Australia's National Science Agency

Woppaburra TUMRA logo © Woppaburra Saltwater Aboriginal Corporation

Report on the SEABORNE workshop for Woppaburra

Prepared by: Victoria Graham, Robert Muir, Meaghan Cummins, Sonny Van Issum, Brenda Boustead, Valmai Smith, Gregory Cummins, Maree Bruce, Greg Cummins Snr, Shelly McArdle, Diane Jarvis and Anthea Coggan, with support from the Woppaburra TUMRA.

July 2024

Citation

Graham, V., Muir, R., Cummins, M., Van Issum, S., Boustead, B., Smith, V., Cummins, G., Bruce, M., Cummins Snr, G., McArdle, S., Jarvis, D., Coggan, A. (2024) Report on the SEABORNE Workshop for Woppaburra. CSIRO, Australia.

Contents

Figures

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the Sea Country of the Woppaburra People where this workshop report is focused. We also acknowledge the disappointment that the meeting could not occur on Woppaburra Land and Sea Country. We would like to thank the Woppaburra Saltwater Aboriginal Corporation and the Woppaburra TUMRA Working Group for the valuable support provided to this project. We thank the following persons: Meaghan Cummins (Woppaburra TUMRA Chair at time of workshop), Dr. Sonny Van Issum (Woppaburra TUMRA Chair at time of report), Robert Muir, Brenda Boustead, Aunty Val, Gregory Cummins Jnr, Maree Bruce, Greg Cummins Snr, Nikkitia Golobic, Madonna Airey, B Peters, B Crealy and Woppaburra TUMRA Coordinator Shelly McArdle, who contributed their time, knowledge and insights into the project and/or organising the workshop. We express gratitude to Woppaburra participants who shared their personal and family stories and acknowledge that many of the memories shared were painful to recall.

This workshop was conducted as a part of the **S**ustainable us**E** **A**nd **B**enefits f**OR** Mari**NE** (SEABORNE) project, an Integrated Monitoring and Reporting project under the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMReP) funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and Great Barrier Reef Foundation (Reef Trust Partnership). We are grateful to Michelle Dyer, Cindy Huchery, Sally Harman, the TUMRA Coordinators and others at GBRMPA for their support and guidance throughout this project.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context and background

1.1.1 Project SEABORNE

The World-Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef is beautiful, vast, and unique (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021). It contributes billions of dollars to the Australian economy and is a key part of the spiritual and cultural identity of First Nations People (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021; Nursey-Bray & Rist, 2009;). Despite being one of the best managed coral reef ecosystems in the world, the most recent Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, 2019) highlights the continued need for urgent and accelerated action to address threats from climate change and poor water quality from terrestrial run-off.

The Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan 2021-2025 (the Reef 2050 Plan) is the Australian and Queensland governments' overarching long term strategy for protecting and managing the Reef (Commonwealth of Australia, 2021). The Reef 2050 Plan provides a strategic framework for action to guide governments, key sectors, and individuals on actions they can take to contribute to improving the Reef's future. The Reef 2050 Plan sets out 20 objectives with supporting indicators to measure success across a selection of attributes for its objectives of *Healthy Reef, Healthy People.* The *Healthy People* outcome of the 2050 Plan emphasises the interconnectivity of the Reef to both its Traditional Owners and the communities that depend on it, by recognising that people benefit from the ecosystem services that the Reef provides. Under the Healthy People heading, the following socio-cultural and economic relevant objectives are, some of which are overseen by Traditional Owners:

Indigenous heritage

1. Traditional Owners caring for Country
2. Traditional knowledge about the Great Barrier Reef is owned and managed by Traditional Owners and is protected and retained for future generations
3. Traditional Owners' rights are genuinely recognised and prioritised and inform and drive how benefits are shared
4. Local Traditional Owner land and sea management organisations are equipped to operate at the appropriate scale
5. Country is healthy and culture is strong

Human Dimensions

1. Uses of the Reef are ecologically sustainable as the system changes, in turn sustaining economic and social benefits
2. People maintain or grow their attachment to the Great Barrier Reef

3. People and communities take individual and collective action to maintain Reef resilience
4. Intangible and tangible historic and cultural heritage and contemporary cultural values remain intact
5. Governance systems are inclusive, coherent, and adaptive

Focusing on two case study areas (**Error! Reference source not found.**), the co-designed CSIRO, James Cook University (JCU), Central Queensland University (CQU) and Great Barrier Reef Management Authority (GBRMPA) SEABORNE project is addressing the first of the human dimension objectives - *Uses of the Reef are ecologically sustainable as the system changes, in turn sustaining economic and social benefits*. Specifically, the SEABORNE project is gaining a better understanding of Reef use, users and the benefits derived from use as well as the vulnerability of benefits to changes in Reef health. To do this the SEABORNE project is consolidating into a database, and analysing existing information about who is using the Reef, how it is being used and what the benefits are from this use. This information will be used for Reef management decision making into the future. Further, by understanding what information exists about Reef use and benefit, knowledge gaps can be identified and filled for better decision making into the future.

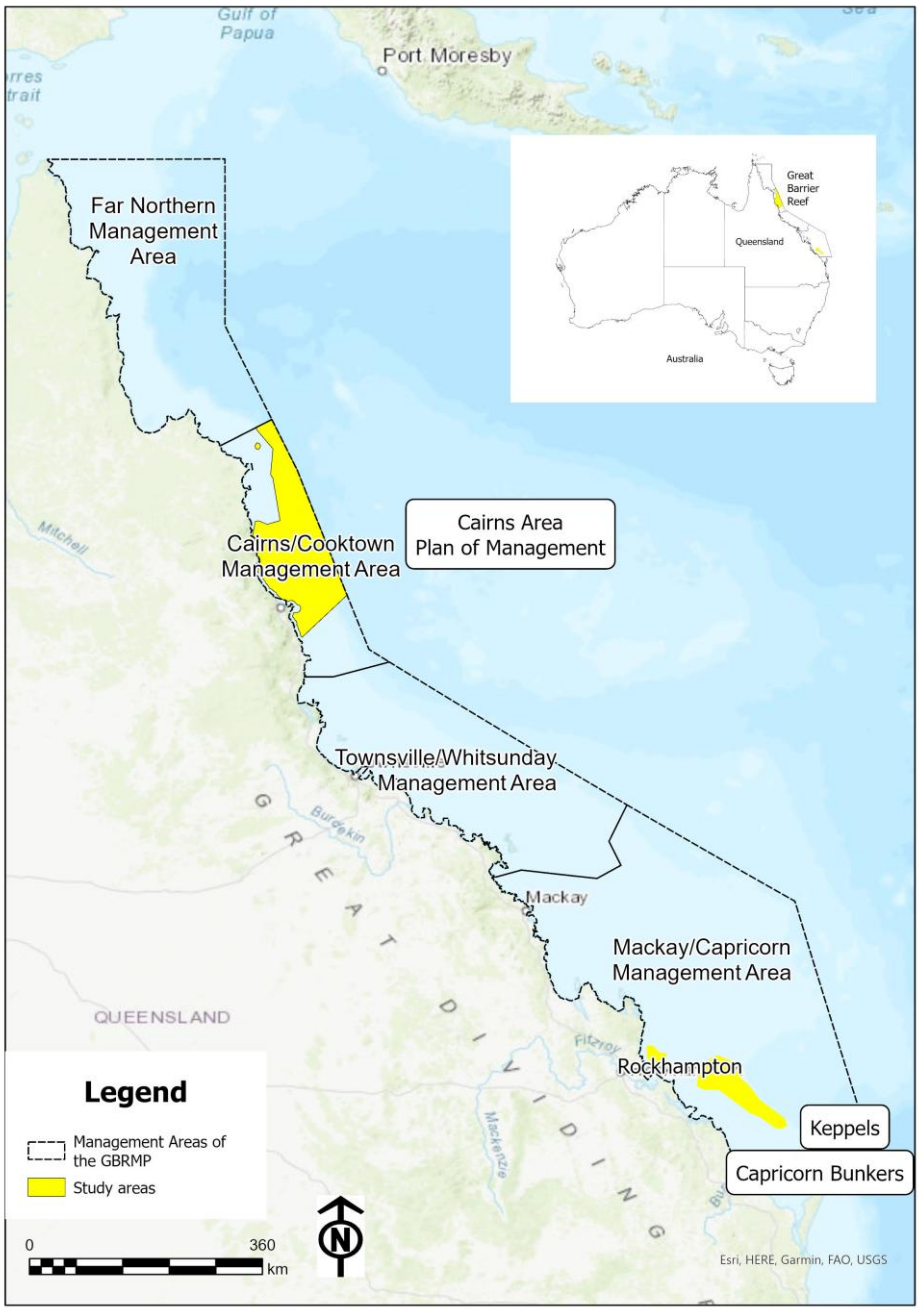


Figure 1: Map showing the two identified study areas, the Cairns plan of management region in the north and the Keppels and Capricorn Bunkers region in the south. This workshop report relates to the workshop held with the Woppaburra First Nations People in the southern study area off the coast of Rockhampton.

1.2 The purpose of this workshop and report

Several Traditional Owner groups with rights over sections of Land and Sea Country across the Reef, have entered into agreements with the Australian and Queensland governments to manage traditional use activities on their Sea Country, through Traditional Use of Marine Resource Areas (TUMRAs). One focus of the SEABORNE project, and the component relevant for this workshop report, involves engaging with Reef Traditional Owners within the case study regions to ensure that:

- The database of existing information about use and benefits contains information that is useful for, and usable by, First Nations peoples in their management of Country
- The database of existing information about use and benefits contains First Nations perspectives related to connection to the reef and surrounding Sea Country such that this can be included in GBRMPA reflections on progress towards Reef 2050 goals and in day-to-day reef management decisions.

Our engagement with Reef Traditional Owners involved reaching out to relevant Reef Traditional Owner-led organisations, and inviting each group to participate in a one day face-to-face workshop to explore these matters further. We report here on engagement with participants of the Woppaburra TUMRA Working Group and the Woppaburra Saltwater Aboriginal Corporation.

