suitable to their respective bureaucracies that equal power-sharing is in fact not occurring. However, the steering of the regional *co-management* arrangement by the GAC through the development of the *Girringun Region Indigenous Protected Area Co-management Consultation Project 2009-2010* document and the ability to withdraw sections from the IPA are two significant factors demonstrating a shift in power. Szabo and Smyth (2003) discuss the Australian IPA system as providing Indigenous control at all levels. Whether power is being equally shared is a matter of perspective and is not easily gauged as one could assert that a scenario in which the GAC had full control over *management* decisions would represent another state of imbalance in which the government (who is supposed to be representing the broader community's interests) would no longer be able to effectively affect regional *management*.

The GAC in conjunction with its board is essentially acting as the bridging and/or boundary organization between Traditional Owners and government. The GAC provides group cohesion for the nine Traditional Owner groups of the region and acts as the intermediary for representing Traditional Owner values and aspirations. The GAC board reviews all activities of the GAC which in turn is deemed with the authority to negotiate with government agencies and the broader community in regards to issues affecting Traditional Owners and *country*. *Co-management* with the nine Traditional Owner groups could not occur easily without the intermediary facilitation and support of the GAC. Therefore, in this case the boundary and/or

bridging organization is essential to the *co-management* process. However, it is important to note that participation of all parties is just as important and essential for *co-management* making both perspectives (discussed earlier) on the roles of bridging and/or boundary organizations equally valid.

In practical terms relating to the Australia systems, qualifiers make it possible to identify the broader current Girringun regional arrangement with government as being a form of *cooperative management* or *co-management*. Armitage and colleagues (2009) describe relationship building, social learning, and institutional development as the hallmarks to *adaptive co-management* contributing to *governance*. Partnership arrangements between the GAC and government agencies have been built up incrementally through the development of steering committees, which are working adaptively to meet a variety of *management* objectives. These negotiations are occurring outside of land rights or Native Title, and have been instrumental in shaping the development of social institutions and learning around complex regional *management* situations. The partnerships between the GAC and the respective agencies involved in the management of Girringun *country*, in a broad sense, can be considered to be one that fits within *adaptive co-management*.

It appears as through in both theoretical and practical terms the regional arrangements with the GAC are indeed *co-management* arrangements. The GAC is involved in creating opportunities for sharing perspectives, building partnerships, working towards participation and power sharing, and are genuinely sharing in the *management* of *country*. Through the existing *governance* and *management* arrangement in Girringun *country*, the GAC is empowered to represent the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners. This is because of the way that the organization is structured with all decisions going through a board of Traditional Owners which are elected by the nine groups. Based on this organizational structure, the GAC is required to be adaptive to the feedback received from the board as well as the feedback from agency partnerships making the GAC an organization that is in constant motion. This creates a cycle of checks and balances working towards favourable outcomes for partners and Traditional Owners. The Girringun case is therefore a good example of a grass-roots regional organization, which is bridging mainstream and Indigenous aspirations for protected areas *management*, in turn translating into favourable on-the-ground outcomes and a working arrangements for multi-party *governance* systems. The Girringun case demonstrates the importance of regional

arrangements taking into account locally responsible *management* bodies and the journey that is *co-management*.

6.3 – Lessons learned

The ability to draw from ‘lessons learned’ as outlined above is central to the discussion surrounding *co-management* (Berkes 2009). ‘Lessons learned’ drawn from investigation of on-going partnerships provide opportunities for the parties involved to work adaptively towards further desirable *management* outcomes (Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday 2007). ‘Lessons learned’ were documented here in order for the information to be reiterated to the *governance* and *management* partners. It was also important to document ‘lessons learned’ so that they could be shared with other communities in Australia and Canada experiencing similar resources and protected areas partnership scenarios. They are presented here from the perspective of the GAC, and the dual perspective of government senior managers and GAC staff working within partnership arrangements.

‘Lessons learned’ from the GAC

- **Group cohesion** is essential for being able to work with government and broader community. The framework of the GAC being built upon a board of Traditional Owners meeting regularly and adaptively creates group cohesion and **accountability**.
- Demonstrating **leadership, strong regional governance, and the capacity** of the organization creates the potential for government senior managers to work confidently on *management* arrangements with the GAC.
- A high level of **transparency** between *management* partners needs to be maintained. This helps to build **trust** within regional *governance* systems.

