

# Guidelines for Country-based Planning

Dermot Smyth 2011

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge and thank all of the Traditional Owner groups and individuals with whom I have worked over many years. It was their commitment to care for country, to strengthen culture and to create economic opportunities for their people that led to the development of planning approaches that are described in this document.

I also wish to thank the participants of the Country-based Planning Workshop held in Cairns on 29 November 2011. The workshop provided an opportunity to get feedback on the draft Guidelines document from Traditional Owners and others directly involved in planning and managing country on Cape York Peninsula. Suggestions made during the workshop and some direct quotes from participants have been incorporated into this final version of the Guidelines.

Finally, I would like to thank the Partnerships and World Heritage team in the Cairns office of the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) who commissioned these Guidelines, provided feedback and assistance along the way and who convened the Country-based Planning Workshop in November.

*Dermot Smyth*

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# *Guidelines for Country-based Planning*

By Dr Dermot Smyth

Smyth and Bahrtdt Consultants

PO Box 1202 Atherton Qld 4883

[dermot.smyth48@gmail.com](mailto:dermot.smyth48@gmail.com)

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## ***1. Purpose of the Guidelines***

The purpose of these Guidelines is to support Traditional Owner groups and their advisors to develop and implement effective plans for their traditional country. Drawing on experience and examples from plans in various locations around Australia, the Guidelines set out a framework for thinking about planning from a Traditional Owner perspective, especially by using the concept of “country” as the geographical and cultural scale for developing a plan. The Guidelines aim to assist Traditional Owners to consider how they wish to protect and manage the spectrum of cultural, natural, social and economic values of country that are of interest and concern to them, how to communicate those interests and concerns to others and how to protect and manage those values through building capacity and partnerships.

The trigger for the development of the Guidelines was availability of funding from the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) in 2011 to support planning for country in Cape York Peninsula as a mechanism to assist Traditional Owners to consider whether they wish their country to be included in nominations for National Heritage listing and World Heritage listing. While the Guidelines were designed to assist with this decision-making process, they also have a much broader application to considering options and achieving outcomes for protecting and managing country across Australia (and perhaps elsewhere) independently of heritage nominations.

The ideas and suggestions presented in the Guidelines are informed by the experience of developing and implementing country-based plans with Traditional Owners in several Australian states and territories. For many of these groups, the development of their country-based plan has been a transformative experience that has resulted in many positive outcomes for country, culture and community.

There are, however, many alternative planning approaches and techniques, and Traditional Owners and their supporters are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from a variety of sources, including (but not limited to) references and other information sources provided at the end of this document.

## ***2. What is Country?***

‘Country’ has many meanings in the English language (e.g. nation, landscape, music), but in this context it means the traditional land and waters of an Aboriginal group. The word ‘country’ has its origins in the Latin word *contra*, meaning ‘against’ or ‘opposite’ – referring to the land lying opposite or the land spread out before you. In the 19th century it was common to use ‘country’ to refer to the area where a particular group of people came from and the same term was used by naturalists to refer to the area or habitat where a particular species of animal or plant could be found. Throughout Australia, Aboriginal people adopted the word ‘country’ as an English language approximation for describing the complex layers of meaning associated with their place of origin and belonging. Some Traditional Owner groups may prefer to use a local language word (e.g. *bubu* in the Yalanji language) instead of ‘country’.

*Country is my home, the backbone of my culture and who you are. It is my language, cultural values, identity, knowledge and everything we know.<sup>1</sup>*

*Country is what links the past and the present. It is ancestors, belonging, where your strength comes from<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Participants in Country-based Planning Workshop, Cairns 29 November 2011

*'Country' refers to more than just a geographical area: it is shorthand for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that geographical area.*<sup>2</sup>

*People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease.*<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding its complex cultural meanings, country is also the geographical scale at which most human interaction with Australia's environment and natural resources has occurred for tens of thousands of years. Human impacts on the environment, particularly through use of fire, may have occurred at a larger geographical scale but it is at the scale of country that most traditional resources were and are used, and it is at the scale of country that cultural obligations to care for those resources were and are carried out. For most of Australia's 60,000 years of human history, country has been the fundamental geographical unit of cultural and natural resource management.

In resource rich regions, such as in the extensive estuarine and wetland ecosystems of western Cape York Peninsula and rainforest environments in the eastern Cape York Peninsula, clan estates tend to be considerably smaller than in the inland savannah regions across the north and in the arid regions of central Australia. Coastal clan estates around Australia typically also include extensive areas of sea country.

Despite the cultural, social, political and legal changes that have occurred since British colonisation of Australia over more than two centuries, the concept of country remains central to identity and cultural authority for many, possibly most, Aboriginal people throughout Australia. Whether or not traditional land has been alienated from or retained by Traditional Owners, and whether or not Traditional Owners continue to live on or near their ancestral land, country as a place of origin, identity and belonging remains an enduring cultural, social and political reality.

The precise meaning 'country' varies from place to place and over time. For example, in parts of Cape York Peninsula and elsewhere in Australia, 'country' may be used to describe defined clan estates in much the same way as they are represented in the maps in Figure 1, which were developed by anthropologists in collaboration with Traditional Owners in the 1970s. In other areas, 'country' may refer to an assemblage of clan estates or a larger area where a particular language is or was spoken. Despite these changes, country remains a viable and valuable spacial unit for planning and management because, as in pre-colonial times, it remains the source of cultural identity, obligation and authority.

A fundamental rationale for using country as a cultural and spacial planning unit is that Aboriginal people consistently insist that they can only speak for and about their own country. While many Aboriginal people have acquired other geographic, cultural and social identities in the post-colonial era – e.g. an Aurukun person, a west coast person, a Cape York

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<sup>2</sup> Smyth, D. (1994) *Understanding Country – The Importance of Land and Sea in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Societies*. Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra.

<sup>3</sup> Rose, D. B. (1996) *Nourishing terrains: Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness*. Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission.

person, a Queensland, a Bronco's (football club) supporter etc. – when it comes to making plans for and decisions about land, water, cultural sites and natural resources it always comes back to who can speak for which country. If Traditional Owners are to have a meaningful voice in the future of Cape York Peninsula (and elsewhere in Australia) it therefore makes sense to recognise and respect the cultural resilience of country as the appropriate and enduring scale for engagement and planning.

