

Towards Decolonisation of Australia's Protected Area Management: the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area Experience

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Abstract

Management of Australia's National Parks and Protected Areas originally developed according to the United State's 'Yellowstone' model. Aimed primarily at preserving 'wilderness' areas, this form of protected area management has excluded indigenous habitation and land management, effectively colonising these landscapes. Since the 1980s indigenous exclusion from protected area management has been contested in the public sphere. Indigenous peoples have become involved in protected area management in various ways, such as the joint management of national parks. However, greater indigenous control is necessary to truly decolonise protected area landscapes and fully recognise the importance of indigenous Australians in land management.

This paper explores a new initiative in protected area management: the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program. IPAs are established through voluntary declaration of indigenous land with the aim of enhancing indigenous control of protected area landscapes. Nantawarrina, the first declared IPA, is considered as a case study. Although some manifestations of colonialism are still evident in the Nantawarrina IPA, the program has made some significant contributions to the decolonisation of protected area management in Australia.

KEY WORDS *Indigenous Protected Area; Nepabunna Aboriginal group; decolonisation; conservation*

ACRONYMS

ALT	Aboriginal Lands Trust (South Australia)
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NCC	Nepabunna Community Council
SAMLISA	Strategy for Aboriginal Managed Lands in South Australia

Introduction

On the 26th of August 1998, Australia's first Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was established

over Nantawarrina in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia (Figure 1). The Nantawarrina IPA was declared by the Nepabunna community

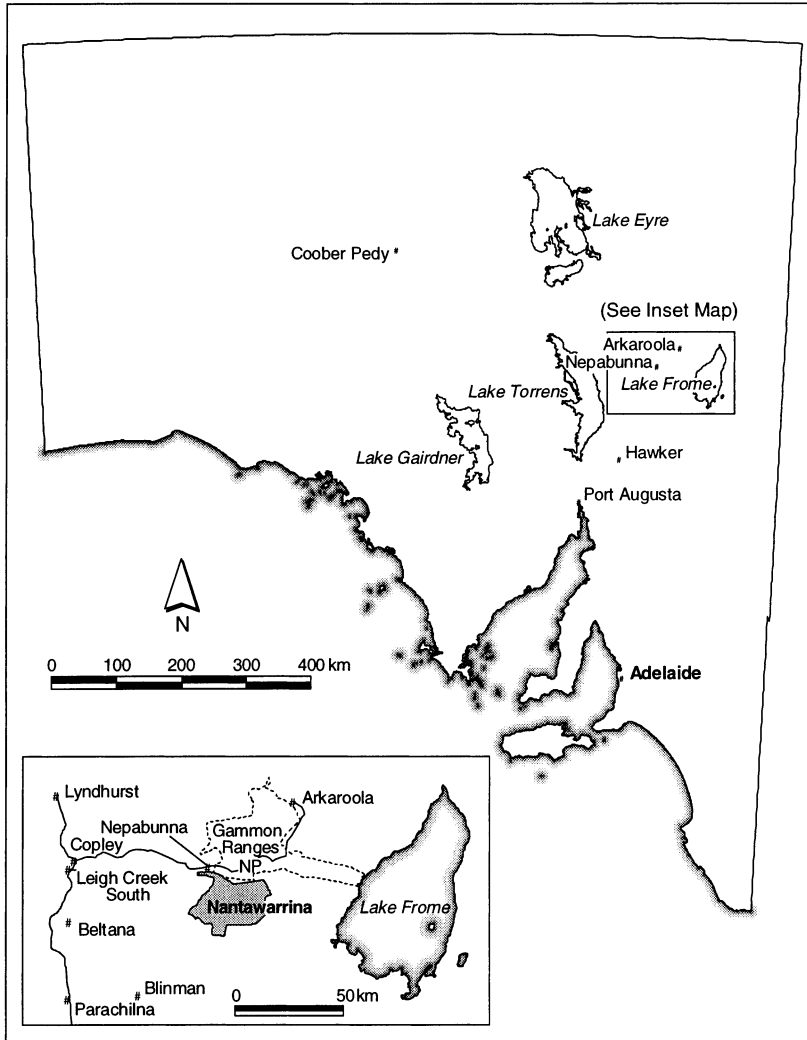


Figure 1 Locations of places referred to in the text

and the South Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT), the two organisations sharing ownership and management responsibilities for this land. The IPA declaration marks the first time that a formal Protected Area has been set up voluntarily in Australia by an indigenous community

rather than through government legislation. Voluntary proclamations of indigenous land as Protected Areas are a new approach to conservation that enhances indigenous control in management and recognises the cultural, spiritual and economic significance of land for the

improved economic development of indigenous peoples. Such an approach has the potential to change the nature of global efforts to support environmental protection and cultural survival (Stevens, 1997a).