1.2.1 Overview of the Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreement

The Woppaburra People are the Traditional Custodians of the Sea Country off the coast of Rockhampton around the Keppel Islands, covering 17 islands including two major islands; Wop-pa (Great Keppel Island) and Ko-no-mie (North Keppel Island).

The Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA; **Error! Reference source not found.**) is managed by Woppaburra TUMRA Aboriginal Corporation (WTAC). The Woppaburra TUMRA was initially accredited in 2007 for 5 years, and was re-accredited for a 10-year term in June 2014 covering an area of approximately 561km^2 of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Woppaburra TUMRA Aboriginal Corporation is made up of a board of directors, managers, a Ranger team, and project administrative support staff. The Woppaburra TUMRA falls within the southern section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

As documented in the Woppaburra Traditional Owner heritage assessment Guidelines (GBRMPA 2021), the Woppaburra people inhabited the Keppel Islands prior to colonization, travelling from island to island using canoes (Figure 3). Interactions with other clans took place in and around Yeppoon. Colonisation had a devastating impact on the Woppaburra people, resulting in many lost lives and the dispossession of their lands (Van Issum, 2016). The survivors were relocated to settlements, many to locations far from their traditional Country including Yarrabah in the north and Cherbourg in the south and many have yet to return. All Woppaburra people alive today are direct descendants of those 19 survivors. It is important to Woppaburra people to protect their cultural heritage and their connection to Sea Country; "*these lands and other land and Sea Country of the Keppel Islands have a strong cultural and spiritual meaning*". Connection to Country is

important for healing and wellbeing, as documented in the aspiration statement of the saltwater Woppaburra TUMRA region:

> *"Ensuring the well-being of Traditional Owners through physical, cultural and spiritual connection to country and continuing access to traditional resources".*

[GBRMPA, 2021]

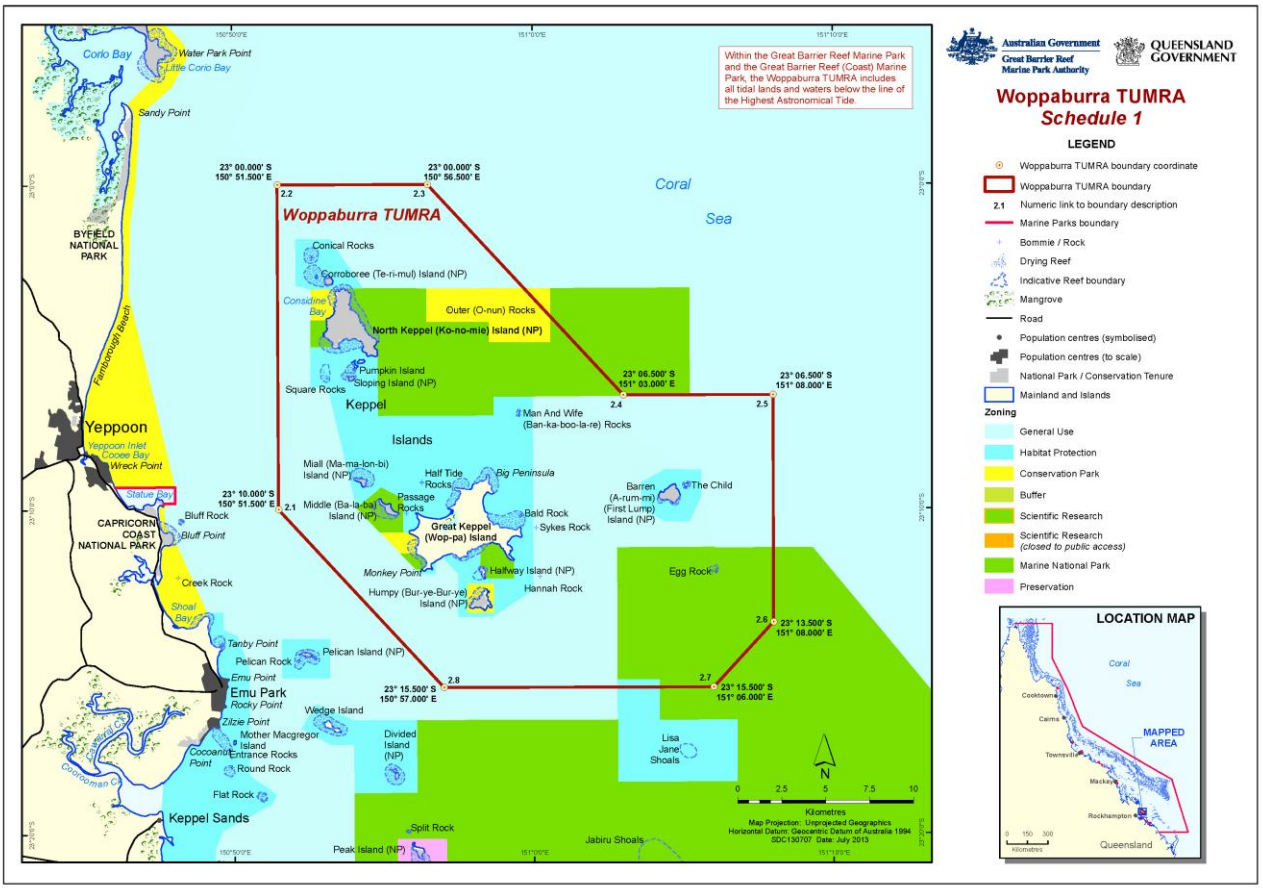


Figure 2: Map indicating location of Woppaburra TUMRA (GBRMPA, 2024).

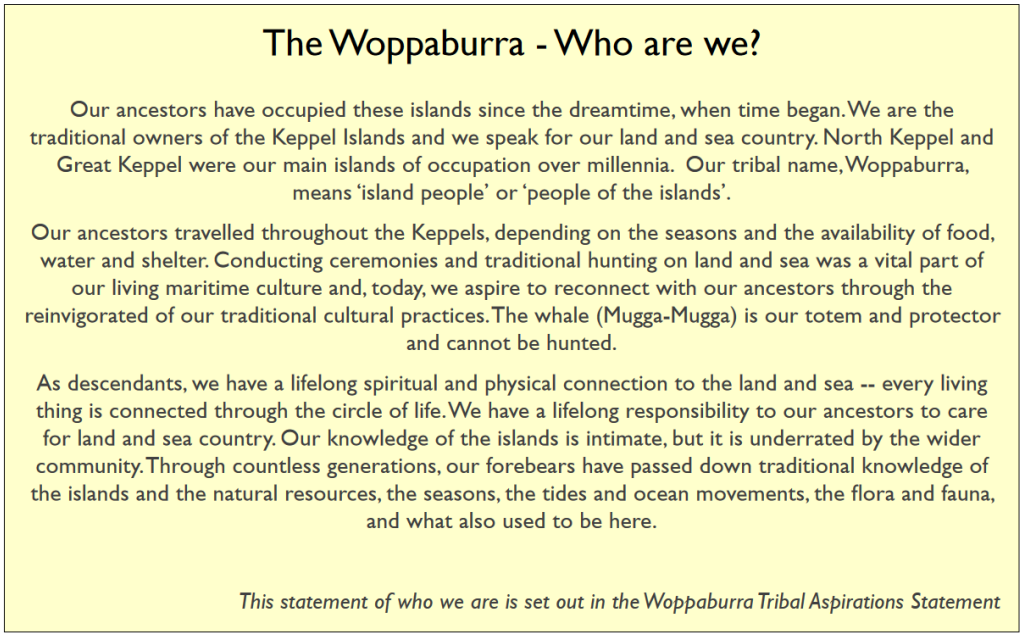


Figure 3: The Woppaburra statement of identity from the Woppaburra website (2024).

2 Workshop summary

The SEABORNE/Woppaburra workshop was held on the 18th of November, 2023, at the Griffith University Mt Gravatt campus in Brisbane. A copy of the agenda is attached (Appendix 1). The research has human ethics approval from CSIRO (reference CSIRO HREC 023/23) and from JCU (Reference JCU HREC H9163). There were 11 participants from the Woppaburra Saltwater Aboriginal Corporation and the Woppaburra TUMRA and 3 facilitators from JCU and CSIRO (Figure 4). The workshop was audio recorded with notes transcribed by an independent transcription service. Quotes included in this report are both from the transcription and from the sticky notes written on by participants.

The workshop started with acknowledging the disappointment that we were not able to meet on Woppaburra Sea Country. Participants noted the challenges of getting the Woppaburra group together, due to how widely dispersed everyone is across Australia and the expenses of travel, which is a large reason why the TUMRA management team are unable to regularly meet on their traditional land and Sea Country. Participants initially expressed concern about ensuring the right people were in the room to participate in the workshop discussion, and had concerns about their ability to contribute to the discussion because some participants had not had the chance to return to Country yet; restricted by long travel routes and the expenses to travel by plane and boat, as well as accommodation. As such it was suggested to write-up the report from this workshop, and enquire about whether a follow-up workshop or meeting would be necessary and feasible, to include individuals who missed the workshop.