The use of country as the planning unit is not to deny the existence and usefulness of other planning and management scales – such as local government areas, land trusts, native title determined areas, natural resource management regions, national parks, marine parks etc. Rather, recognition of country as the fundamental cultural and geographic scale for Traditional Owners' relationship with the Australian environment enables their engagement at broader geographical scales to be built upon firm and legitimate cultural foundations.

### 3. What is a country-based plan?

A country-based plan is simply a plan for the country of a particular Indigenous group, as defined and selected by that group. If the plan is developed by a single family or clan group, the country-based plan may relate to a relatively small area of a single clan estate.

Alternatively, a Traditional Owner group may comprise members of several clans, or a whole language group or perhaps several language groups – in which case the country-based plan would relate to a larger area. The critical factor to a successful country-based plan is that the Indigenous group determines the cultural and geographic scale at which they wish to plan. The diversity of scales at which country-based planning can operate is illustrated by the following three plans:

The *Strategic Plan for Mandingalbay Yidinji Country* was developed by the Mandingalbay Yidinji people whose country lies just to the south of Cairns. The plan covers a diversity of tenures including national park, environmental reserve, local government reserve and marine park and was developed following a determination of native title over portion of Mandingalbay Yidinji country. The Mandingalbay Yidinji people are a sub-group within the larger Yidinji language group whose country extends from the Great Barrier Reef to the Atherton Tablelands.



Map showing approximate location of Mandingalbay Yidinji country, near Cairns, North Queensland<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Source: *Mandingalbay Yidinji Strategic Plan*  
([http://www.djunbunji.com.au/files/8713/2219/6853/Mandingalbay\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.djunbunji.com.au/files/8713/2219/6853/Mandingalbay_Plan.pdf))

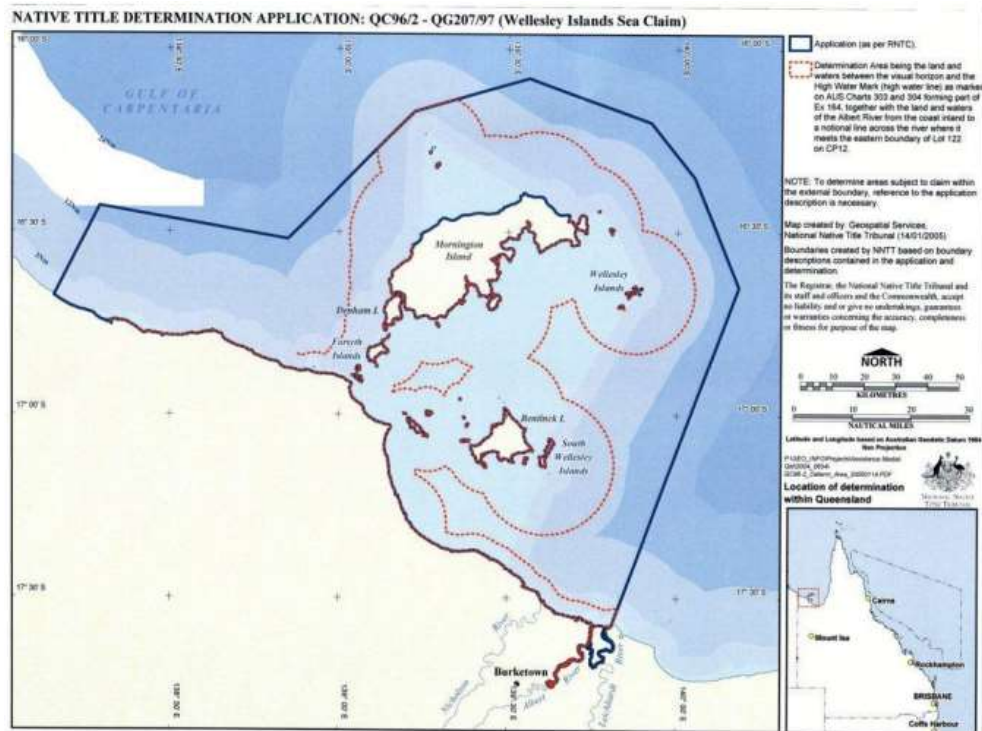
**The Ngarrindjeri Nation Yaruwar-Ruwe Plan** was developed by the Ngarrindjeri people whose country lies along the lower reaches and lakes of the Murray River and Coorong coastal region of South Australia. This is an example of a country-based plan that covers an entire Aboriginal nation or language area and covers large areas of farmland, national park, freshwater and saltwater wetlands and beaches.

Although Ngarrindjeri people have ownership of only small areas of their traditional country, their country-based plan provides a platform for negotiating substantial involvement in the management of country

**Aerial photo of Ngarrindjeri country around the mouth of the Murray River, South Australia<sup>5</sup>**



**The Thuwathu / Bujimulla Sea Country Plan** was developed by the Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and Gangalidda peoples whose country includes the Wellesley Islands, surrounding marine areas and coastal mainland in the south-eastern Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland. This country-based plan is an example of four language groups working together to plan for the future following the successful determination of their combined native title claim over their sea country in 2004, which was subsequently followed by successful native title determination of the islands and coastal areas.



**Map showing the combined native title claim area (blue line) and determined area (red line) of the Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and Gangalidda peoples of the Wellesley Islands<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> Photo courtesy of South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage

<sup>6</sup> Source; National Native Title tribunal

### ***Scope and intent of country-based plans***

The scope and intent of a country-based plan are matters for each Traditional Owner group to determine. The potential scope and intent of country-based plans includes assisting Traditional Owners to:

- Consider the cultural, natural, social and economic values of country that are important to them and to others;
- Gather new information to clarify values of country, utilising cultural knowledge and traditions as well as contemporary scientific information and practices;
- Decide which information should be made available publicly through the country-based plan and which information should remain confidential;
- Summarise local historical events that have contributed to current circumstances of Traditional Owners and country;
- Consider the implications of legal, tenure and native title issues that may impact on the protection and management of cultural and natural values;
- Consider the impacts and benefits of existing or proposed developments or management actions on identified values of country;
- Consider the impacts and benefits of other planning schemes or proposals, including (in the context of Cape York Peninsula) National Heritage listing and World Heritage listing;
- Develop strategies and actions to protect and manage values of country;
- Identify potential partnerships with other Indigenous groups, government agencies, research institutions, non-government conservation organisations, commercial enterprises, philanthropic organisations and others to implement proposed strategies and action;
- Communicate the values, history, concerns, aspirations, capacity etc. of the Traditional Owner group; the target audience could include the Traditional Owner group itself, the broader Indigenous community, government agencies, other stakeholders with an interest in country and the general public.