The primary aim of this paper is to consider the ways in which the IPA program contributes to the processes of decolonising protected area management in Australia. The Nantawarrina IPA is examined as a case study. Decolonisation involves a set of processes which identify and challenge the aspects of colonialism in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and in the construction of Australia's identity and social institutions (Howitt, 1998, 33). In relation to environmental management, decolonising processes challenge Western land management to value indigenous land management as a significant contribution to achieving good environmental outcomes. These processes must reflect the principles of self-determination, such as indigenous control and autonomy in decision-making. Failure to accept these principles and what they imply about face-to-face relations in managing country may obscure the intended recognition of indigenous rights with a 'deep colonising' process (Rose, 1996a). Decolonisation does not necessarily imply a return to pre-colonial land management relationships, but a breakdown of the colonial structures that have disempowered indigenous people and consequently reduced cultural and biological diversity. As such, this paper considers the contribution of IPAs to social justice outcomes for indigenous peoples and its contribution to enhanced environmental management in Australia. Models of management which incorporate indigenous interests, such as joint management, have marked the beginning of this process of decolonisation. However, the IPA program is the first time that government funding has targeted indigenous organisations in participatory processes of conservation planning (Davies *et al.*, 1999, 61). The IPA program thus enhances the potential for decolonising protected area management in Australia. As Noble and Ward (2000, 6) state:

If IPAs can be successfully established and managed, the process will assist the empowerment and self-determination of the indigenous communities through the one thing most important to them — their Land.

The transmission of the Aboriginal¹ land ethic and connections to land, its landforms and intricate knowledge of local environments to future generations, is essential for cultural survival (Horstman and Downey, 1995; Lawrence, 1996; Young, 1999). Land management is also a vital base for Aboriginal development, and is important in the broader arena of ensuring the future sustainability of Australia's natural resources in a number of unique environments (Young *et al.*, 1991). There is a pressing need to convey to protected area managers a better understanding of Aboriginal relationships to land and the implications of those relationships (Cordell, 1993, 107). Integration of the views, approaches and experiences of indigenous peoples into national strategies for environmental management will enrich Australian concepts of protected area management (Dodson, 1995, 26). Lack of understanding of the social and cultural relationships of indigenous people to their land, and marginalisation from processes of government decision-making, continue to impede the establishment of protected areas and full participation of indigenous peoples in land and resource management (Lawrence, 1996; Davies *et al.*, 1999). Indigenous peoples have long called for a recognition of their rights, responsibilities and capacity to be fully involved in natural and cultural resource management activities (Bridgewater *et al.*, 1999, 75). A better understanding and accommodation of these rights 'offers avenues for addressing colonial legacies constructively and equitably' (Howitt, 1998, 28).

Colonial legacies have excluded indigenous peoples from national parks in Australia (Lawrence, 1996; Davies *et al.*, 2000). Continuing the exclusion of indigenous peoples may result in the double tragedy of the loss of unique ecosystems and unique cultures (Stevens, 1986, 30). The implications of the exclusion of indigenous

peoples have contributed to new thinking over the past decade about the implementation of new kinds of protected areas. In particular, the 1994 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Guidelines for protected area management recognise the needs of indigenous people as a specific objective within all six categories of protected area management (IUCN, 1994). The IPA concept was developed using these classifications (Smyth and Sutherland, 1996).

Aboriginal rights and interests in Protected Area management will remain subordinate to competing government and non-government interests until Aboriginal communities and organisations are able to negotiate formal agreements with governments from a position of secure tenure in the land (Clements and Rose, 1996, 60). The IPA is a formal agreement which:

... provides a framework for recognising and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identity, culture, rights and obligations in the management of Australia's landscapes and seascapes (Smyth and Sutherland, 1996, 99).

The discussion of Nantawarrina, the first IPA, in this paper provides a preliminary analysis of the IPA framework as it relates to the practice of decolonisation of protected areas in Australia.

The attitudes and perspectives of the people involved in development and management of the Nantawarrina IPA are documented with the aim of determining the success of the program and the lessons to be learnt from it. In particular, the perceptions of the Nepabunna Community have been recorded because, as De Lacy and Lawson (1997, 185) note, whether policy initiatives, such as the IPA, continue to prosper depends on 'Aboriginal people's perception of whether they assist them in maintaining their culture and obtaining social justice'.

Australian national parks and protected areas: from colonised to contested landscapes
Early Australian national parks were influenced strongly by the United States Yellowstone

National Park model (Stevens, 1997a, 30). A primary concept in this model is the Western construct of 'wilderness' — a preservation of the 'natural' landscape in which human influence is excluded. 'Wilderness' denies the fundamental role of indigenous land management in the creation of these 'natural' landscapes and excludes indigenous people from areas of economic, cultural and spiritual importance in the name of conservation. Concepts of wilderness are not compatible with the reality of indigenous occupations in Australia where Aboriginal people have been actively managing the land for at least 50 000 years (Ketley, 1994; Horstman and Downey, 1995; Langton, 1995; D.B. Rose, 1995, 1996b; Lawrence, 1996; Langton, 1998; Davies *et al.*, 1999; Hall, 2000). Consequently, in their declaration and management, the 'legacy of Yellowstone' (Stevens, 1997a) has facilitated the colonisation of protected area landscapes.