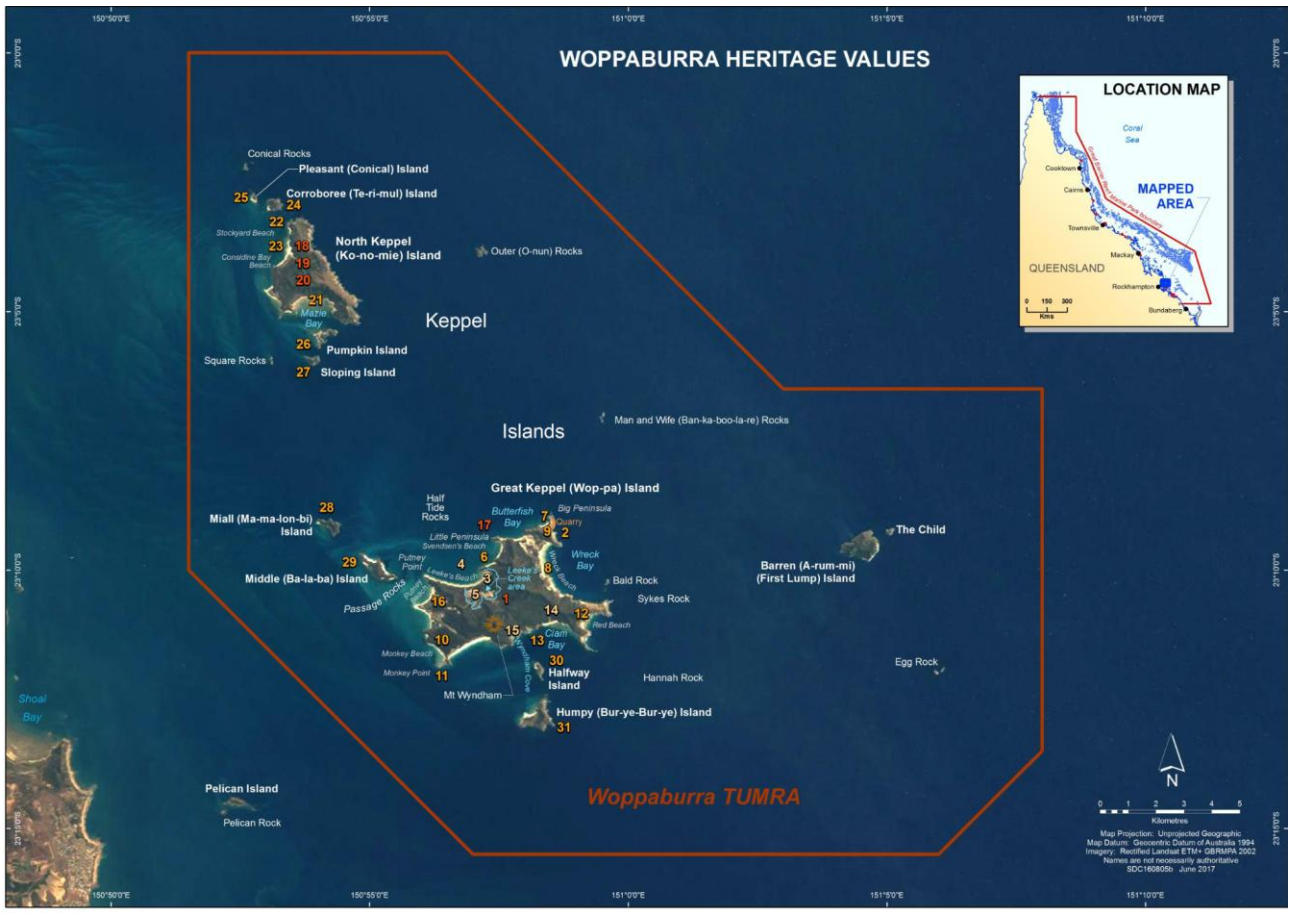


Figure 4: Location of Woppaburra Sea Country with cultural heritage values shown (top). Credit: Woppaburra Traditional Owner heritage assessment Guidelines. Workshop participants of the Brisbane workshop (bottom).

2.1 Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which Woppaburra Sea Country is used and valued;
- Learn about how Woppaburra Sea Country is monitored and nurtured;
- Identify information that will help to better meet TUMRA goals and monitoring needs; and
- Explore how to reflect monitoring of healthy Sea Country into Reef Knowledge Systems to support more holistic management.

2.2 Activity 1: Understanding the meaning and values of Sea Country

2.2.1 Method

The first interactive workshop activity was focused on understanding the meaning and values of Woppaburra Sea Country (Figure 5). Participants were asked to use the butchers paper and sticky notes to write down all the things that are important and meaningful about Sea Country. Participants were provided with sticky notes where they could write their ideas, or if they preferred, they were able to talk about their ideas and the facilitators noted these down on their behalf. The sticky notes were placed on the butchers paper, with no attempts to organise or theme the ideas; this was to avoid breaking the flow of conversation, and due to time constraints.

Questions posed:

We would like to invite you to share with us what Sea Country means to you? This could go back as far back as you want. This could include where you're at in that journey, what you're focusing on, what it means to you, what's important to you, and what you value.

Figure 5: Woppaburra Sea Country. Credit Alanah Hooi. Taken in Sept 2022.

2.2.2 Summary of discussion

During the workshop, there was a rich sharing of knowledge that captured the deep connection of Woppaburra people with their Sea Country, as described in the section below. A visual depiction of the key concepts that arose during discussions of the values and meaning of Sea Country are illustrated below (Figure 6).

Woppaburra is the overarching concept that brings together the physical and non-physical values as well as the connection across generations (e.g., healing generational trauma, and passing of knowledge from ancestors through to children). The concept of “feel” captures the emotional, healing and cleansing values that Sea Country offers through the physical connection of being on the water or islands. The “islands” concept captures the physical aspects of place and elements of belonging and self-identity. The “saltwater” concept captures animals and seasonal changes. “Generation” covers overlapping concepts of education, cultural expression, learning and spiritual lineage. Refer to Figure 7 for sticky notes.

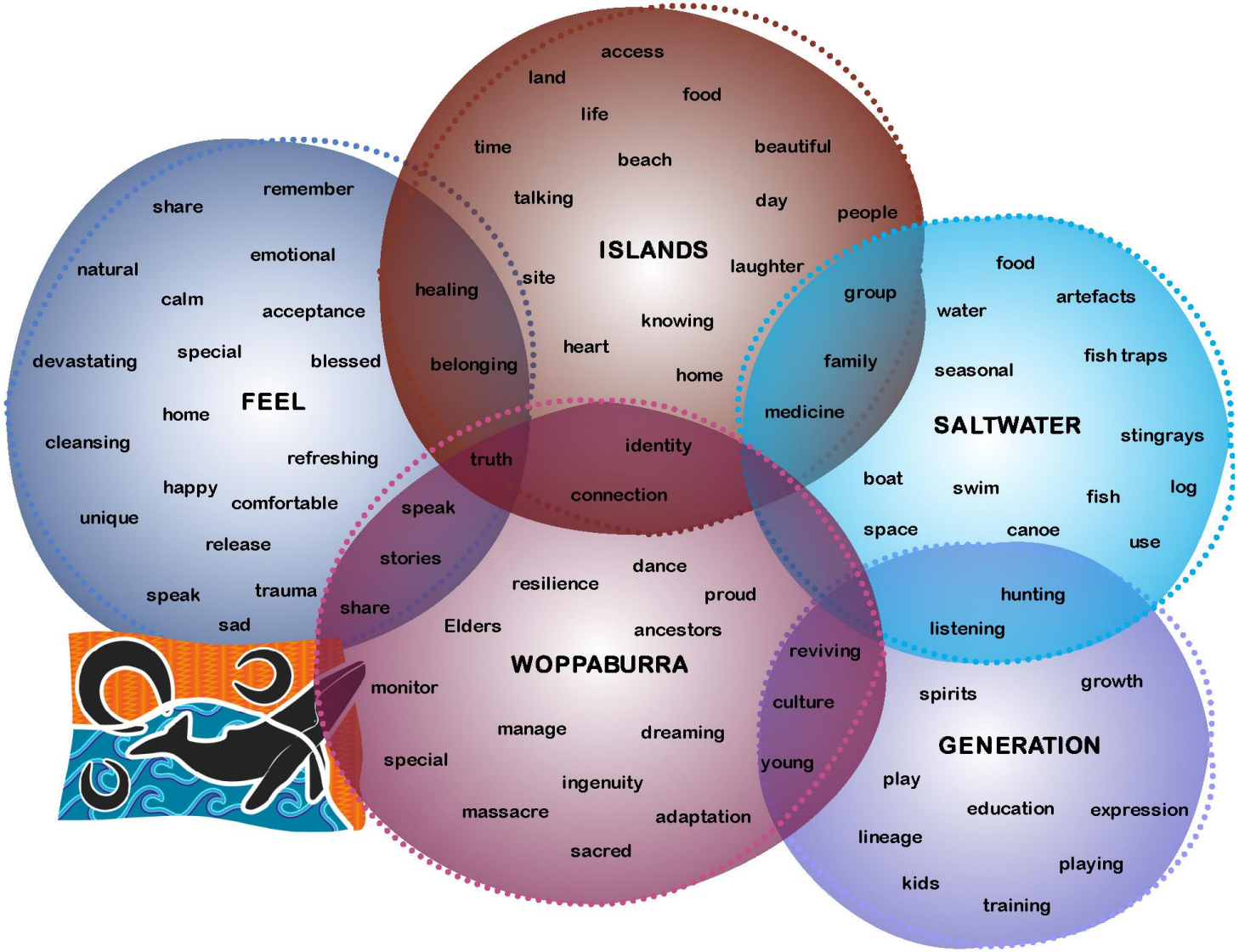


Figure 6: Word cloud generated of concepts that arose during the workshop from discussions of the meaning and values of Sea Country. Woppaburra logo © Woppaburra Saltwater Aboriginal Corporation

Sea Country cleanses and heals

The first word that workshop participants used to convey the meaning of Sea Country was "healing". From here, a deep conversation followed around the healing nature of Sea Country, with many participants able to vividly describe the feeling of returning to Woppaburra Sea Country for the first time. Some of the quotes that described this were "*Let go of bottled up feelings*" and "*Reviving and refreshing my soul*". A participant shared how they felt overwhelmed with emotion on returning for the first time, while remembering what their ancestors lived through it brought tears to their eyes. The physical action of landing on Sea Country was described as bringing trauma to the surface, while at the same time, cleansing the bottled-up feelings. These sentiments were further conveyed with the following quotes:

> *"When people return to Sea Country, it lands the trauma (generational)."* [workshop participant]

> *"That again is exactly what Sea Country is for us. It's that calmness. It's that openness to feel, to talk, even through the storm we know how to feel and be. That's why this could happen today I believe…."* [workshop participant]

> *"Kids laughter, healing for the people and island"* [workshop participant]

> *"When I've been over there for certain projects or whatever. There was - free time I guess you call it. We all get down to the beach and start swimming and all that. The kids are laughing and carrying on and somebody said to me once, 'listen. Just listen'. We were listening and it was like, listen to all that laughter. So that was good - that's healing. Because we're healing the Island as well"* [workshop participant]

> *"On Country: listening to the laughing and healing the land"* [workshop participant]

> *"Medicine and healing"* [workshop participant]

> *"Acceptance"* [workshop participant]

Participants discussed how important Sea Country is for bringing family back together and serving as a connection that unites families. The forced dispersal of Woppaburra survivors around Queensland and more widely across Australia, has shaped diverse meanings of Sea Country for Woppaburra people, as discussed in the following quote:

> *"Because of that dispersal, Country has become something that is in everyone's heart is a little bit different because of where they've been moved." [workshop participant].*

The feeling of returning to Sea Country for the first time was expressed in the below statements:

"The first time I was on Country I was so young. So that's probably a blessing. The very first time I ever stepped on Country, what did I feel? It was that long ago, I was that young, I really actually… I was proud. I was definitely proud but blessed." [workshop participant]

"I probably cried. It was emotional. Sad. It was just really emotional to think about what our ancestors went through." [workshop participant]

Healing was referred to by participants in relation to processing the trauma of their ancestors, and being on Country was described as being important to connect with their spiritual lineage and to reflect on what life was like living on Sea Country.