In short, a country-based plan provides an opportunity to tell the story of a Traditional Owner group and its country, and to be a catalyst for supporting culture, addressing concerns and achieving aspirations.

## **4. Developing a country-based plan**

The following steps in developing a country-based plan may not always be taken sequentially; some steps will be taken in parallel with other steps, some will be ongoing through the planning process and others will need to be repeated as the plan develops. For the development of any particular plan, additional steps are likely to be necessary to address particular circumstances of the people, country and issues. Who? The important first step is to determine which group or organisation will be undertaking the planning. This could be, for example, one of a number of bodies including:

- Traditional Owner group
- Traditional Owner organisation
- Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC)
- Land Council or Native Title Representative Body (NTRB)
- Any other organisation with capacity to initiate planning to support Indigenous people's relationship with country.



The membership of the group or organisation initiating the planning does not necessarily indicate the extent of Traditional Owner or Indigenous involvement in the planning. It is possible, indeed it is likely, that once the planning has commenced other Indigenous groups and/or individuals (as well as other stakeholders) will be consulted or may become centrally involved in the planning. It is therefore not essential that the initiating organisation or group is inclusive of all Indigenous people with an interest in the country being planned; rather, it is essential that the initiating group has the commitment and capacity to engage with all the Indigenous groups or individuals with an interest in the planning area.

Key factors determining the group or organisation initiating the planning include:

- The group/organisation is selected by Indigenous people;
- The group/organisation has the commitment and capacity to engage with appropriate Indigenous people who have rights and interests in the planning area.

### ***Where?***

The group initiating the planning will typically decide the area of land and/or sea that will be covered by the plan, based on their understanding of country and irrespective of current tenures. By taking a “tenure-blind”, country-based approach, the planning area may include several tenures and the extent of the planning area may change as the planning develops in the light of new information or because of the involvement of additional groups or individuals.

Key factors determining the location and extent of the planning area:

- Planning area can include land or sea, or land and sea;
- Planning area determined by the Indigenous group undertaking the planning;
- Planning area based on traditional concept of country, and may therefore include several tenures;
- Planning area can be adjusted during the planning process as new information emerges and/or as community engagement develops.

### ***Facilitation / Planning Support***

Usually the group or organisation initiating a plan will require the services of an external facilitator or planner to assist with the planning process. Some groups or organisations will have sufficient in-house expertise to undertake the planning themselves or will only require external assistance for specialist tasks, such as data analysis or graphic design. Whether or not and how an external facilitator or planner is engaged are matters for the group or organisation initiating the plan to decide.

The roles of the facilitator/planner include assisting the Indigenous group or organisation to:

- Determine the extent or boundaries of the planning area;
- Decide whether to develop a strategic plan or a more detailed management plan for country (discussed further below);
- Determine the format and structure of the plan;
- Think about values, issues, concerns and aspirations from a holistic, “tenure blind” perspective (discussed further below);
- Determine what additional Indigenous groups, organisations or individuals to engage with during the planning process;

- Determine what other stakeholders should be consulted and at what stage of the planning process;
- Map out the planning process in accordance with the scope and intent of the plan;
- Gather information, maps, photos etc. required to document the values etc. required;
- Facilitate consultation meetings within the Traditional Owner group, with other Indigenous people and others with an interest in the area.

### ***Strategic Plan or Management Plan?***

No plan can address all issues, contain all information and outline all necessary actions required for the future of country, people and culture. Plans typically include a mixture of general information and general direction about particular issues, and more detailed information and more specific direction about other issues. With respect to issues where little information is currently available, a plan may include a commitment to undertake further information-gathering or research about those issues and a commitment to develop specific actions to address those issues at a later stage.

For example, a plan may include the objective to minimise ecological and cultural impacts from weeds or feral animals which would be achieved through the development and implementation of feral animal and weed management strategies as part of the implementation of the plan. On the other hand, a plan may include very detailed information about other issues, such as visitor use at a particular location or specific measures addressing the sustainable use of traditional resources.

To put it another way, plans generally contain a mixture of strategic (general) and management (detailed) information. An important early stage in the planning process is to determine whether your country-based plan will primarily be a strategic plan for country or a more detailed management plan for country.

In practice, each country-based plan will contain strategic information and ideas as well as more detailed management information and ideas, and so any plan could be described as located somewhere along the strategic-management spectrum. Implementation of specific project tasks may also require more detailed operational planning which would address specific issues of budget, personnel, equipment and other resources required.

The first three plans referred to below are located towards the strategic end of the spectrum, while the second group of three plans are located towards the management end of the spectrum. A strategic plan for country will provide an introduction to the people, environment, culture, issues and aspirations relevant to the future management of the country and will spell out a range of strategies to address those issues and aspirations. Strategic plans are very helpful in identifying Traditional Owner's priorities, exploring future options and building the foundations for partnerships and investment to achieve those options. Strategic plans for country have been used very effectively as the first stage in establishing Indigenous land and sea management programs, securing substantial investment for ranger employment and infrastructure and setting the direction for more detailed planning and management of particular issues. Consideration of the broad potential impacts and benefits of National

Heritage listing and World Heritage listing could be undertaken as part of the development of a strategic plan for country. Examples of **strategic plans**<sup>7</sup> for country include:

- Mandingalbay Yidinji Strategic Plan for Country<sup>7</sup>
- Thuwathu / Bujimulla Sea Country Plan<sup>7</sup>
- Ngarrindjeri Nation Yaruwar-Ruwe Plan

A **management plan** for country will provide detailed information about a range of environmental, cultural, social and economic issues as well as specific actions to address those issues. A management plan would be expected to be more comprehensive, take longer to prepare and may be more expensive to develop than a strategic plan for the same country. A management plan could be developed from scratch, or could be built on a pre-existing strategic plan. Alternatively, a management plan may be limited to specific issues which were not addressed in sufficient detail in a strategic plan - e.g. a feral animal management plan may be developed to address feral animal issues identified in a strategic plan. The *Dhimurru IPA Management Plan 2008-1015* is an example of a management plan for country that has been incorporated into an Indigenous Protected Area.