In response to the need for the Aboriginalisation of national parks and protected areas, Aboriginal involvement in park management was adopted, by park managers, as a mechanism to reconcile Aboriginal and conservationists' concerns for their management. However, the ready assumption that the agenda for conservationists' protection of the environment coincides with that of indigenous Australians carries the same paternalist approach as the wilderness model (Head, 1990; Sultan, 1996). It fails to recognise that Aboriginal aspirations are complex and constantly evolving, and that land is clearly also an economic and political issue. It should not be assumed that Aboriginal people will value conservation above both commercial exploitation and community self-management and be prepared to hand over management of their land to external conservation agencies (Head, 1990; Lawrence, 1996). Therefore, although the intention was to find common ground between the two groups, Aboriginal involvement in protected area management was often, in reality, a conformation to pre-conceived ideas of what 'Aboriginal aspirations' should be like (Foster, 1997, 71).

Indigenous involvement in protected areas needs to be recognised as operating within the broad range of social justice issues in Australia, including community development and cultural integrity, and not simply as a conservation agreement. Until this broader focus is recognised, 'the declaration of more protected areas will continue to be seen as paternalism, at best, and internal colonialism at worst' (Lawrence, 1996, 24). It follows that the management of Aboriginal land as a national park may not be the best way of achieving conservation goals. Many of the intrinsic nature conservation benefits of recognising Aboriginal rights are lost if recognition of those rights is too highly compromised (Hill, 1992).

It thus seems vital to move beyond merely reforming the Yellowstone model by moderating the impacts of the establishment and operation of uninhabited protected areas. New insights into wilderness, the conservation of biodiversity, human rights, and indigenous peoples' role in maintaining both cultural and biological diversity instead seem to call for the creation of new kinds of protected areas altogether (Stevens, 1997b, 35).

In particular, voluntary agreements, such as IPA, entered into by indigenous landholders may be preferable to legislated agreements as a means of empowering indigenous peoples.

Models of indigenous management in protected areas in Australia

Indigenous peoples in Australia are now involved in the management of formal protected areas through a variety of institutional arrangements, and seek stronger roles in many places (Davies *et al.*, 2000, 13). Nine of Australia's 6000 protected areas are jointly managed and at least 30 other protected areas are being negotiated for joint management, but these negotiations remain sporadic and slow (Woenne-Green *et al.*, 1994; De Lacy and Lawson, 1997; Davies *et al.*, 1999; Davies *et al.*, 2000). The joint management concept was initiated in Kakadu National Park in response to conflicts between

Aboriginal land rights claims and protected area management in the Northern Territory in 1985. The Kakadu National Park was established on a leaseback arrangement which has been used as a model for the establishment of other national parks on Aboriginal land, such as at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

The success of the process of joint management should be measured in terms of Aboriginal empowerment, equity and social justice (Lawrence, 1996). Joint management provides the opportunity for the Aboriginal landowners to repossess their land and to exercise political and cultural power over decisions affecting their lives and land. One of the greatest potential benefits of joint management is to provide a potent symbol to all Australians of how we need to respect and care for country (De Lacy and Lawson, 1997, 187). Many indigenous groups have achieved a high profile of their management rights and responsibilities through 'joint management' arrangements (Davies *et al.*, 2000). Joint management has also enhanced conservation outcomes and the ability to control culturally significant lands for cultural continuity and the maintenance of traditional knowledges and employment (Davies, 1991).

Joint management is a political relationship that is likely to have arisen out of conflict and compromise over land ownership. It has been adopted as a necessary strategy to increase Aboriginal control over the management of those parts of their traditional country where ownership cannot now be realised because of the existence of government protected areas (Ketley, 1994; Foster, 1997; Stevens, 1997b; Davies *et al.*, 1999; Davies *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, jointly managed parks are a mechanism for accommodating some Aboriginal interests in a pre-determined conservation framework, rather than an expression of self-determination in land management (Hill, 1992; Smyth, 1996, 124).

The leaseback structure of Aboriginal 'owned' national parks reflects a reluctance to 'allow' Aboriginal people to have total control over land management on their lands and has been argued forcefully by Aboriginal groups to

be mere tokenism (Toyne, 1994, 59). The lease-back arrangement could hence be seen as a mere redefining of Aboriginal lands on Western perceptions of conservation and protected area management, through a process of 'deep colonisation' (Rose, 1996a). As Cordell (1993, 113) questions: 'in the deconstructing of the political economy of national parks in Australia, are we seeing the lengthening and tightening of green fingers around black lands?'