"I've got so many thoughts about it [Sea Country], it's just like home. It's my life. It's like a life to me. So when I'm thinking about it and we start talking about it, a lot of tears come to the eyes, because I haven't been there for a while." [workshop participant]

A place to connect with spirits

Participants discussed how being back on the islands allowed space to feel comfortable to sit in silence, to listen to the spirits and "*let the spirits know they're there*". Participants spoke about the Dreaming spaces on the islands and how having the opportunity to return to Country is an important part of sorry business; after a Woppaburra member passes, "*someone will bring back sand from the island and take it to their family*". The spiritual connection to the land, sea, ancestors and spirits was spoken about in statements, such as:

"Feel the spirits and see the spirits" [workshop participant].

Using the phrase of "*mixed emotions*", participants conveyed the dual meaning of Sea Country, referring to the "*devastation*" of the past but also the "*beauty*" of Sea Country. The quotes below convey the significance of Sea Country in reflecting on the trauma of their ancestors and thinking about how happy their ancestors were before the forced removal.

"Thinking about what our ancestors and people went through" [workshop participant].

"Although we have some sad stories and that, we just - we absolutely love going there ... When we're there we just feel so comfortable and like you said, at home. You just feel like you're at home. Even the first time people have been there" [workshop participant].

"Knowing my ancestors lived happily before their forced removal" [workshop participant].

"That's what I think about when we going over on the ferries and that. That's what I'm thinking about that whole time because it's such an expansive water. Just to think that that swim was made to get home to Country, you know?" [workshop participant].

Speaks truth of lived experience

Sharing of stories was discussed as an important part of inter-generational learning, to teach the young ones about what their ancestors lived through. It was also discussed how with time, more stories can be shared of what happened on Woppaburra Sea Country. Though it was described as being painful to recall and speak of the history, participants discussed the importance of making their story known, particularly for the younger Woppaburra generation but also more broadly so that the correct account of history is documented. The Native Title determination was one reason for collecting and documenting stories and several accounts have now been published in books and on the Australian Museum website, and in reports. The following quotes were spoken about by participants that capture the importance and difficulty in talking about the history of the Woppaburra people:

> *"Trauma wasn't spoken of much in previous decades, too much trauma, but with every generation, more is spoken of and it's about learning and sharing, wanting to share stories and pass those stories down to young ones and wanting to speak the truth about what happened on Woppa" [workshop participant].*

> *"Sea Country and us being sea people, the change - just like the change in the tide, I'll say that generational trauma of the learning of Sea Country and the memories that are there. So from [unclear 19:37] again, like I did with [Mazie Bay 19:39], the generational trauma and the things that have happened on our sea waters and our land. On our land and in our Sea Country, the older generations didn't speak of it or more so believed it was taboo to speak of." [workshop participant].*

It was noted by one participant how important it is for them to speak the truth of what happened to their ancestors and share their stories as a way of connecting, healing and correctly documenting the past. For example, it was discussed how a culturally significant and sacred site was pointed out as a tourist site by local guides as the "*Drowning Cave*", where in fact it was the site of a "*horrific massacre*". Participants expressed their distress resulting from people incorrectly telling their history.

> *"A site where tour guides visit with groups and incorrectly call it the drowning cave when it gives false sense of what happened there. It was a massacre site. Guides point it out and present it falsely, and shouldn't be telling these stories. Woppaburra people want the true story to be told, but only by certain people because it is men's business" [workshop participant].*

> *"An accident didn't happened, it was a massacre - punishment." [workshop participant].*

Sea Country is part of self-identity; "I am living it"

During discussions about the meaning of Sea Country, participants spoke about Sea Country as part of their identity, and how they felt a strong sense of belonging to Country and to each other. Participants shared stories about how during childhood or as adults when they

learnt they were from Woppaburra Sea Country. Part of this discovery of their lineage meant that they learnt about family connections with people they had known since childhood. Reconnecting with each other after decades of living apart was discussed in the following quotes:

> *"Years ago we didn't know that I was related to this one [pointing to another participant] but somewhere along the line, we had interactions with that person. There's heaps of those stories and then we find out later that we're related. So, there's been a big gap and yet now I still feel like we're still young. Woppaburra is still young." [workshop participant].*

> *"Even though it's got a long history but I feel like when we come together we don't - we feel like we've been together forever, or I do. Yeah, I don't know. Even the family from Hervey Bay, I didn't quite realise how - because growing up I didn't know. We didn't know we came from the Island because my mum was the baby and nothing was really handed down because nothing was talked about." [workshop participant].*

There was appreciation from the room for having Elders present who are willing to share their personal stories.

> *"Proud to have stories like that, and I started thinking about bringing my own kids, I've been taking over to the Island now. My next generation is brought and it's a very proud moment for me to have my children on Country." [workshop participant].*

Rite of passage; expression of culture

Participants spoke about how much growth they experienced from their first time returning to Woppa and Konomie, and consequent return visits. Certain aspects of culture were described as not being learnt or expressed until being physically present on Country. For example, one participant had not been able to dance corroboree ever in the past, but once they were on Country with their family group, they knew what to do and it felt completely natural to dance corroboree. This was the first time the participant wanted to express their culture through dance in that way. Participants discussed how they have seen similar growth when the kids are on Country, and how much connecting to culture helps them mature. It was noted that returning to Country is such a valued expression of culture and growth, the Elders and parents take a group of six or so young ones to visit every year to play and learn traditional ways of hunting and performance. The little fellas learnt corroboree with Elder men, expressing their connection to Woppa. Similar educational benefits were described in terms of hunting; passing down the skills and knowledge from older generations who lived on the island and relied on the island for food and water.

> "*When young ones go, you see their growth"* [workshop participant].

> "*Down the beach and start swimming and they're like and the kids are laughing, carrying on and somebody said to me, listen, just listen. Listen to that laughter, so that was that's it because I love it."* [workshop participant].

"I laugh with - I can't remember the year but having niece and nephews over there one year and - I can't remember what event it was. I woke up, I think it was only 5 in the morning, literally. All I could hear was, 'go that way. I got him this side'… I run out and here is, I kid you not, children from the age of six up to 12, if that, cornering in a stingray - you know how we got that fish trap where the rocks are at the front that we use now, at the front of Konomie - they're coasting a stingray in and they're just feeling so comfortable and at home and everything is right, and all that. I was asleep and you're hearing kids running along the beach and trying to catch the stingray. I was at ease, I'm like, oh yeah." [workshop participant].

"Listening to parents and spending time in silence…. It comes to the surface. Sitting with my grandfather, talking about the island. Say a prayer for the fish, blue water, white sand, whale, fish swimming, sting rays, reef sharks. You know when it's time for the young ones to come." [workshop participant].

"Sea Country also, for us, is education. There's a lot of learning in our Sea Country too. Like what Aunty said with - that's where we got our food from. So we learnt how to hunt there and how to survive from the waters" [workshop participant].

"So there are - on Konomie around the back, which is leading to our Sea Country, is Considine Beach. Now Considine is known us our Woppaburra birthing place. So that's where the beach is, that's not exactly where our birthing hole is but it's Considine. So there is a camping ground there that people can go." [workshop participant].

Reviving language and culture through Sea Country education

Shaped by the forced removal of all Woppaburra ancestors from Sea Country, language and culture was partially lost but is now being revived through connections with other Woppaburra people, through visits to the islands and gatherings where stories are shared. For example, one participant shared how being on Country felt right to express culture through corroboree dance for the first time ever.

"My first corroboree... I was nervous; did the Woppaburra women dance? I wasn't sure because we hadn't been told this. In the video, I share that I'm not thin-skinned at all about my fair skin but when it came to corroborees I was like, I'm too white to go and get up and corroboree... So at the land handover just seeing everyone come painted up getting ready to corroboree and then the sister, and my Aunty and was going, 'come on daughter'. So I was like, 'all right, I'll dance'. That was my first corroboree ever and it just felt like it was natural and I did it - all my fears were just gone. I had been on my father's father's Country at the Laura Dance Festival and was like, 'I can't dance. I'm not going to dance here'. Being on Palm, being on Mission Beach on my mother's Country. Never corrob~~b~~oree'd anywhere else, my first time on Woppa and I felt right to want to dance. That's what Sea Country did for me there." [workshop participant].

Participants discussed how being on Sea Country is part of learning the history of how the Woppaburra people lived before the removal, and discovering the birthing sites, massacre

sites, middens, dreaming sites, hunting sites and where they found food and water. It was noted that some of this information has been written in books, because a lot of information was gathered for the native title application, but most of the information is stored away in the archives. Learning about the swim logs was discussed as an example of "*ingenuity*" and "*resilience*":

> *"The adaptation of the swimming log was because our canoes were deliberately burnt so we wouldn't - couldn't go anywhere. Another example of ingenuity." [workshop participant].*

Sea country and land country are one

Sea Country was described by participants as being both land and sea:

> *"No border between land and sea" [workshop participant].*

> *"Heal land will help heal Sea country" [workshop participant].*

Figure 7: Sticky notes of meaning and values of Sea Country.