### ***Format and Structure of a Country-based Plan***

Developing a vision for the format and structure of the plan early in the planning process will help clarify what information will need to be collected, who needs to be consulted and what the scope and intent of the plan will be. Format refers to the medium, size and shape of the plan. Structure refers to the component parts of the plan. The actual format and structure of the plan may change as the planning process proceeds, but developing an image of what the plan will look like will help communicate what the planning process is all about to everyone involved.

### ***Format options***

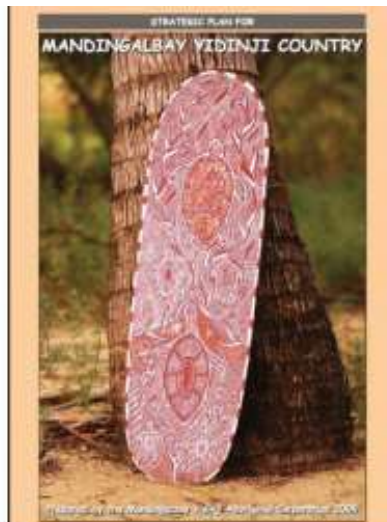


Image courtesy of Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation

Most plans are prepared in the form of an A4-size book of between 20 and 100 pages, usually with photographs and maps to supplement the text. Layout can be quite simple with black and white illustrations, but plans are more effective in engaging Traditional Owners and potential partners if they are well designed, colourful and attractive.

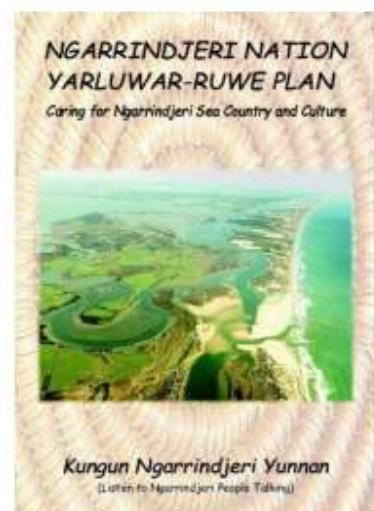


Image courtesy of Ngarrindjeri land and Progress Association

<sup>7</sup> These and other strategic plans for country are available at:  
<http://www.sbconsultants.com.au/index.php/country-based-planning>

Book plans can also be produced in larger formats, such as A3 size. This allows larger maps or photos to be included and the text size may be larger than in an A4 size book, which can make the plan easier to read and easier to be viewed by a group of people. A3 size books, however, may be less convenient to transport and more difficult to print if downloaded from a website.

Plans can also be prepared as posters or on websites or as DVDs. Plans in the form of large wall posters may be more visible to a larger number of people compared to a plan in book form, which may be placed on a shelf and seldom seen



**Management Plan for Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area**  
(Image courtesy of Mandingalbay Yidinji Aboriginal Corporation)

Plans can also be produced in multiple forms (e.g. as a book, poster and on a website). The Management Plan for the Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area, for example, has been printed in AO, A1 and A3 sizes; it is also available on a website where further information about each of the issues can be downloaded by clicking on the relevant part of the poster. Supporting documents can also be downloaded by clicking on the document icons on the bottom right hand section of the poster. The advantages and disadvantages of the various format types are summarised in the Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Format options for country-based plans**

<b>Format</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<p><b>Book (printed)</b> A4 size – combination of text, photos and maps, preferably in full colour and attractively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can include large amount of background information about people, country and culture, as well as about management issues and actions;</li> <li>• Easily distributed by post or at meetings;</li> <li>• Similarity with other planning documents gives “status” to the plan (even though it is not a statutory document).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlikely to be read “cover to cover”;</li> <li>• May quickly disappear (in shelves and bottom drawers) soon after publication;</li> <li>• Key messages of the plan may be lost in detailed information presented.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Book (printed)</b> A3 size –text, photos and maps, preferably in full colour and attractively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can include large amount of background information about people, country and culture, as well as about management issues and actions;</li> <li>• The large format enables large photos or maps to be included;</li> <li>• The large format enables larger text size to be used, making it easier to be read by a group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger size is less convenient to distribute and transport;</li> <li>• Limited access to A3 printers make it difficult to download and print.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Book (electronic)</b> PDF or “Word” version of the book format plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can distributed as an email attachment (if file size is not too large);</li> <li>• Can be made available as a download from a website worldwide;</li> <li>• Electronically “searchable” for particular issues;</li> <li>• Cheaper to copy and distribute than printed version.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people resist reading long documents in electronic form;</li> <li>• Many people do not have access to a printer (especially a colour printer) to produce their own hard copy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Poster (printed)</b> Medium size (A1) or large size (A0) wall poster</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan can be permanently on display at numerous locations (Council office, Ranger base, Government agencies, Schools etc.);</li> <li>• Limited space encourages Traditional Owners to decide on the most important information to be included in the plan;</li> <li>• All key messages are visible at a glance;</li> <li>• With good layout and design, can engages with a wide Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience;</li> <li>• Can be printed in small sizes (e.g. A3) for mass distribution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited space restricts the amount of detailed information to be included;</li> <li>• May not be regarded as equivalent to other planning documents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Poster (electronic)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be distributed by email (if file size is not too large);</li> <li>• Can be made available for download from a website;</li> <li>• Can be projected for presentations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be difficult to see plan details on a small computer screen</li> </ul>
<p><b>Website</b> Stand-alone plan website or separate tab on organisation website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes plan available worldwide;</li> <li>• Opportunity to provide additional information and updates on the plan;</li> <li>• Opportunity to make supporting documents, related plans, species lists, cultural information, maps etc. available for download;</li> <li>• Provides links to other activities of the organisation, or links to other IPAs, related national and international policies etc.;</li> <li>• Helps develop professional image for the organisation and credibility for the plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires resources and expertise to build the website;</li> <li>• Requires resources and expertise to maintain the website;</li> <li>• Needs to be regularly updated to keep fresh and current.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DVD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides lively images of people and country;</li> <li>• Engaging way to raise issues and explain aspirations;</li> <li>• Can be viewed by a group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can’t be accessed when required technology is not available.</li> </ul>