Joint management continues to be constrained by the unequal distribution of powers, the lack of full recognition of cultural values in legislation, inadequate control of the pace and direction of development, and failures to provide equal employment of Aboriginal people at every level in protected area management (Lawrence, 1996). Thus, far from being an alliance of stakeholders with common goals, joint management is better characterised as an arena of 'competing interests' (Ketley, 1994; Woenne-Green *et al.*, 1994; Davies *et al.*, 1999).

The Indigenous Protected Area Program

The Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) program may provide a mechanism for Aboriginal peoples to become more significantly involved in environmental and resource management. Simplistically, the IPA is a direct conservation agreement between indigenous landholders and the federal government. The IPA program is aimed at encouraging indigenous landowners to dedicate their land for the purpose of conservation, for which they receive on-going financial and technical assistance. In contrast to joint management the IPA program has been established in recognition of the conservation and biological importance of Aboriginal lands and Aboriginal land management practices. The IPA program relies upon the indigenous community self-declaring their interests in managing land, rather than conservation agencies 'allowing' Aboriginal participation in land management.

The IPA program has its origins in a number of national policies, international conventions and declarations, and various reports relating to indigenous peoples' involvement in natural

resource management (Thackway and Brunkhorst, 1998). In particular it derives from:

1. the Prime Minister's 1992 Environment Statement which set the objective of developing an 'adequate, representative and comprehensive' National Reserve System by the year 2000, and
2. the decision of the IUCN to revise its classification system for protected areas to acknowledge that ownership, management and the sustainable use of resources by indigenous peoples are compatible with protected area status (Australian Nature Conservation Agency, 1996).

Twelve pilot IPA projects have been established to consider the effectiveness of the IPA approach. To date, the Federal government has added three million hectares to the national system of protected areas (Davies *et al.*, 2000, 12). Three IPAs have been declared in South Australia, with Nantawarrina the first declared IPA in August 1998. In 1999, the Yalata community and the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) declared Yalata on the Great Australian Bight of South Australia as an IPA. In June 2000 Aboriginal owners of the vast Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands in the arid far north of South Australia declared their intention to manage a large proportion of their lands as IPAs (Davies *et al.*, 2000, 11).

Background and development of the Nantawarrina IPA

The Nepabunna community and the ALT in Adelaide declared Nantawarrina an IPA in 1998. They share ownership and management responsibilities for this land (Davies *et al.*, 2000, 11). The land was transferred to the ALT under the *Aboriginal Lands Trust Act* of 1966, and was later leased to the Nepabunna Community Council (NCC). Nantawarrina provides a suitable medium for an exploration of the IPA program, because as the first declared IPA it provides the greatest scope for a longitudinal analysis. Furthermore, certain characteristics of Nantawarrina, such as the logistical and physical aspects and international recognition, suggest

that lessons learnt from Nantawarrina may provide useful insights for other Aboriginal communities.

The Nepabunna community is a small indigenous community (approximately 80 people) comprising members of the Adnyamathanha² people, the original habitants and traditional owners of the Flinders Ranges region. The ALT consists of a Chairperson and two other members appointed by the Governor, all of whom must be Aboriginal (Pierson, 1982). The ALT Board consists of representatives from the various settlements located on ALT land, including a Nepabunna representative. As well as its function as a land holding body, the Trust is increasingly involved in enterprise development and land management.

Nantawarrina is set within the semi-arid mountain country of the Flinders Ranges, the northern part of the Adelaide geo-syncline. The area is characterised by steep gorges, sparsely vegetated high quartzite hogback ridges, and intermittent creeks. The river red gum, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, is the dominant species on the valley floors where coolabah box (*E. intertexta*) and teatree (*Melaleuca glomerata*) are also common. Nantawarrina has some significant conservation values including, among others, a colony of the *andu*, the 'yellow footed rock wallaby' (*Petrogale xanthopus*) and the Balcanoona wattle (*Acacia araneosa*). There are also sites of significance from the Adnyamathanha Dreaming stories, including two sites that have been classified and registered with the Aboriginal Heritage Unit of the Division of State Aboriginal Affairs under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988* (ALT/NCC, 1998, 12). Pastoralism has caused extensive land degradation. In the areas of grazing there has been such an absence of perennial vegetation that sheet erosion and active gullyng on slopes have occurred (ALT/NCC, 1998, 42). The damage from pastoralism has been exacerbated by exotic species, in particular goats, donkeys and rabbits. The Nepabunna community primarily uses Nantawarrina for cultural purposes, hunting and camping, and has aspirations to extend land use

to include general public use for camping and guided tours by community members. (ALT/NCC, 1998, 13). The Community received a United Nations Award for their conservation efforts on June 5th 2000, World Environment Day.