- Working with government to achieve *management* outcomes is favorable in many instances because such partnerships afford the potential for Traditional Owner **training and employment**, which can help achieve the holistic (i.e. includes wellbeing) goals for *caring for country*.
- Partnerships with government are often about '**testing the waters**'. Often the best way to work is to put forward an idea or desired framework with the request that government investigate policy frameworks in order to meet the aspirations of Traditional Owners.
- **Senior managers from government agencies need to be involved** in *management* steering committees in order for the work to be effective and for arrangements to have influences on policy and the bureaucratic system.
- Working towards **regional management arrangements** can provide greater and faster results for Traditional Owners than working towards Native Title. This being said, it is also important to be sure that such arrangements do not jeopardize the potential for Native Title in the future.

'Lessons learned' from government senior managers and the GAC

- **Working incrementally, continually and adaptively** with management arrangements can be the best way to achieve desired regional frameworks. Incremental change on the ground can lead to eventual changes in policy, which in turn creates opportunities for furthering aspirations. Therefore, the **process** is equally as valuable as the product of an arrangement.

- All parties need to be in agreement over the overall **direction and vision** before moving forward into the development and planning phases of an arrangement and/or agreement.
- It is important to stay true to **the ‘spirit’ of agreements** (e.g. *Wet Tropics Regional Agreement*) made with Traditional Owners. This works towards building trust and confidence in future arrangements.
- It is important for government to **support organizations** while they are working on building partnerships and new arrangements. This should include both financial and in-kind **support for governance** provided by organizations in addition to financial and in-kind support for project components. Support includes monetary, in-kind, as well as the support that is gained by agencies who demonstrate a commitment to working on projects with the GAC.
- **Cross-cultural understanding** needs to be built among *governance* and *management* partners. Education and progressively working together on the ground is the best way to build relationships.
- The **integrity of past and present partnerships** needs to be strong in order for successful development of new partnership agreements and/or arrangements.

6.4 – Outcomes of research for the GAC

The fourth goal of the research was to contribute to the capacity of the GAC as a hosting organization. The participatory nature of the research provided the GAC with several services,

and tools in addition to my thesis, which it may continue using in *governance* and *management* forums. These tools include:

- The *Investing in Successful Processes* document, which was prepared for the GAC during my time in the field. This is a plain English working paper including a description and brief history of the organization, an outline of the characteristics that lead to the success of the organization in working towards regional arrangements with government, and a cost-benefit analysis of investing in core funding for Indigenous organizations like the GAC.
- Several Power Point presentations that the GAC can use in *resources management* and protected areas meetings and/or conferences.
- Conceptual diagrams to help the GAC describe their regional arrangements to other interested government agencies and/or the broader community.
- *Caring for country* acrylic on canvas painting to be shared and used to express the Giringun vision and aspirations for land and sea *management*.

The feedback from the GAC staff following the completion of the field research was very positive. They were happy with the products and service that were provided and also felt that beyond the products and services provided, that benefits would come from my telling of the 'Giringun story' through my thesis, other written work, and verbal communications. Staff at the GAC felt that a really good personal relationship has been established through my research.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Thesis data listing and participant demographics

Data type	Participant(s) / Description
3 Interviews	Senior managers from the DERM
2 interviews	Senior managers from the GBRMPA
1 interview	Senior manager from DEWHA / project manager for the Giringun Indigenous Protected Area
1 interview	Senior manager from the WTMA
1 interview	GAC TUMRA & IPA contractor
2 interviews	Bandjin Traditional Owners / GAC board members (one younger generation, one older generation, both men)
1 interview	Djiru Traditional Owner / GAC board members (older generation, man)
1 interview	Girramay Traditional Owner (older generation, man)
1 informal discussion (participant observation)	Girramay Traditional Owner (older generation man)
1 interview	Gugu Badhun Traditional Owner / GAC board member (younger generation, man)
2 interviews	Gulnay Traditional Owners / GAC board members (both older generation, one man and one woman)
1 informal discussion (participant observation)	Jirrbal Traditional Owner / GAC board member (younger generation, woman)
1 interview	Nywaigi Traditional Owner (older generation, man)
2 interviews	Warrgamay Traditional Owners / GAC board members (one younger generation woman, one older generation man)
1 interview	Warungnu Traditional Owner / GAC board member (older generation man)
1 interview	Former CIRU senior ranger
2 interviews	Saltwater rangers
1 focus group	1 younger generation Djiru man, 2 younger generation Girramay women, 2 older generation Girramay/Jirrbal women,