### ***Plan Structures***

Whatever format is used for presenting the plan, it should be structured in a way that tells a coherent story about country, people and culture and clearly explains the way forward to achieve what Traditional Owners identify as their needs and aspirations.

The generic structure shown in Table 2 is adapted from the contents of several country-based plans. The structure of each plan will differ from this generic structure depending on local circumstances, but is likely to incorporate many of these elements in some way.

**Table 2: Generic Structure of a Country-based Plan**

<b>Plan component</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Dedication	Honours those that have come before and to put the plan in historical and cultural context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually includes reference to ancestors who have cared for country and culture down the ages and passed on their responsibilities to current and future generations;</li> <li>• May also include dedication to current elders and others who have struggled to regain management of country and whose vision guided the planning process.</li> </ul>
Acknowledgment	Acknowledges all the individual and organisations who contributed to the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgements will usually include:</li> <li>• Elders and other Traditional Owners who guided the planning process and provided information and ideas;</li> <li>• Indigenous and other organisations that provided information, ideas and feedback during planning;</li> <li>• Individuals and organisations that assisting in facilitating and designing the plan;</li> <li>• Funding sources and other partnerships that assisted in preparing the plan.</li> </ul>
Introduction	Provides background information and purpose of the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets the scene for the plan;</li> <li>• Explains the scope and intent of the plan – what the plan is and what the plan is not.</li> </ul>
People and Country	Introduces readers to the Traditional Owners, country and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains the location of country and the extent of the planning area;</li> <li>• Provides overview of environments and resources of country;</li> <li>• Provides overview of local society and culture;</li> <li>• Summarises impacts of colonisation, cultural changes and contemporary life.</li> </ul>
Values of Country	Summarises tenure, native title, and other legal and policy issues that impact on the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of published and other available information about the cultural and natural values of country;</li> <li>• May include detailed information on cultural sites, language names, species list etc., or may just provide a summary of this information and refer to other sources or data bases;</li> <li>• Spectrum of values may include social and economic values.</li> </ul>
Threats to Country	Identifies threats to values of country.	<p>Threats may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development threats, such as from existing or proposed mines, agriculture, roads etc.;</li> <li>• Cultural and social changes that impact on retention and transmission of cultural knowledge and practices;</li> <li>• Biological threats, such as weeds and feral animals, that impact on natural values, species and ecosystems;</li> <li>• Climate change, including temperature changes, rainfall changes and sea level rise that potentially impact on cultural and natural values</li> </ul>

Opportunities and constraints	Summarises tenure, native title, and other legal and policy issues that impact on the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of past and/or current land tenures and uses that impact positively or negatively on protecting and managing cultural and natural values;</li> <li>• Summary of native title claims and/or determinations on country;</li> <li>• Overview of management regimes (e.g. National Park, Environmental Reserve, Marine Park, Fish Habitat Area, Indigenous Protected Area, National Heritage listing, World Heritage listing, Wild Rivers declaration, Ramsar Site listing etc. that potentially constrain or support protection and management of country.</li> </ul>
Managing Country	Outlines goals, strategies and actions to protect and manage country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad goals of key cultural and natural values, linked to ways to monitor the achievement of those goals;</li> <li>• Strategies to achieve goals, including responses to existing or proposed management regimes discussed in the previous section;</li> <li>• Actions to implement strategies, linked to ways to monitor the delivery of those actions;</li> <li>• Research and monitoring strategies or projects that can improve management of cultural and natural values over time.</li> </ul>
Implementing the plan	Outlines steps required to implement the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating strategies, such as an implementation workshop, to build awareness, partnerships and capacity to implement the plan;</li> <li>• Identification of individuals, groups, organisations or partnerships that can take responsibility for implementing key strategies and/or actions;</li> <li>• Governance or administrative reforms necessary to implement the plan;</li> <li>• Identification of potential funding sources and other resources to implement the plan;</li> <li>• Timeline for implementing key strategies and actions.</li> </ul>
Monitoring and reviewing the plan	Keeping track of plan implementation and effectiveness.	Reporting systems to track implementation of strategies and actions; • Monitoring systems to measure the effectiveness of strategies and actions; • Timeline and process for reviewing the plan; • Update and amend the plan where necessary.
References, supporting document and links	Providing access to information, documents and organisations that support the goals and implementation of the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical references on cultural and natural values;</li> <li>• Local, regional, national and international plans and policies relevant to the country-based plan;</li> <li>• Links to Indigenous, government, research, conservation, funding and other organisations associated with the implementation of the plan.</li> </ul>

## 5. Planning processes

There are many well established processes and tools that can assist in planning, and each plan is typically developed using a unique mixture these and others developed to suit local needs. The processes and tools described below are particularly useful to support country-based planning, but this list is by no means comprehensive and Traditional Owners and planners are encouraged to explore a range of planning tools and processes by looking at other plans (e.g. through the links and references provided at the end of this document) in order to develop the appropriate planning mechanisms to suit their own needs.

### *Planning Team*

Typically the people most involved in planning (the planning team) will include the planner/facilitator, a core group of Traditional Owners and other specialists (e.g. elders, ecologists, archaeologists, graphic designers etc.). The core group of Traditional Owners may include the executive officer of a Traditional Owner organisation, individuals with a particular interest in planning and managing country (remembering that not everyone will be interested in the planning process, especially in the early stages), and key staff members (e.g. rangers and coordinators) with knowledge and responsibilities for managing country.