The Nepabunna Community decided to implement the IPA program during a period in which it was under significant pressure to address land management issues at Nantawarrina, particularly from the Upper Flinders Ranges Soil Board. The community decided to declare the land as an IPA to obtain resources directed at land management. IPA funding enabled the Nepabunna Community to address conservation issues without losing access rights to their land. The concept took a few years to develop. At first, the community was not sure what the IPA was about. There was a lot of scepticism and speculation arose about the government taking their lands from them (J. Chester, personal communication, 2000). Nevertheless the IPA was declared.

Approaches to research

This research employed qualitative research methods. Between May and August, 2000, three field trips were undertaken to Nepabunna and Nantawarrina, and other interviews were held in Adelaide (Appendix 1). Interviews involved members of the Nepabunna community, the Aboriginal Lands Trust and Environment Australia — the three tiers of involvement in the IPA program at Nantawarrina. People were interviewed in both 'informal' and 'semistructured' styles (Bernard, 1994, 209). Most interviews were held in the field, when respondents would take me out and show me their land. The 'informal' and 'in the field' nature of the interviews were adopted as a means of ensuring that respondents were comfortable, with the aim of gathering more insightful and more valid data (Dunn, 2000). The understandings gained from the interviews were used to break down the IPA program into key themes. Each of these aspects was then considered for their relationship to the decolonisation of management practices at Nantawarrina.

This paper is intended to accord with the research priorities set out in Howitt *et al.* (1990, 2), in that the Nepabunna community may benefit from this study. As Woenne-Green *et al.* (1994, 375) point out, the public is seldom made aware of the successes of Aboriginal achievements in land management. The paper highlights the benefits that can be achieved for cultural and biological diversity through the empowerment of indigenous communities in environmental management. The paper is also a vehicle for expression of the Nepabunna community's perceptions of the IPA program in relation to their concerns and aspirations for land management. The Nepabunna community members were knowing contributors to research that would have a public outcome. Through quotations and discussion, I have documented the ideas, concerns and comments expressed to me (as a non-indigenous person) by the Nepabunna Community, through a series of interviews, as input to this study of the IPA program. As such, it contributes to the very limited discussion about IPAs in Australia.

An assessment of the IPA program in practice at Nantawarrina

The remainder of paper reviews a number of key themes associated with the IPA program in practice at Nantawarrina. The key themes are:

1. local control in meeting conservation objectives;
2. improved conservation of cultural and natural values;
3. community representation;
4. formal recognition of land management abilities, and
5. gender biases.

The partnership at Nepabunna between the ALT and the NCC is structured into themes of community control within the partnership, training and information flow and future directions. Each thematic discussion incorporates Aboriginal perspectives and my own interpretation of events. I have chosen to distinguish Aboriginal perspectives from my own through the use of quotes or citation of the appropriate people following the comments in the text.

Local control in meeting conservation objectives
Writing a Plan of Management as a formal planning instrument is one of the key stages in the development of the IPA, and it served as a mechanism for enhancing Nepabunna control of management. The Nantawarrina plan of management was created by community members, ALT members and Environment Australia representatives through a series of meetings and discussions.

In joint management arrangements, the use of plans of management has been criticised as culturally inappropriate, due to linguistic and literacy barriers (Ketley, 1994, 144) and inadequacies in enforcing the protection of cultural landscapes (Savigny *et al.*, 1990). Part of this inadequacy is a consequence of State or Federal conservation agencies having primary responsibility in preparation of the document, which is then presented to traditional owners for 'consultation' and 'negotiation' (Davies, 1991).

In the case of Nantawarrina, direct involvement of the Nepabunna community throughout the construction of the IPA plan of management is one mechanism ensuring that conservation objectives conform to the ecological and cultural aspirations of the community. The community has access to Nantawarrina so that they can pursue their cultural activities, such as hunting and camping, as a part of their day to day existence. As such the Nepabunna community exerts control over their economic, cultural and spiritual needs throughout their activities at Nantawarrina. Allocation of resources is then modelled according to the plan. Hence, power over the funding and therefore management priorities, in both legal and practical terms, is within the control of the Nepabunna community.

Improved conservation of cultural and natural values

Ensuring local control in planning, through the plan of management, also enhances conservation outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation are not prescribed aspects of the IPA program. No baseline flora or fauna data have been collected for Nantawarrina to date. Therefore the

conservation outcomes of the program so far are purely anecdotal. Various community members (J. and I. Johnson, G. Coulthard and D. Wilton, personal communication, 2000) noticed that Sturt's Desert Pea, *Clianthus formosus*, and other native plants are coming back because the Nepabunna community has actively managed and reduced the numbers of feral animals. Such changes are clearly recognised as positive by the community who feel that it is 'good to be looking after our own land, doing the right thing by it' (K. Johnson, 2000, personal communication). The conservation of Nantawarrina also has important outcomes from a bioregional perspective, as it borders the Gammon Ranges National Park.