	1 Nywaigi younger generation woman
1 participatory painting workshop	Participants: 1 Djiru (younger generation man), 7 Girramay woman (two older generation women, four younger generation women, one younger generation man), 3 Jirrbal (older generation women), 1 Nywaigi (one younger generation woman), 2 Warrgamay (1 younger generation man, 1 younger generation woman)
Participant observation ongoing notes	Notes from participatory approach with the GAC
Meeting minutes (participant observation)	GAC and DERM management meeting
Meeting minutes (participant observation)	GAC and DMR road planning meetings
Participant observation	Natural Resources Management working group conference, Cairns: state and federal government managers / bureaucrats, GAC and other Indigenous organizations
Participant observation	GIRU funding establishment meeting: GAC, DERM, and DEWHA
Meeting minutes (participant observation)	IPA steering committee establishment meeting: GAC, DERM, DEWHA, DPI&F, GBRMPA, Saltwater rangers
Meeting minutes (participant observation)	Djiru TUMRA meeting
Meeting minutes (participant observation)	Nywaigi TUMRA meeting

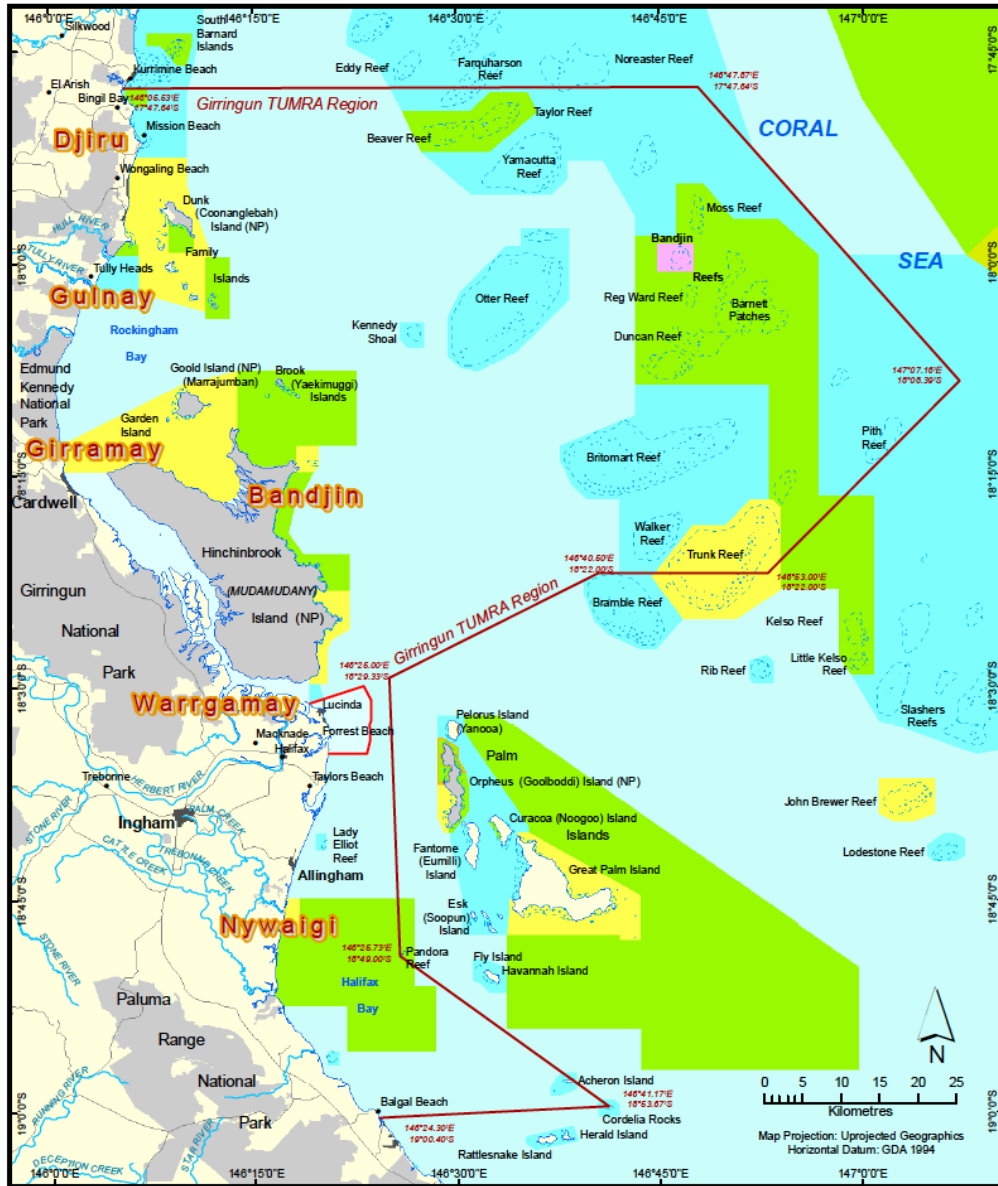
*younger generation = 25- 45 years old, older generation = 50+ years old