### *Communication*

While the planning team will take responsibility for mapping out and delivering the planning process, it is important that a process is established to keep the wider Traditional Owner group informed about the intent and scope of the plan and about opportunities to take part in the planning process. Communication can be achieved through regular newsletters or by giving presentations at scheduled meetings (e.g. council meetings, school meetings, land claim meetings etc.). It is usual for more people to become interested and engaged in the planning process as it proceeds, particularly when a draft plan is made available for comment. No matter how comprehensive the communication is, however, it is not unusual for individuals to come forward at the very end of the planning process and complain that they have not been consulted. While this can be frustrating for a planning team that has made every effort to involve everyone, it can also be seen as a growing awareness of the importance of the plan and hence a belated desire to have input. The best approach to late arrivals is to respond positively and welcome their interest and input, rather than contest their criticism.

### *Consultation meetings*

Whatever planning processes and tools are used, development of a country-based plan will inevitably involve consultation meetings with Traditional Owners, with other Indigenous community members and with other stakeholders. Consultation meetings can be divided into several broad categories, which may not be mutually exclusive:

- Information exchange;
- Decision-making or consensus-building;
- Single interest group (often small meetings);
- Multiple stakeholders (often larger meetings).

While there can be no hard and fast rules about the conduct of consultation meetings, it is helpful for the planning team to be aware of which of the above categories best describes a proposed meeting and to consider the following suggestions:

- Meetings at which new information is presented (e.g. presentation of a draft plan) should generally not involve decision-making; i.e. people should be given sufficient opportunity to consider new information before being asked to make a decision based on that information;
- Information is generally most effectively given and received at meetings involving people with a common interest and/or common authority (e.g. members of a family or



clan group, or representatives of one organisation or agency) – usually small meetings;

- Larger meetings (e.g. whole of community meetings and multi-stakeholder meetings) are generally most productive if members of the sub-groups attending the meeting have had the opportunity to meet among themselves, consider new information, achieve consensus positions etc., prior to the large meeting; large meetings are generally inappropriate forums for presenting new information, but can be helpful in achieving consensus outcomes among separate groups that have already considered their position.

### ***Tenure-blind planning***

Critical to the success of country-based planning is the ability to temporarily set aside the constraints and legacy of tenure changes since colonisation. This is not to deny that these changes have occurred or to dismiss the real constraints (and some opportunities) resulting from the diversity of tenures that have been imposed on Aboriginal land. Rather, it is a conceptual and psychological tool to encourage Traditional Owners and others to view landscapes and seascapes through the lens of country and all the associated values which that perspective involves.

This can sometimes be a surprisingly difficult process for Traditional Owners, many of whom have lived for generations on the fringes of their country or in the knowledge that large parts of their country have been alienated from them by pastoral leases, freehold land, national parks, marine parks etc. It is also a challenge for other stakeholders, such as government agency representatives or leaseholders, to set aside their particular interests or obligations to participate in a country-based, tenure-blind planning process. Fortunately, a tenure-blind perspective is so compatible with both the reality of culture and the reality of ecosystems that, with a little encouragement, everyone involved in the planning process can usually make the necessary adjustment and contribute to whole-of-country planning.

Having identified whole-of-country values and developed ideas and strategies for protecting and managing those values, the next phase of tenure-blind planning is to bring the existence of tenures and various existing management regimes back into focus and to explore the extent to which these realities present constraints and/or opportunities. This process is discussed further below in the context of considering existing or potential management arrangements (section 7) and implementing country-based plans.

### ***Building on existing natural and cultural heritage plans***

It is possible to build on an existing natural and/or cultural resource management plan to develop a country-based plan for the same area or part of the same area. The process is similar to as described above, using the existing plan as one of the sources of information for the new plan. A country-based plan could further develop or improve an existing natural and/or cultural resource management plan in the following ways:

- Re-visiting the values, goals, strategies and actions through the perspectives of country – potentially incorporating additional tenures or including marine areas that may have been omitted from a terrestrial plan;
- Reviewing implementation of the existing plan to achieve whole-of-country management;
- Filling in information gaps;

- Considering new opportunities, including opportunities for additional partnerships, that may become available through a whole-of-country approach;
- Developing new implementation strategies in collaboration with additional whole-of-country partners, e.g. through a multi-stakeholder implementation workshop.

When reviewing existing natural and cultural resource management plans it can be helpful to consider the extent to which these plans have been implemented. Plans that have not been implemented successfully generally reflect inadequate attention to implementation processes and partnerships in the design of the plan. Some plans may provide comprehensive documentation of values and aspirations without outlining clear steps on how these values would be successfully managed or how the aspirations would be achieved. Country-based planning provides an opportunity re-assess the values and aspirations of earlier plans and to ensure that proper attention is given to successful implementation pathways.

### ***Action-based planning***

Complementing the processes described above, action-based planning or “planning by doing” refers to utilising day to day on-ground activities to contribute to the development of the plan. This approach provides opportunities for everyone involved in managing country (elders, rangers, young people etc.) to engage in planning through participation in practical projects – such as recording traditional knowledge, controlling weeds, monitoring environmental changes etc. Information and experience obtained during these activities is then used to make the plan more relevant to management issues and gives those people directly involved in managing country greater ownership of strategies and actions outlined in the plan. Action-based planning may include training and employment opportunities for Traditional Owners or other community members to become directly involved in management activities while also contributing to the development of the plan. It is important, however, to consider what the impact of such capacity-building initiatives may have on the timely completion of the plan. It may be preferable, for example, to build training and employment opportunities into the implementation of the plan rather than into the planning process itself.

### ***Working with Neighbours***

Developing and implementing a country-based plan usually involves communicating and working with neighbours. Neighbours may include other Traditional Owner groups, Indigenous communities, pastoral stations, mining company, national parks and other protected areas. Country-based planning provides an opportunity to engage with neighbours to explain why certain cultural and natural values are important to your group and explore ways to collaborate with the neighbours to protect those values.