Funding — benefits and problems

The secure and planned provision of public funding to Aboriginal people for sustainable contemporary uses of traditional lands, such as the IPA funding, is a part of the reconciliation of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and place required in Australia (Davies and Young, 1996, 170). Community members, including Kelvin, Judy and Ian Johnson, are pleased to receive money that is specifically directed towards land management and believe it to be a good source of funding. The IPA has the potential to act as an 'umbrella' or 'seeding' program from which other funding sources will be attracted. For example, the World Wildlife Fund has established a Threatened Species Program and is monitoring the numbers of yellow-footed rock wallabies and managing feral animals around the sites of importance to these animals. Additional sources of funding are particularly important as many Aboriginal communities have difficulties in gaining access to mainstream funding. Factors in the design and administration of mainstream funding programs — principally the fact that they are based on non-Aboriginal models of land use, land ownership and collective action — limit Aboriginal peoples' ability to draw upon them (Young *et al.*, 1991, 55). Funding has also provided increased

employment and economic opportunities at Nantawarrina, in the forms of conservation management and tourism.

Conservation land management is one of the few economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities in remote locations (De Lacy and Lawson, 1997, 178). Many Aboriginal people feel that conservation management should be Aboriginal work. 'If the land was to be looked after it was Aboriginal people's job to do it' (B. Rose, 1995, 92). At Nantawarrina, the Nepabunna land management team undertakes conservation management. In this way the IPA recognises traditional knowledge and provides an outlet for it in a contemporary career in land management (Noble and Ward, 2000). Nantawarrina provides an excellent opportunity for community members to utilise their skills in a preferred form of employment on their own land. For example, Gavin Coulthard, member of the Nepabunna land management team, prefers to work at Nantawarrina (personal communication, 2000). The IPA can also act as a central pillar to which associated land management projects such as tourism enterprises can be attached.

Increasing attention is being directed to the possible use of tourism in remote areas as a means of economic development for Aboriginal people (Hall, 2000, 62). The Nepabunna community aspires to have tourism operations in the Nantawarrina IPA (see ALT/NCC, 1998). At Nantawarrina, funding assistance for the coming year will be directed primarily towards building infrastructure for tourism developments, including road signs, toilets, bores and shower blocks for tourists. Small-scale tourism, particularly tourism that concentrates on environmental and cultural aspects about which Aboriginal people have particular knowledge, can offer attractive opportunities for communities such as Nepabunna (Young, 1995). The direct level of control the Nepabunna community has over tourism operations in Nantawarrina, in access and planning, may enable the correct balance between preserving social and cultural integrity and privacy on the one hand, and benefiting from

the money which can be generated through commercial development on the other. This, however, is yet to be seen.

Throughout the development of the IPA program, the short-term nature of the funding was identified as a potential concern. However, the Nepabunna community is less worried about this than about the funding structure itself. Funds are presently directed from Environment Australia through the ALT. This is meant to be a form of monetary protection for the community to ensure the money is accounted for. However, members of the Nepabunna community feel this structure is paternalistic, and would prefer to have the money directly. Ian Johnson (personal communication, 2000) notes that the NCC deals with a larger amount of money than that directed from Environment Australia regularly and successfully. He believes that direct control of the money will mean that works can proceed straight away without waiting for the transfer of funds. Jamie Johnson (personal communication, 2000) considers that the lack of direct control of funding is generally felt as a loss of direct control of management. This issue has been expressed as one of serious concern to the community. The control of land management responsibilities is overshadowed by the paternalistic nature of the funding. Direct funding is essential to the continuation of a successful program and partnership at Nantawarrina, particularly in relation to issues of local control and decolonisation.

Community representation — Nepabunna and Adnyamathanha

A 'community' is often denoted as a geographically bounded and socially cohesive group, with a simple representative structure (for example, the NCC) which somehow stands for or represents the varied local interests in an unproblematic way (Wolfe, 1993; Davies, 1995). However, the notion of a 'community' and 'representation' are non-Aboriginal constructs which fail to recognise the complexities of Aboriginal relationships with land. Although all Nepabunna community members are

Adnyamathanha people, issues of representation evolve because the community does not represent all Adnyamathanha people or interests. The NCC constitutes the interests of people who live at Nepabunna and actively manage Nantawarrina, but cannot represent the members of the broader Adnyamathanha community who may not live at Nepabunna, yet nevertheless maintain an interest in their traditional lands, such as Nantawarrina. Ian Johnson has recognised the issues for other Adnyamathanha people having to ask for permission to enter Nantawarrina, 'even if it's our own mob' (personal communication, 2000). To truly decolonise the management of Nantawarrina, 'community representation' must also accommodate the interests of Adnyamathanha people outside Nepabunna. Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow exploration of this issue or the process of Native Title claims currently underway in the area.