2.3 Activity 2: Way of caring for Sea Country

2.3.1 Method

The direction of conversation around monitoring was guided by participants voluntarily discussing information, rather than the facilitators posing specific questions, as many of the participants had not yet been back onto Sea Country. As workshop participants shared examples of monitoring activities, the facilitators followed up with questions to learn more. Figure 8 presents the sticky notes from the conversation.

2.3.2 Summary of discussion

Monitoring health of Sea Country was discussed through conversations around accessing Country, reviving cultural practices and healing of people and Country. Specific examples discussed of monitoring activities that have been done on Country are water quality collaborative monitoring conducted with the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), an on Country workshop with AIMS [under the Reef Restoration Adaptation Program], compliance monitoring in partnership with the Reef Authority (GRBMPA, CSIRO hydrophones monitoring, a flora and fauna survey with QPWS including a bird survey (Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services) and a preparing a seasonal calendar. Monitoring activities and priorities were therefore discussed in terms of operational activities where there is a specific purpose to measure, but also in terms of the stories passed down through generations (generational wealth) and capacity building (vocational and training opportunities to foster leadership). An example of generational learning was rangers in the field and in the community linking with Elders.

Access and cost are major barriers

A dominant theme discussed by workshop participants on monitoring was centred around access and cost as barriers to being on Country. Due to the completely offshore location of Woppaburra Sea Country, limited access influences all monitoring and caring activities on the islands. Of the participants, only one or two live close to Woppaburra Sea Country and have regular access to visit by vessel. Access and cost are major limitations to caring for Country because the boats are expensive to hire or purchase, and if participants are travelling they need to cover accommodation, travel, and also equipment or what is needed to do the monitoring. One workshop participant mentioned that the opportunity to share stories with young ones is rare, because there is nowhere to reside or stay on Woppa. There is an education centre on Konomie (https://konomieislandeec.eq.edu.au) but the waitlist is long (up to two years for a whole group) and it is not easy to get a booking for everyone together.

Participants made the following comments relating to cost of travel:

"Holding workshops are few and far between. Our biggest challenge is budget. Prime example in our last workshop, our last workshop for the year is when we take six children on Country, so one from each family group. And four adults and that alone costs $30,000 AUD." [workshop participant].

"One night and you've already spent $450. To get there, and that's one person. So that's the reality of the budget and the families trying to be there." [workshop participant].

Although accessibility and cost were barriers to being on Country frequently and for longer periods of time, participants expressed great concern about what is happening on Country and made it clear how important it is for Woppaburra people to physically be on Country to monitor its health. Despite the access limitations, participants shared examples of monitoring and training programs and events that are held on Woppaburra Sea Country, and discussed specific types of information that is already collected.

Compliance monitoring

Woppaburra mentioned they have no compliance officers specifically looking after their sea Country to monitor recreation and researchers. However, in the TUMRA there is a no take policy, which allows QPWS rangers to fine people if they are catching turtle or dugong. One specific example of a compliance monitoring project uses hydrophones to record vessel noise data. The project is a partnership between CSIRO, Woppaburra, Darumbal (the Traditional Custodians of land and sea adjacent to Woppaburra), and the Reef Authority that deploys submerged hydrophones to capture vessel noise data, providing information on vessels used in Woppaburra waters. Woppaburra discussed they have one ranger who is placed with Queensland Parks and Wildlife on Country, however they have been awarded a new grant that will fund 4 new Woppaburra rangers to work in the TUMRA zone. Participants discussed how Darumbal TUMRA are already working on Crown of Thorns Starfish with the Reef Authority, and the new rangers will likely start working in that area too.

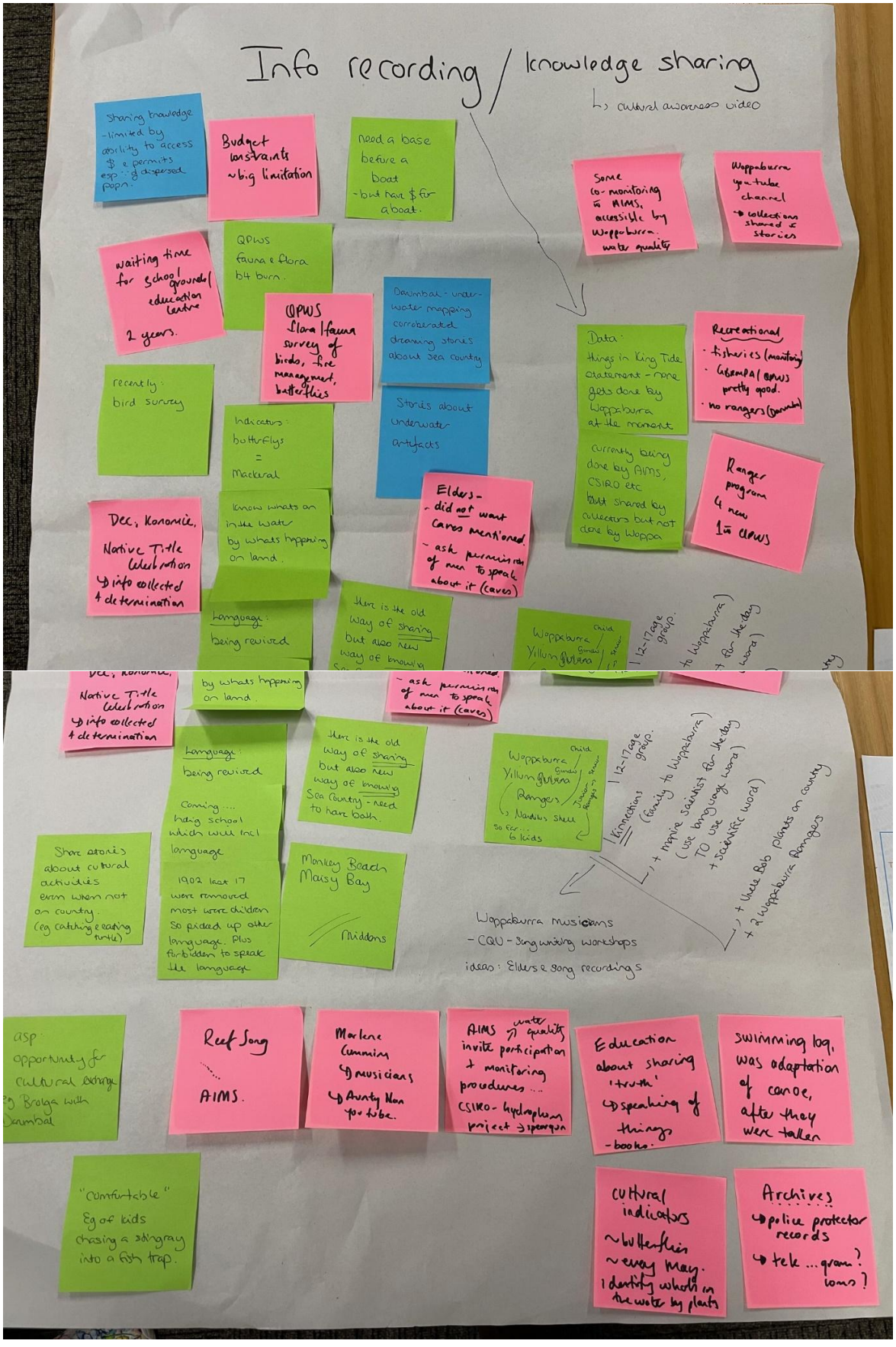


Figure 8: Sticky notes of ways of caring for Sea Country, including current monitoring activities and current level of presence on Country.

2.4 Activity 3: Data gaps and aspirations

2.4.1 Method

Towards the end of the workshop, the discussion moved towards Woppaburra participants sharing their future aspirations for the TUMRA, and examples of the programs and monitoring-related activities they are developing. This discussion was led by Woppaburra participants and the facilitators followed up with questions to understand specific details. Notes were written down on sticky notes and placed on the butchers paper (Figure 9).