While the interests of neighbours may be different to those of the Traditional Owner group undertaking a country-based plan, there are usually common interests that can be the starting point for collaboration. Common interests may include song lines, waterways, fire management, weed management or tourism opportunities. Country-based plans should be presented as an invitation to collaborate, rather than a threat to neighbours’ rights and interests.

## **6. Considering existing or potential management arrangements**

The scope of existing or potential management arrangements to be considered will vary from country to country. As indicated in the Table 2 above, consideration of National Heritage listing and World Heritage listing should be considered among the range of management regimes that potentially support and/or constrain protection and management of country. There are parts of Australia, including parts of Cape York Peninsula, where the country of one Traditional Owner group may potentially be subject to some or all of the following management regimes:

- National Park
- Marine Park
- Fish Habitat Area
- Indigenous Protected Area
- Nature Refuge
- Ramsar Site
- Wild River
- National Heritage listed area
- Area of International Conservation Significance
- World Heritage listed area

Summary information about each of these management regimes<sup>8</sup> is presented below; this information should be supplemented by information from additional sources regarding actual or potential management regimes in operation in the planning area.

### ***National Park***

- Established (dedicated) by the Queensland Government under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld);
- For the purpose of protecting biodiversity, ecosystems services and associated cultural values (public, recreational use is normally allowed in national parks);
- Most national parks in Queensland are owned and managed by government, but on Cape York Peninsula it is Queensland Government policy under the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007 (Qld) that all national parks will become “national parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land)”, in which the land is owned by Traditional Owners and the park is jointly managed by the Queensland Government and Traditional Owners;
- Joint management on Cape York Peninsula involves a single partnership between the Traditional Owners who own the land (via a Land Trust or Corporation) and the national park agency (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service);
- Usually includes land only (can include marine areas in some jurisdictions);
- This is the only tenure in Queensland for which mining is directly prohibited.

### ***Marine Park***

- Marine area designated under legislation for the purpose of protecting biodiversity, ecosystems services and associated cultural values;

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<sup>8</sup> The information presented here refers to current legislation and policy in Queensland; a similar range of management regimes is in place in other Australian states and territories, but legislation and policies differ in each jurisdiction.

- Generally extends landward to the highest tide level, including river estuaries; • Access and use subject to zoning plans and native title rights;
- In the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, opportunities for Traditional Owner involvement in managing sea country through Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs) and other engagement and consultative processes;
- Typically weaker co-management arrangements in marine parks than in national parks (e.g. no ownership of marine parks);

### ***Fish Habitat Area***

- Marine or estuarine area declared under fisheries legislation for the purpose of protecting natural ecosystem to provide a sanctuary for fish breeding;
- All forms of legal fishing allowed including recreational, Indigenous and commercial, subject to regulations;
- In Queensland, usually little active management and no formal opportunities for co-management with Traditional Owners – though several Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between Traditional Owners groups and Fisheries Queensland are currently under negotiation.

### ***Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)<sup>9</sup>***

- Area of land and/or sea declared or dedicated by Traditional Owners as a protected area, independently of legislation;
- Terrestrial IPAs recognised as part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas (NRS); • Most IPAs are located on Indigenous-owned land;
- IPAs can co-exist with other conservation regimes, such as national parks and marine parks;
- Funding for planning and management from Commonwealth Government's IPA Program and other government and nongovernment sources, typically resulting in multiple partnerships;
- As IPAs are not dedicated under legislation, they do not prevent development, such as mining, in the area; • Can be designated over any tenure or multiple tenures with the agreement of tenure-holders;
- Mandingalbay Yidinji IPA near Cairns, dedicated in November 2011, was the first country-based, multi-tenure IPA in Australia and several others are currently being planned.

### ***Nature Refuge***

- Land area on freehold or leasehold land designated under conservation legislation for protection of biodiversity values;
- Declared after the landholder enters into a Conservation Agreement with the State, committing to protect the natural and cultural values of the land;
- Typically little or no government funding is provided for managing biodiversity values.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about IPAs see: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/about/jobs-land-and-economy-programme/indigenous-environment-branch/indigenous-protected-areas-ipas>

### ***Ramsar Site<sup>10</sup>***

- Estuarine or freshwater wetland area designated for the protection of its biodiversity and ecological values, under the Ramsar Convention (named after the city in Turkey where the convention was signed);
- Ramsar sites trigger Commonwealth involvement in environmental impact assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth);
- Generally subject to a management plan, but often little or no funding provided for management;
- No formal mechanisms for co-management with Traditional Owners; some Ramsar sites are in national parks so they can be jointly managed.
- Can be designated over any tenure or multiple tenures.

### ***Wild River***

- River basin declared to be a “Wild River” under the Wild Rivers Act 2005 (Qld) for the purposes of protecting the ecological integrity of the river catchment system;
- Wild River declaration restricts development in-stream such as dams, in-stream mining and major infrastructure developments within the high preservation zone along the river, and other uses subject to permit requirements;
- Consultations with Traditional Owners and communities occur prior to a Wild River declaration, but no formal requirement for Traditional Owner consent.
- Can be designated over any tenure or multiple tenures.

### ***National Heritage listed area<sup>11</sup>***

- Area designated by the Australian Government as part of the National Heritage List of areas recognised for their nationally important natural and/or cultural values;
- Protection not legally binding, but must be taken into account in government decision-making;
- Generally subject to a management plan, but often little or no funding provided for management;
- No formal requirement for Traditional Owner consent for an area to be added to the National Heritage List;
- No formal mechanisms for management or co-management with Traditional Owners;
- Can be designated over any tenure or multiple tenures.

### ***Area of International Conservation Significance (AICS)***

- Area of Cape York Peninsula designated by the Queensland Government under the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007 (Qld);
- Criteria for AICS are identical to those required for World Heritage listing;
- No AICS yet declared;

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on Ramsar sites see: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

<sup>11</sup> For more information on National Heritage listing go to [www.environment.gov.au/heritage](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage)

- Traditional Owner consent not formally required, but likely to be a condition for AICS declaration, as for World Heritage nomination;
- No prescribed management regime for AICS; any specific management actions would come as a consequence of World Heritage listing.