Formal recognition of community land management ability

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the IPA for the Nepabunna community is the recognition of the community's conservation achievements. Community members commented that their successes in land management have caused 'red faces' amongst previous critics (I. Johnson, personal communication, 2000). The United Nations Award was awarded on World Environment Day, 5th June 2000, as a celebration of the IPA style of management partnership. The award is considered by the Community as 'one of the best things' to come from the IPA (K. Johnson, 2000, personal communication). It has brought recognition to the achievements by Nepabunna and increasing interest from interstate and international visitors.

What was really special for us was the award was announced at an international event. We are only a small community — so it was nice that all our effort was recognised (D. Wilton, cited in Aboriginal Way, 2000, 5).

Through the award, members of the Nepabunna community were acknowledged for their land

management, which has enhanced a sense of pride within the community. This formal, international acknowledgement contributes to the process of decolonisation. It provides a symbol to an international audience that international standards of conservation exist at Nepabunna as a result of indigenous land management. This symbol is also powerful to other indigenous communities. As a role model, Nantawarrina may provide an impetus to enhance conservation aspirations for other communities.

Gender biases at Nantawarrina?

In Australian indigenous cultures, women have a sphere of knowledge, ceremony and subsistence activity which is separate to and no less significant than that of men. But, particularly in the public arena, women are often marginalised. Thus while women are powerful leaders in local level management of indigenous communities and organisations, they are poorly represented at regional and national levels. Women are also marginalised in decision making on issues concerning land and wildlife management (Davies *et al.*, 1999, 87).

The predominance of men in official positions has meant that Aboriginal men often represent the community's claims. This has led to an incorrect assumption among external agencies that only Aboriginal men have a spiritual interest in land (Jacobs, 1988, 255). The Strategy for Aboriginal Managed Lands in South Australia (SAMLISA) report (SAMLISA Steering Committee, 2000, 32) also noted that Aboriginal women are specifically disadvantaged in information exchanges with government agencies because of the 'lack of recognition of their critical role in land and resource management.'

Women have been marginalised in their participation in the IPA program at Nantawarrina to date. Female members of the Community have noted the predominance of males in employed positions in land management and want this to change (V. Coulthard and D. Wilton, personal communication, 2000). Having a male coordinator

makes it culturally difficult for women to get support for their priorities (Davies *et al.*, 1999, 87). Effective mechanisms must be developed to recognise and support the role of women in environmental management on Aboriginal lands and to give equitable consideration to women's issues. This is a gap in the IPA program that needs to be redressed. Decolonisation needs to take account of the fact that the process has been gendered, affecting men and women differently. The IPA should operate under gender equity because 'spheres of knowledge, rights and responsibilities in indigenous culture are equal and complementary [between genders]' (Davies *et al.*, 1999, 87).

The partnership at the Nantawarrina IPA

Management of Nantawarrina is shared between the Nepabunna community and the ALT, although not all IPAs share management with a land holding body. Indigenous landholders throughout Australia currently manage their land with varying degrees of assistance from relevant State and Territory conservation agencies. Partnership agreements relating to IPAs are intended to be mechanisms to support self-management of indigenous held lands (Smyth, 1996, 27). Aboriginal groups are to be assisted through access to technical advice and assistance, training, capital funding and recurrent expenses. This injection of resources means that conservation agencies need to concede some of their power to the indigenous groups for this act of empowerment to occur (Clements and Rose, 1996, 67).

There are various 'non-traditional' environmental issues that Aboriginal communities must confront, including the introduction of exotic animals and plants (B. Rose, 1995), increasing reliance on Western technology and infrastructure, and the limited ability to resist incorporation into the global economy (Langton, 1998, 59). Access to resources and assistance to deal with land management issues create greater opportunities for indigenous communities including training, employment, (re)affirmation of the worth of their knowledge, and a chance to share their culture with the wider community.

Sustainable resource management of Aboriginal lands depends on Aboriginal landholders having active support from governments, service providers and the wider community (SAMLISA Steering Committee, 2000, viii). There are various inhibitions associated with partnership experiences. Most of these relate to indigenous Australians having to conform to Westernised models of participation and involvement.

To enhance processes of decolonisation at Nantawarrina, members of the Nepabunna community should feel that they have majority control over planning and management directions. In its role as a training and information resource, the ALT should contribute to the self-determination of the Nepabunna community so that community members can develop skills in land management without compromising control. Conflicts over land management have developed regarding goat management. Some members of the Nepabunna community would prefer to farm the goats on Nantawarrina, whilst other community members and ALT workers are keen to pursue goat eradication programs for enhancing the biodiversity values of Nantawarrina.

Community control within the partnership: access and decision making

Control of access puts Nepabunna people in a much stronger position to manage appropriately the sites of cultural significance, such as Moro Gorge, than they might have had by relying on State legislation (ALT/NCC 1998, 12). Kelvin Johnson (personal communication, 2000) believes that the community's priorities are being met in terms of land management. According to Ian Johnson: '... things are done in our own way. We can plant things if we want to; the women can go and collect the seeds' (I. Johnson, personal communication, 2000).