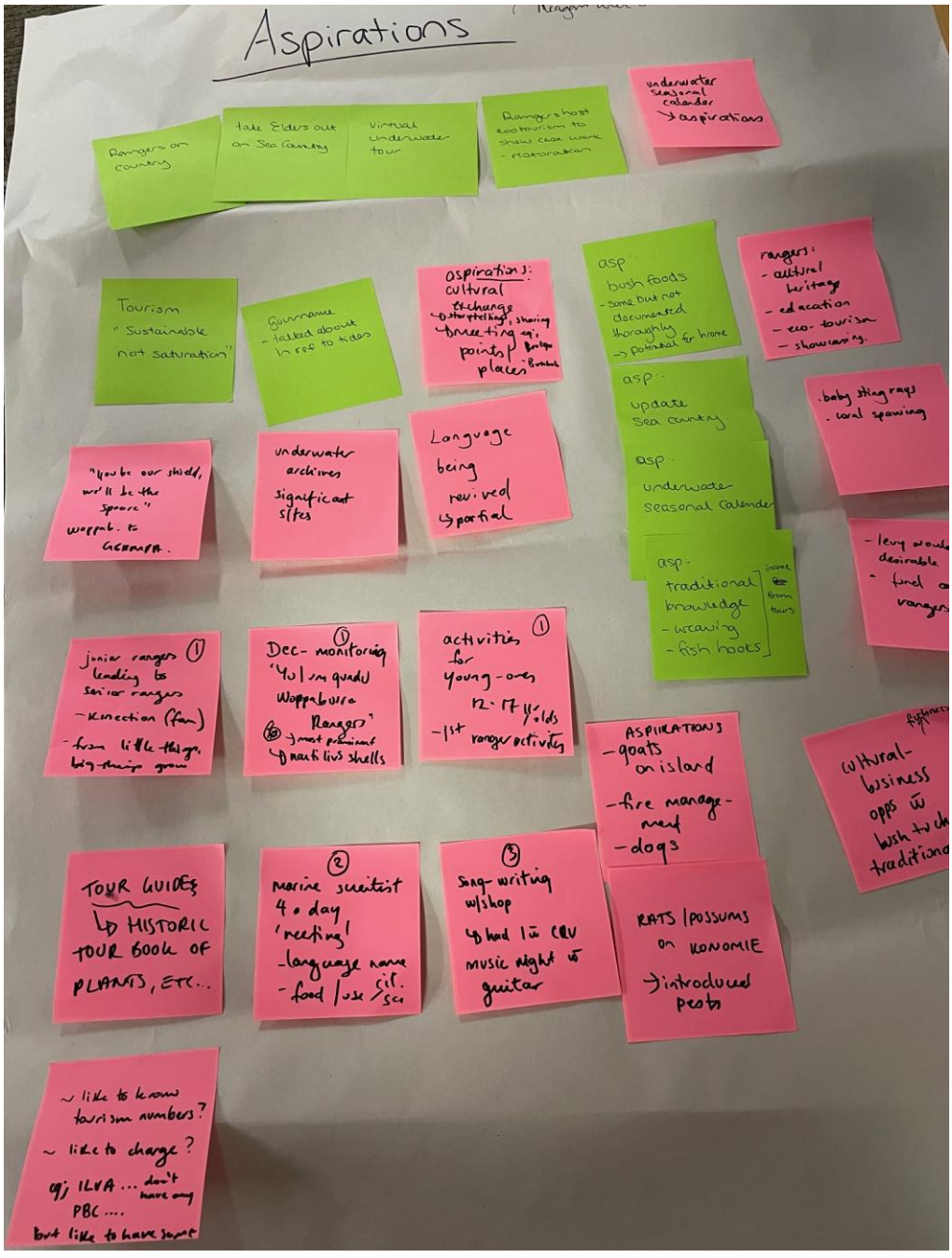


Figure 9: Notes on monitoring aspirations.

2.4.2 Summary of discussion

Since the Native Title determination result was finalised in 2021, the rights granted under the Act enable Woppaburra to progress implementing aspects of monitoring Country. The aspirations for the Woppaburra TUMRA working group were clearly laid out and printed in four brochures (see details below) that discuss the current stage of leadership, and where they aspire to be in terms of monitoring and managing Country. The ideal arrangements are where Woppaburra are leading and overseeing management of all activities on their Sea Country, and this includes setting the monitoring priorities. Monitoring visitor numbers, recreational fishers, invasive species, preparing seasonal calendars and fire management were examples of monitoring and management priorities for Woppaburra, however the current monitoring priorities are set by funding bodies and research institutions who administer the funds.

It was noted by participants that most of the current funding priorities are focused on coral. It was discussed how funding can dictate the type of monitoring being conducted, with specific mention of the funding coming through RRAP from the Reef Trust Partnership being focusing solely on coral reefs. This narrow emphasis is at odds with how holistic ways of monitoring, as conveyed in the quote below:

"But we identify what's in the water by the particular plants on the land."
[workshop participant]

One participant discussed their vision for a relationship with the Reef Authority (GRBMPA):

"you be our shield, we'll be the spears." [workshop participant]

Another part of Woppaburra aspirations for leading management of Sea Country was being the first point of contact to assess permit applications that GBRMPA currently receive and notify Woppaburra Traditional Owners of, in accordance with the Native Title Act 1993 regarding any activity that is proposed to occur on or near their determination area (Native Title Tribunal, 2023). The protection of culturally significant sites was discussed, with the mention of Dreaming sites and birthing sites. Participants mentioned that a significant dreaming site is now protected. However, there are many culturally significant sites that Woppaburra would like to hold more regulatory power over, to keep these places free from campers, tourists and other visitors.

Compliance monitoring of use within the TUMRA and green zones for example was described by participants as not being strict enough due to staff limitations and access. Rats, goats, and possums on the island are also priorities for monitoring and increased management. QPWS helps with some of these species, but participants noted they would like to be overseeing the management of these invasive species themselves and deciding how to address them. Another concern was visitors bringing their dogs; it is understood the islands are being promoted as dog-friendly within some communities.

Information and datasets desired by Woppaburra

With the current GBRMPA review of the Southern Plan of Management, an opportunity discussed by participants is to ensure Woppaburra people have access to economic benefits from the new management arrangements. For example, currently Woppaburra do not have access to information on tourism numbers, or what tourists are using the islands for. This is information that Woppaburra would like access to in order for participants to see important economic benefits from visitors that could be used to support management activities.

Examples of cultural enterprise opportunities were discussed:

- Cultural education materials through tours and published materials that cover bushtucker and bush products, weaving, fishing hooks and nets;
- Information guides and books on history of the islands and the ecology;
- Eco-tourism opportunities to showcase Sea Country (e.g. boat tours, virtual underwater tours) and to showcase restoration activities (coral restoration);
- Visitor levies to access the Keppel Bay Islands National Park and use the islands for recreation that flows to Woppaburra in support of managing Sea Country.

Further details of some of the monitoring priorities are captured in the following sections.

Generational learning and passing down knowledge

Workshop participants discussed their focus on training the next generation of Woppaburra youth as a high priority objective. Conservation of cultural heritage was discussed as being part of a ranger program, as participants see this as being integral to learning the knowledge required to care for Country and to showcase culturally important areas. This aligns with their broader aspirations focused on improving education and eco-tourism opportunities. Aspirations in this area include a junior ranger program run through the TUMRA, where there is a development pathway for junior rangers to learn the skills required for becoming a senior ranger. For example, the quote "*from little things big things grow*" was shared to illustrate a monitoring program they are running with 12-17 year olds, called *Yulumquan*. The nautilus shell is the symbol for this, being a symbol of growth.

A goal discussed by participants related to cultural heritage, including the revival of language and passing knowledge on language and cultural practices (including artefacts, fire sticks). Participants noted the value in running a cultural exchange program of storytelling held on meeting points and places – like the Darumbal BROLGA program. Woppaburra discussed the Marine Scientist for a Day program, where participants are taught the Indigenous Woppaburra names for various food and places. The program involves taking a group out to the Reef and demonstrating what a marine scientist or ranger does on the water, showing the participants the types of work they do and blending in Traditional scientific knowledge (e.g., if they know the Woppaburra word they would use that word for places, plants, animals etc). They have run song-writing workshops in the past, where they partner with other researchers and get together on one of the islands with a guitar and play

music. Participants discussed this as an important part of sharing knowledge that helps monitor and manage Country.

> *"There's a partial language there basically. It's not strong but it's not removed." [workshop participant]*

> *"Preserving language and traditional ways" [workshop participant]*

> "*It would be lovely to collaborate with our Woppaburra Elders with their current music or current songs, and do a workshop with that, especially because this is the year of our elders. That would be something beautiful to do.*" *[workshop participant]*

> *"It would be nice to know some of the - yeah - for our own - like in the future for our own income for these projects and things. Where we might be making jams out of some of those berries or something, you know? Bring back weaving again because they - we've got evidence but they're all sitting in museums of dilly bags and stuff that was made. We know some of the plants. I'm not good on all that stuff, that they use to make twine, to make the dilly bag. The fishnets, fishing line, the fish hooks. How they were made and all that sort of stuff, it's good for tourism too…." [workshop participant]*

Participants also shared how a part of preserving culture and generational knowledge is learning their history of where ancestors were laid to rest.

Learning of where ancestors were laid to rest

> *"It was forbidden to speak the language so it wasn't shared either. So Nana Konomie was between 12 and 17 on the removal and then went from Cherbourg, Fraser Island, [K'gari], and then Moorooka Brisbane to where she resided. [She] was actually laid to rest at Mount Gravatt Cemetery here. So that's the other journeys that we're doing as well. Finding where those that were removed, where they were laid to rest." [workshop participant]*

Underwater seasonal calendar and artefacts

Two additional monitoring aspirations discussed by participants were creating a virtual underwater tour of significant sites and developing an underwater seasonal calendar (capturing sting ray breeding season, coral spawning etc).

> *"I want to do an underwater seasonal calendar." [workshop participant]*

> *"When we went over for work and we went to birthing site, and we were walking through the - the tide was coming in. We were walking, and it was getting deeper and deeper. There were baby stingrays…. talking about a sea calendar, you know, that's about where they're being birthed." [workshop participant]*

> *"It's one of them things now that's actually now only being documented by Darumbal. They've actually done underwater mapping where they've mapped the Tinnaba (Fitzroy River), all the way 80 nautical miles out past the Swains Reef.*

That's another big thing for us, is there underwater archaeology there as well."
[workshop participant]

Increase presence on Country

An increased presence on Country underpins a lot of the monitoring work that Woppaburra participants would like to be doing. This was spoken about as having more rangers on Country, the chance to take Elders on Country and to run a junior ranger program on Country. It was noted by participants that having a boat and a coastal base would help achieve this, because as noted earlier in Activity 2, cost and accessibility (travel and accommodation costs) are major barriers to caring for Country.

Lead management of Country (*you be our shield, we'll be the spears*)

Participants shared printed brochures outlining the stages of leadership they desire to reach their goal of leading research and monitoring on Woppaburra Sea Country. Using the brochures as prompts, participants discussed how the 'low tide' (Figure 10) represents the current arrangements where Woppaburra do not have control over activities (research, development, education) on Sea Country, and have little on Country presence. They spoke about how they are involved in research and employed by science institutions and others, but the control and leadership is still with government. Figures 11 and 12 show the in-between steps that would represent progress towards Woppaburra leadership of on Country activities.