### *World Heritage listed area<sup>12</sup>*

- Areas nominated by the Australian Government to be considered by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to be added to the World Heritage List of areas recognised for their globally important natural and/or cultural values (potentially including cultural landscape values);
- Australian government policy now requires Traditional Owners' consent for area to be nominated for World Heritage listing;
- Final decision for a nominated area to be added to the World Heritage list rests with the World Heritage Committee of United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), comprising selected representatives of member states of the United Nations;
- Once listed, the Australian Government is obligated to protect the values for which the areas is listed, under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act);
- Management can be implemented through a variety of mechanisms (including management by Traditional Owners or through co-management arrangements);
- Can be designated over any tenure or multiple tenures;
- Can be designated over land and/or sea areas;
- World Heritage listing does not affect tenure; tenure remains as it was before nomination and state and local laws still apply;
- World Heritage properties do not become Commonwealth property, nor does ownership pass to any international organisation.

It is very important that a Traditional Owner group, with the assistance of a planner and others, fully understand the intent and implications of each of these arrangements so that an informed judgement can be made about the opportunities and constraints of each arrangement. This can only be achieved once thorough consideration has been given to the values of country, the threats to those values and the group's aspirations for protection, use and management of country. This process is at the heart of country-based planning: World Heritage listing (or any other existing or potential management arrangement) should be considered in the context of Traditional Owners' values and aspirations for country, rather than as a single issue proposal in isolation from a group's broad goals and obligations to country and culture.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on World Heritage listing go to <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about>

## **7. Implementing a country-based plan**

Consideration of how a country-based plan will be implemented is a vital part of the development of the plan. Although there is no guaranteed funding source to implement country-based plans, funding bodies and other potential partners are more likely to support the implementation of a plan that has well thought out steps for achieving its objectives.

The following implementation tools and processes could be considered:

- Include a dedicated implementation section into the structure of the plan, as indicated in Table 2 above;
- Identify specific policies, obligations and legislative requirements of partner agencies that can assist in implementing the plan;
- Spell out how each partner agency can assist in implementing specific strategies and action;
- Explain how support for plan implementation can assist partner agencies to meet their own policy goals and legal obligations;
- Craft the implementation section in the form of an invitation to collaborate for the mutual benefit of Traditional Owners and partner agencies;
- Hold one-on-one implementation consultation and negotiation meetings with each partner agency;
- Convene a multi-stakeholder implementation workshop to communicate bilateral implementation agreements (e.g. MOUs, resource sharing, mentoring, investment etc.) and to develop multi-stakeholder agreements;
- Establish some form of partnership forum or implementation committee that can provide ongoing implementation support and information sharing;
- Explore governance options for implementing the plan – e.g. establishing a whole-of-country management committee, or utilising an existing forum, to provide Traditional Owners with a voice, role and practical opportunities on country and across tenures;
- Explore ways for potential threats and constraints to become opportunities for learning, for securing investment, for securing employment and for developing enterprises;
- Identify specific issues or aspiration that require further testing or research (e.g. what sustainable livelihood opportunities could support Traditional Owners' aspirations to live on country);
- Build governance and administrative structures that will enable Traditional Owners to continue to lead the implementation process in the same way that they have led the planning process.

## 8. References and links to country-based plans

- Hill, R., Walsh, F., Davies, J. and Sandford, M. (2011) Planning Guidelines for Indigenous Protected Area Management Plans, CSIRO and SEWPaC.
- Rose, D. B. 1996. Nourishing terrains: Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness. Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission.
- Smyth, D. 1994. *Understanding Country: The Importance of Land and Sea in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Societies*. Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Canberra.
- Smyth, D. 2007. Sea Country Planning. *Waves*, Vol 13 (2) p. 3.  
<http://www.nailsma.org.au/downloads/Waves132lowres.pdf>
- The Nature Conservancy (2011) *Conservation Action Planning* -  
[http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/index\\_html](http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/index_html)
- Walsh F. J., Mitchell P (ed.) 2002. *Planning for country: cross-cultural approaches to decision making on Aboriginal lands*. Jukurrpa Books/IAD Press, Alice Springs.

### Links to Plans

The following plans can be accessed by the links provided<sup>13</sup>.

- *Strategic Plan for Mandingalbay Yidinji Country* ([www.djunbunji.com.au/strategic-plan/http://www.djunbunji.com.au/strategic-plan](http://www.djunbunji.com.au/strategic-plan/http://www.djunbunji.com.au/strategic-plan))
- *Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous Protected Area Management Plan* ([www.djunbunji.com.au/ipa](http://www.djunbunji.com.au/ipa))
- *Thuwathu / Bujimulla Sea Country Plan* ([www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/thuwathu-bujimulla-plan](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/thuwathu-bujimulla-plan))
- *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan - Caring for Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture* ([www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/ngarrindjeri-plan](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/ngarrindjeri-plan))
- *Barni-Wardimantha Awara (Don't Spoil the Country) - Yanyuwa Sea Country Plan* ([www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/yanyuwa-sea-plan](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/publications/yanyuwa-sea-plan))
- *Dhimurru IPA Management Plan 2015-2022* ([http://www.dhimurru.com.au/uploads/8/9/3/6/8936577/dhimurru\\_ipa\\_management\\_plan\\_2015-22.pdf](http://www.dhimurru.com.au/uploads/8/9/3/6/8936577/dhimurru_ipa_management_plan_2015-22.pdf))
- *Gkuthaarn & Kukatj Land and Sea Country Plan* (<http://www.clcac.com.au/publications/2014/83>)
- *Kurtijar Land and Saltwater Country Plan* ([http://www.clcac.com.au/sites/default/files/downloads/kurtijar\\_land\\_and\\_saltwater\\_country\\_plan\\_web.pdf](http://www.clcac.com.au/sites/default/files/downloads/kurtijar_land_and_saltwater_country_plan_web.pdf))
- *Gunggandi Land and Sea Country Plan* (<http://www.wettropics.gov.au/site/user-assets/docs/gunggandji-plan-2013-lowres.pdf>)

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<sup>13</sup> Links to additional plans will be provided from time to time at <http://www.sbconsultants.com.au/index.php/country-based-planning>