Training and information flow

There has been a tendency in the past for training of Aboriginal people to comply with the established pattern of Western land management without significant recognition of the skills and values of these people (Lawson, 1992, 311). To

conform to the principles of decolonisation, training should be a resource for people who want to learn complementary Western land management techniques and wish to have their traditional skills recognised formally (Lawson, 1992, 315). The ALT has demonstrated its awareness of these issues in restructuring training programs to accommodate the needs of the Nepabunna community, such as rabbit control and firearms training courses. The Nantawarrina IPA provides an application for this training. The skills learnt can be consolidated and used in long term employment in land management at Nantawarrina, thereby enhancing self-determination in the community.

Future directions — moving away from the partnership?

The structure of the involvement of the ALT in the partnership at Nantawarrina is paternalistic. The ALT has legal title to the land, direct control over funding for the property and, through the *Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966*, can overturn any decisions made by the community. This power to overturn management decisions creates a position in which the ALT can 'allow' the NCC involvement in decision-making. The ALT is thus in an authoritarian position, which has resulted from a structure created during a colonial period. Therefore, despite its indigenous make-up, the authoritarian structure of the ALT perpetuates colonial institutions in which indigenous communities can 'participate in' rather than 'control' management. The Nepabunna community has the capacity for complete self-management of Nantawarrina. The nature and structure of the involvement of the ALT indicate that the process of decolonisation is not yet fully recognised at Nantawarrina.

Conclusions: a step in the right direction

This paper has contributed to the limited discussion about the IPA program in Australia. Since the Nantawarrina IPA has been effective only since August 1998, the research can provide only a preliminary analysis of the program. However, one of the important aspects of the

IPA program is that indigenous control is initiated at the beginning of the process — in the process of self-declaration. Therefore, although preliminary, the first two years have provided an insight into the benefits that can be achieved for conservation and for indigenous empowerment in land management, as well as the limitations that remain.

Some issues have surfaced that indicate a manifestation of colonialism in the IPA program. These issues relate primarily to the paternalistic structure of the involvement of the ALT — in legal tenure, ability to overturn decisions and direct control of funding. The indirect nature of the funding structure reflects the reluctance to 'allow' the Nepabunna community to manage their own lands. Gender issues must also be addressed. Furthermore, the Nepabunna 'community' must not be considered representative of all Adnyamathanha people. This has been raised by Nepabunna community and non-community members alike as an issue of concern in relation to access to land by non-community members.

Various aspects of the Nantawarrina IPA reflect a decolonisation of management. The Nepabunna Community feels in control of management priorities and visitor access, stemming from direct involvement in the construction of the management plan and visitor access. The potential to increase economic and employment opportunities to enhance economic development in the community is also important in achieving decolonisation at Nantawarrina. The community has developed a clear sense of pride in their management at Nantawarrina, primarily drawn from the environment award, which signifies a formal recognition of the land management capability of the community by an international audience. Traditional and non-'scientific' land management practices are recognised and validated, ensuring that areas of cultural and biological significance to the community can be managed appropriately. Successful management achieved under Aboriginal control may be the 'symbol' that Western managers need to fully appreciate the significance of indigenous land

management. When this significance becomes acknowledged on a wider scale, Protected Areas in Australia may truly become decolonised.

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NOTES

1. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'Aboriginal' is used to indicate both Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are culturally different and both are culturally diverse peoples. It has been necessary in some parts of this paper to generalise about some cultural characteristics. However, when information relates to a specific group of people, such as the Adnyamathanha, this is clarified.
2. The term Adnyamathanha means hills people; *Adna* means stone and *matha* means group (Brock, 1985, 13).

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Appendix 1

List of Personal Communications

Members of the Nepabunna community

Chair of the NCC:

Ian Johnson; 25-31/7/00, 30/8/00

Executive Officer of NCC

Phil Wright; 28-31/8/00

Elders of the Nepabunna Community:

- Ron Coulthard; 29-30/7/00
- Gurti Johnson; 28/7/00

Community Members:

- Gavin Coulthard; 25-31/7/00
- Valerie Coulthard; 25-31/7/00
- Dulcie Johnson; 27/7/00

- Jamie Johnson; 27/8/00 (In Adelaide)
- Judy Johnson; 30/7/00
- Kelvin Johnson; 25-31/7/00,
- Denise Wilton; 25-31/7/00

Members of government organisations

John Chester — ALT Rangelands Officer; 28-31/8/00

Jason Downs — ALT Project Officer; 27/8/00

Ivan Haskovec — Environment Australia; 28-31/8/00

Field Trips

To Nantawarrina and Nepabunna:

7th–9th of May 2000

24th–31st July 2000

28th–31st August 2000