Woppaburra people's aspiration for leadership is represented in the 'King Tide' statement where 'Woppaburra people are making waves' (Figure 13). They aspire to control their own future and to be the people leading the monitoring of seagrass, dugongs, turtles, whales, COTS, coral reefs, mangroves, and water quality. Woppaburra people aspire to own their own vessels and other infrastructure, to allow them to easily access Country and carry out their custodial responsibilities, and live and work on Country. They also would like to use modern technology (cameras and drones) for above and below water monitoring. They shared a desire to be in charge of the permitting system for Woppa and Konomie, and the first point of contact for research and development permits there. Specific reference was made to the underwater mapping performed on underwater archaeological sites and artefacts that Darumbal have done; participants mentioned they would like to do same thing.

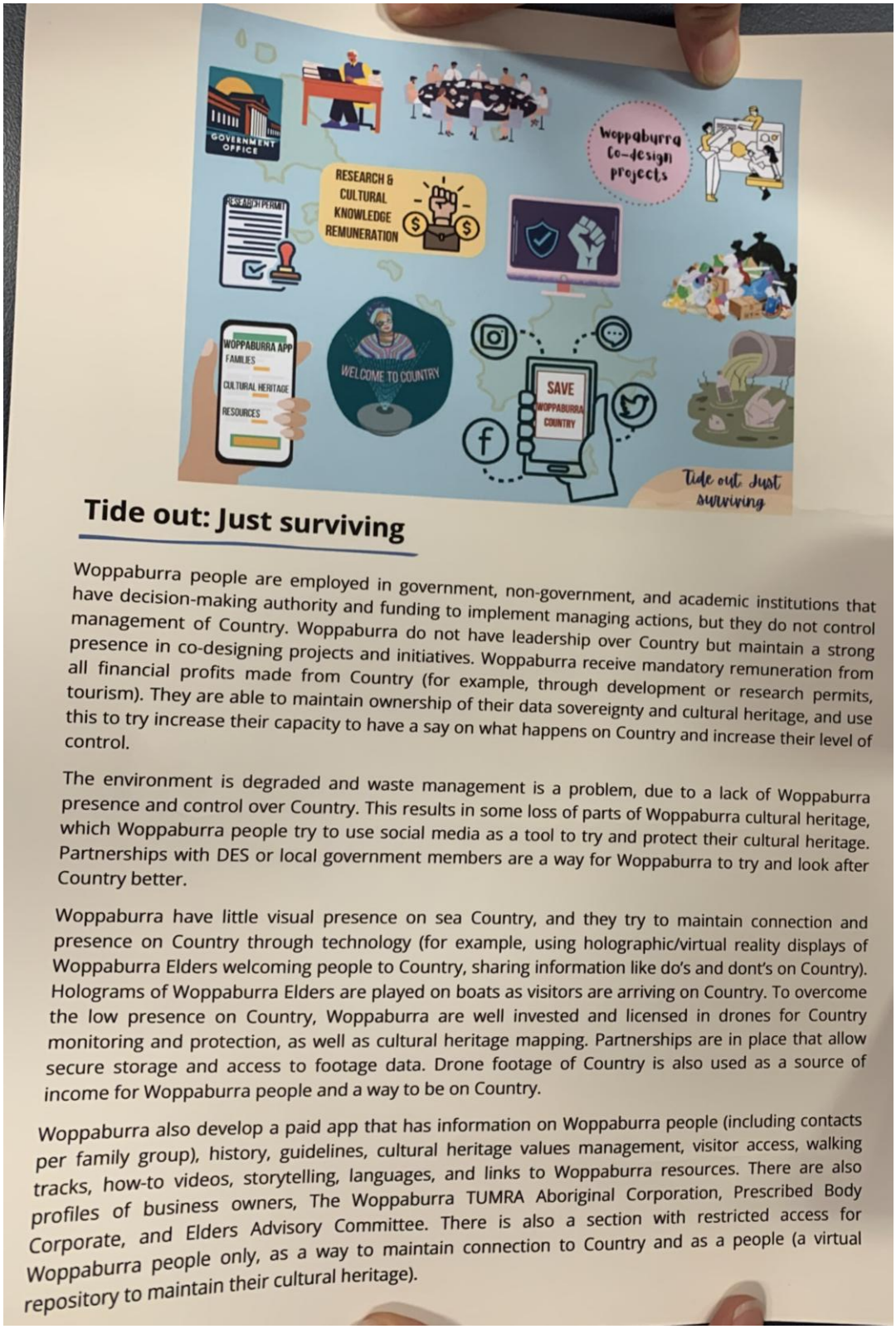
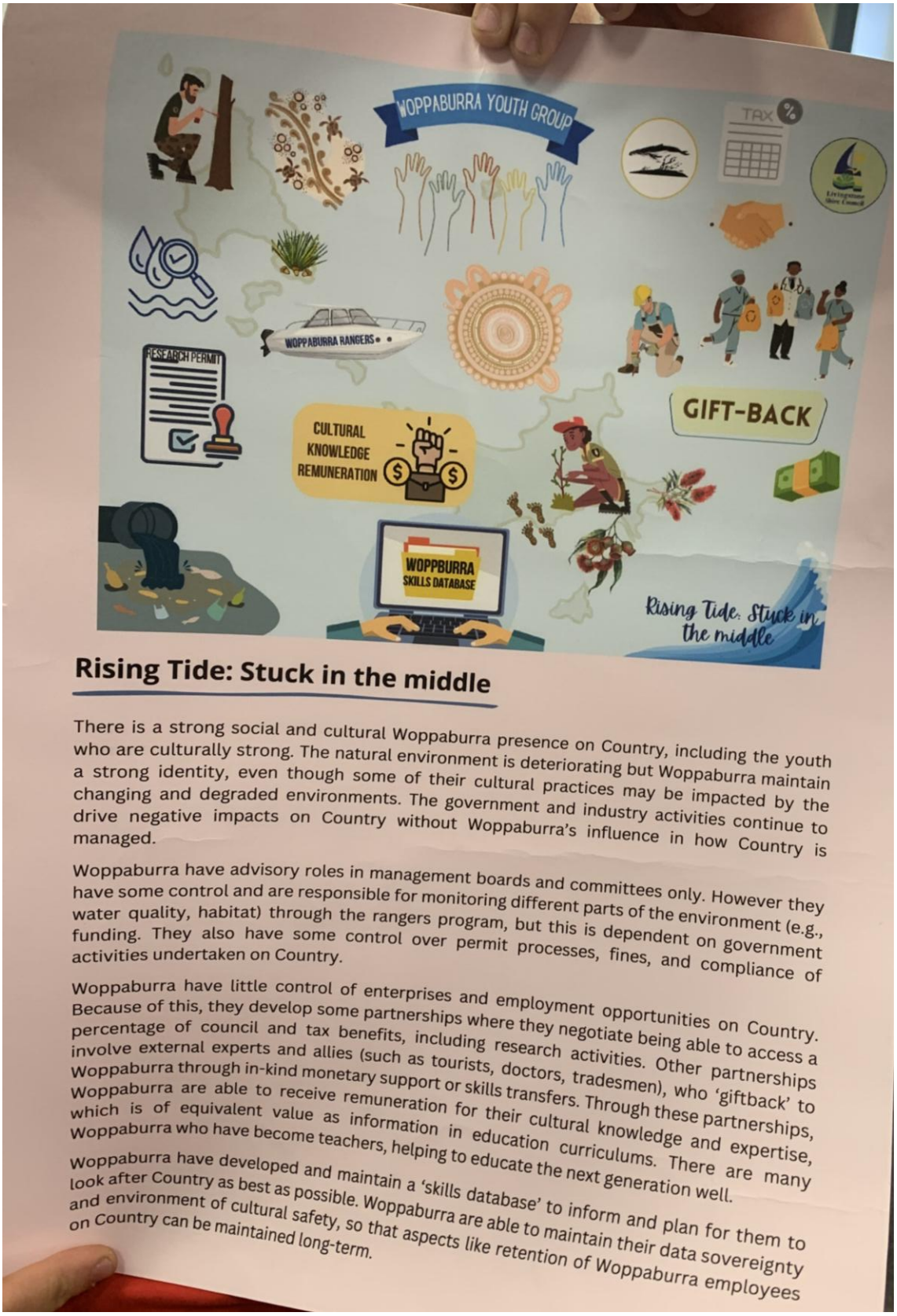


Figure 10: Low tide; description of the lowest level of Woppaburra leadership on Sea Country. This broadly represents the current position.



Rising Tide: Stuck in the middle

There is a strong social and cultural Woppaburra presence on Country, including the youth who are culturally strong. The natural environment is deteriorating but Woppaburra maintain a strong identity, even though some of their cultural practices may be impacted by the changing and degraded environments. The government and industry activities continue to drive negative impacts on Country without Woppaburra's influence in how Country is managed.

Woppaburra have advisory roles in management boards and committees only. However they have some control and are responsible for monitoring different parts of the environment (e.g., water quality, habitat) through the rangers program, but this is dependent on government funding. They also have some control over permit processes, fines, and compliance of activities undertaken on Country.

Woppaburra have little control of enterprises and employment opportunities on Country. Because of this, they develop some partnerships where they negotiate being able to access a percentage of council and tax benefits, including research activities. Other partnerships involve external experts and allies (such as tourists, doctors, tradesmen), who 'giftback' to Woppaburra through in-kind monetary support or skills transfers. Through these partnerships, Woppaburra are able to receive remuneration for their cultural knowledge and expertise, which is of equivalent value as information in education curriculums. There are many Woppaburra who have become teachers, helping to educate the next generation well.

Woppaburra have developed and maintain a 'skills database' to inform and plan for them to look after Country as best as possible. Woppaburra are able to maintain their data sovereignty and environment of cultural safety, so that aspects like retention of Woppaburra employees on Country can be maintained long-term.

Figure 11: Rising tide; description of the next level from low tide, establishing Woppaburra increased leadership on Sea Country.

High Tide: Steering from afar

Woppaburra has a commercial arm and produces variety of creative products (weaving baskets, videos), which get sold on the islands and elsewhere. Woppaburra people are trained in business and their artists, musicians, photographers, videographers are employed to promote Woppaburra people and Country. Because there is not a strong physical presence of Woppaburra on Country, their businesses are run online. There is also a strong Woppaburra managerial presence for all businesses operating on Country (through Managing Board positions).