Appendix B. Summary of outcomes of the ‘*What does caring for country meant to you?*’ focus group

Themes	Sub-themes	Discussion points
Cultural	Cultural significance and preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories and story places are important • Continuation of language and the oral tradition • Cultural knowledge transmission • Learning from the elders • The importance of generations and the passing down of knowledge • Cultural knowledge transmission • Documenting and recording culture
	Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual connection to <i>country</i> • Spiritual healing – by being on <i>country</i> – also lends to social wellbeing
Environmental	Preservation of places and resources for future generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>Nothing has gone extinct through traditional management practices</i>” • ‘Leave only your footprints’ approach to being on <i>country</i> • Balancing economic development and the preservation of nature • Preventing encroaching development • Species management – re-vegetation and removal of feral/non-native species
Political	Rights of Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights to be on <i>country</i> • Rights to <i>care for country</i> – Traditional Owners feel that it is their responsibility • Native Title allows for some power but only with the land that is ‘left over’ • There are ‘rules’ that limit being on <i>country</i> – ‘rules’ which are set in place by government which doesn’t understand Traditional Owner values and aspirations – “<i>They [government] need to listen to Traditional Owners if they are going to understand</i>”
Wellbeing	Life, health, and vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order for people to be healthy, <i>country</i> needs to be looked after: ‘healthy country, healthy people’ • Access to <i>bush tucker</i> (bush foods) • Important for healing people – bush medicines, special places, spiritual healing

Wellbeing	Re-establishing a sense of pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through involvement in activities <i>on country</i> • Identifying with what it means to be out <i>on country</i> • Respect for <i>country</i> and self-respect are linked • Building of capacity and strength in Traditional Owner communities • Enables a focus on role models – leadership through example • Spending time together out <i>on country</i> – companionship • Empowerment of Traditional Owners • Identity formation – peoples’ names come from their <i>country</i>
	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of educating youth • The importance of educating the broader community about <i>caring for country</i> and Indigenous involvement • Creating overall awareness
Holism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to see all parts of the system • People are part of the system • <i>“To heal country you need to be on country”</i> 	
Vision for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development • Cultural preservation • Recognition of non-economic/monetary values – <i>“Some things are more important than money and cannot be measured in this way”</i> – there is a need to find alternatives to selling culture (e.g. trading/cultural exchange) • Social equity • Indigenous peoples being viewed in a contemporary context – true expressions of Aboriginality (of aspirations, creativity, etc.) rather than just those which are expected of Traditional Owners – breaking down of stereotypes • Contemporary role models – recognitions of these and acknowledgement of traditional role models – role model leadership development – elders taking young people out <i>on country</i> • ‘Ownership’ – recognition of this, respect, understanding and support (both symbolic and economic) from the wider community • Having <i>country</i> left to care for 	

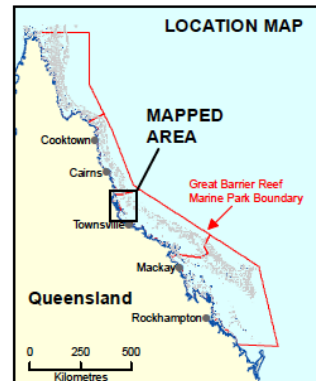
Appendix C. Map of the Giringun TUMRA area (courtesy of the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation)



Giringun TUMRA Region Schedule 1

LEGEND

- Giringun TUMRA Region Boundary
- Towns
- Localities
- Rivers
- Roads
- Reef Flat
- Indicative reef boundary
- Queensland coast and islands
- National Parks
- General Use
- Habitat Protection
- Conservation Park
- Buffer
- Scientific Research
- Scientific Research (closed to public access)
- Marine National Park
- Preservation



Appendix D. Map of the potential Girringun IPA (courtesy of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation)