Woppaburra drive eco-certification (e.g., no single use plastics) of islands through partnerships with businesses and organisations (e.g., GBRMPA, QPWS) that are on and accessing Country. A percentage of profits from the eco-certification of the island or businesses go back to Woppaburra. People who are accessing Country must also pay fees (through government fees, registrations, tourism enterprises) and a percentage of these also go to Woppaburra. A percentage of Woppaburra people are employed in services that exist on the islands where contractual agreements are inclusive of cultural protocols.

Virtual cultural tours created for younger generation of Woppaburra mob to learn about and maintain connection to Country and culture, supported by the Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre. These activities happen through partnerships with those who have ease of access to Country, including the non-Indigenous community on the islands. These partnerships help create programs like 'Elders in Residence', where there is subsidised transfer and a Community Centre for Woppaburra people to be on Country. There is a Woppaburra Elders Council that make sure protocols are in place for each cultural site on Country.

Woppaburra cultural knowledge is valued and they retain strong Indigenous and Cultural Intellectual Property and control of their own data. Because of this, they maintain good control over research that happens on Country. To maintain their connection, there is language revitalisation and cultural reconnection programs (including dancing). Woppaburra are able to maintain primary responsibility of care for sea Country through key positions in government managing bodies (e.g., GBRMPA, QPWS) to have some control of the narrative and a strong voice on sea Country management.

Figure 12: High tide; description of the next level of Woppaburra leadership on Sea Country, where leadership is clearly established but mainly managed remotely.

King Tide: Making waves for Woppaburra

Woppaburra people control their future. There is a Woppaburra local shire council who are responsible for creating management regulations that affect Country, and there is less management control by GBRMPA, state, and local governments. There are also Woppaburra scholarships for mob. Woppaburra lead and are in charge of permitting processes for the Keppel Islands (for research, development) and they are the First Point of Contact.

There is strong Woppaburra management of Country – they lead research and monitoring of Country, training and living on Country, and have a Registered Training Organisation (RTO, and Officers). They monitor their seagrass, turtles, whales, dugongs, COTs, and the environment (corals, mangroves, seagrass, water quality). Woppaburra own vessels and other infrastructure that allow them to easily access Country, where they live and work. Access to and monitoring of Country also occurs through technology, such as cameras and drones (aerial and underwater).

There is infrastructure on Country created by the Woppaburra: a Welcome Cultural Centre, Respite and Healing Centre, Functional Hall, and Cultural Education Centre. They develop and lead well-being tours and endemic bush tucker tours. Businesses are run and owned by Woppaburra on Country, these businesses employ Woppaburra people. There is a united station and office where all Woppaburra-led organisations are based on Country under the same banner.

There is strong collaboration between Woppaburra and wider mobs, like Darumbal and Butchulla, and there are cultural exchanges that happen regularly between neighbouring mobs. Meeting places are established with other groups for these cultural exchanges. These meetings form the foundations of putting in place treaties with other mob, before treaties with state governments.

Figure 13: King tide; description of the highest level of Woppaburra leadership of Sea Country, where Woppaburra people are able to have control of, and lead from, an established presence on Sea Country.

3 Conclusions

In the first workshop activity around the meaning and values of Woppaburra Sea Country, participants highlighted the physical and non-physical values. Participants described how being back on Country brings painful feelings to the surface and encourages the processing of emotions experienced from reflecting on what their ancestors lived through (e.g., "*it cleanses and heals*"). Sad, devastating, emotional, traumatic, healing, calming, beautiful, unique and cleansing were words used to convey the mixed emotions. Belonging and self-identify were strong themes described by participants (e.g. "*I am living it*"), through learning of their family connection to the islands and connecting with dispersed family members.

The physical aspect of Sea Country described the islands as a place to gather, learn and share. The saltwater concept describes the marine animals, artefacts and seasonal changes. A key concept of lineage was discussed around generational learning and the importance of passing down stories to Woppaburra youth and the cultural growth seen from visiting Sea Country (e.g., "*a rite of passage*"). The revival of language and culture was an important benefit described from visiting Sea Country.

Examples of monitoring programs that Woppaburra participants are involved in include water quality and coral monitoring with AIMS. The most significant theme impacting all monitoring activities was access. Due to the completely offshore location of Woppaburra Sea Country, and the absence of any dwellings to permanently reside on the islands, access is severely limited by funding for transport and accommodation. Of the workshop participants, only one or two live close to Woppaburra Sea Country and have regular access to visit by vessel. Specific information and data that was discussed as not being available to participants is information on visitor numbers and visitor use.

The workshop naturally progressed to discussion of monitoring aspirations, which highlighted the desire for Woppaburra participants to lead monitoring and management on Country. Participants clearly expressed how important it is for them to be overseeing monitoring and setting the priorities, as well as seeing economic benefits flow from visitors and researchers to the islands. Several examples of cultural enterprise opportunities were discussed, covering cultural and eco-tourism, information guides and books, and visitor levies to the National Park.

Workshop participants shared brochures that captured the progression from the current level of involvement and autonomy they have in monitoring and managing Sea Country (Low tide), through two changing tides, arriving at the aspirational King Tide where "Woppaburra people are making waves". This describes Woppaburra people as controlling their own future and leading the monitoring of seagrass, dugongs, turtles, whales, COTS, coral reefs, mangroves, and water quality, and being the first point of contact for permit applications on Sea Country.

A key message that was delivered throughout the workshop was the importance in Woppaburra people being back on Country for healing the generational trauma, to bring families back together and create economic opportunities for the Woppaburra people.

4 References

Commonwealth of Australia. (2021). Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Retrieved from https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/great-barrier-reef/protecting/reef-2050-plan

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. (2019). Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2019. Townsville. Retrieved from: https://www2.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-work/outlook-report-2019

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. (2021). Woppaburra Traditional Owner Heritage Assessment Guidelines (Document No. 100428), accessed 29/11/23, http://hdl.handle.net/11017/3215

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. (2024). Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement, accessed 22/02/2024. https://www2.gbrmpa.gov.au/learn/traditional-owners/traditional-use-marine-resources-agreements

Native Title Act 1993 (Cth). Act No. 110, 1993. Amended 2017: Act No. 53 https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04665/2017-06-22/text

Nursey-Bray M, Rist P (2009) Co-management and protected area management: Achieving effective management of a contested site, lessons from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (Great Barrier Reef WHA). *Marine Policy* 33(1): 118-127

The Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Steering Group. (2022). Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Implementation Plan. https://reefto.au/resources/

Van Issum (2016), Woppaburra: Past & Present. PhD thesis. Australian Catholic University. https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/download/3f961888d709bd53b685b52aa74a8d248406892dd0c042b557ed102afe57f469/6020405/Van_Issum_2016_Woppaburra_past_and_present.pdfWoppaburra

Woppaburra TUMRA website. Accessed 1 December 2023. www.woppaburra.com.au

Links to Woppaburra video resources:

Cultural Awareness on Woppaburra Country

Woppaburra TUMRA, posted 2 Aug 2023. Prepared by the Woppaburra TUMRA. The project was funded by Queensland Parks and Wildlife's Joint Field Management Team.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8JLvWdgsxo

Woppaburra / AIMS On-Country Workshop at Konomie

Australian Institute of Marine Science, posted 9 Nov 2020.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6gzryuWI7g

Coral Spawning on Woppaburra sea Country

Australian Institute of Marine Science, posted 3 Apr 3 2023. Woppaburra Traditional Custodians gained hands-on experience in marine science and coral seeding, building capabilities and empowering them to manage sea country in the future at the Konomie Environmental Education Centre. The Woppaburra Coral Project is part of the Australian Coral Reef Resilience Initiative, and a partnership between AIMS, BHP and Woppaburra Traditional Custodians https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Di48-EJfImg

Appendix 1: Agenda

Agenda

Date: Saturday, 18th November 2023

Venue: Griffith University, Mt.Gravatt, Brisbane

Agenda item	Summary description	Presenters	Detail
Opening & introductions **12:00 – 12.05 (~5 mins)**	• Introductions	Tori Graham, JCU	
Overview of the workshop and SEABORNE project **12:05 – 12.10 (~5 mins)**	• Introduction to the SEABORNE project • Overview of the workshop	Anthea Coggan, CSIRO Diane Jarvis, JCU	
Looking after information - Ethics, privacy & consent **12:10 – 12.20 (10 mins)**	• Ethics, privacy, consent (recording the workshop) • Sharing of workshop information, records, privacy, agreements, storage, use, attribution	Diane Jarvis, JCU	Signed consent forms from all participants
Activity 1 **12.20 -13.05 (45 mins)**	• Discussion: Recognising Woppaburra Sea Country values • What is important about caring for Woppaburra Sea Country?	Facilitated by Tori Graham & Diane Jarvis	Facilitators will take notes on butcher's paper.
Activity 2 **13.05 - 13.50 (45 mins)**	• Discussion: In what ways do you monitor health of Sea Country? • How is information collected? Who is involved in monitoring? How does this benefit people-country? • What existing information is publicly available/shareable?	Facilitated by Tori Graham and Diane Jarvis, JCU	Facilitators will take notes on butchers' paper
Tea break **13.50 - 14.00 (10 mins)**			
Activity 3 **14.00 - 14.45 (45 mins)**	• What else would you like to be measuring and monitoring? • Aspirations for monitoring sea country – TUMRA activities, goals	Facilitated by Tori Graham and Diane Jarvis, JCU	Facilitators will take notes on butchers' paper
Wrap up, next steps and reflections **14:45 – 15:00 (15 mins)**	• Next steps • Post workshop quick reflection & feedback form	Diane Jarvis, JCU	Workshop reflection sheet

Appendix 2: Photos containing images of people

Participants engaged in the workshop held on 18th November 2023 at Griffith University, Mt.Gravatt, Brisbane.

As Australia's national science agency and innovation catalyst, CSIRO is solving the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology.

CSIRO. Unlocking a better future for everyone.

Contact us

1300 363 400
+61 3 9545 2176
csiro.au/contact
csiro.au