



Towards a national platform for Australia's islands

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ABSTRACT

Islands are important for maintaining a range of biodiversity, cultural and economic values. However, islands around the world face major and complex conservation challenges, often shared across multiple islands. The variety of tenures and uses also means there is a lack of coordination in policy and management. Addressing these challenges requires sharing lessons of success and failure. To facilitate knowledge-sharing, we need to develop common frameworks, platforms, guidelines and legislation to devise, advise and support actions and collaborations aimed to enhance island conservation. These need to consider both human needs and biodiversity, interactions, research, practice, and information sharing across islands. Pathways may include knowledge, data and experience sharing to ensure that cross-State and Territory coordination can disseminate the lessons learned from island projects to island stakeholders and vice versa. We discuss examples of existing organisational management structures that can potentially form the basis for a timely new platform focusing on Australia's islands. We propose an island alliance be established as a multi-disciplinary platform to improve coordination among Australia's islands, and to represent Australia's environmental island challenges and solutions. Such an alliance would aim to bridge island communities, practitioners, managers, researchers and cultural advisors across diverse and complementary spheres along the continuum from biodiversity and ecosystems to people and social entrepreneurship. This alliance would have a mandate to develop national environmental collaborations, research and standards relating to island environments, facilitate business entrepreneurship with complementary outcomes to manage the threats that face Australian islands, and contribute to improving biodiversity conservation outcomes. The platform would draw together practitioners, natural and social scientists, policymakers, and importantly indigenous and non-Indigenous island communities to lead innovative collaborations and support Australian islands.

Keywords: Australian islands, biodiversity conservation, environmental collaborations, island action planning, islands alliance, island conservation, knowledge-sharing, partnerships.

Introduction

Australia's islands and their surrounding seascapes are important regions for maintaining natural, cultural and social values. Islands represent opportunities for conservation of biodiversity, and for maintaining ecosystem function and services. In particular, due to their size and isolation compared with the mainland, islands can serve as model systems for examining and addressing change and human-related impacts on ecosystems. In some cases, islands can act as refugia for conservation, for example, by providing safe havens from invasive species in cases of isolated and less impacted islands, or in other cases, facilitated by eradication programs and subsequent implementation of biosecurity safeguards (Reside *et al.* 2014; Moro *et al.* 2018). This is more achievable on islands by virtue of greatly reduced potential for reinvasions compared to the mainland. Some islands might also act as refugia from climate change, although some ecosystem change is expected (Garnett and Reside 2018). Importantly, cultural, social and other benefits also accrue from these opportunities and may potentially create drivers for improved holistic island management (Ball *et al.* 2018).

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Current challenges

Australia's 9000 plus islands cover vast geographical and ecological regions. Currently, most island management activities are conducted at the individual island or archipelago level and are undertaken by many different actors. However, among the diversity of management issues, there are many shared and common themes, challenges and solutions. These include, for example, climate change impacts and resultant sea-level rise, plastic pollution, invasive species management or eradications with the subsequent need for biosecurity systems, and translocation of threatened species to create insurance populations (Thaman and Biogeography 2002; Raven and Yeates 2007; Nias *et al.* 2010; Lohr *et al.* 2017; Macinnis-Ng *et al.* 2021). These shared themes are often also characterised by significant logistical challenges and limited resources and funds. Thus, there is a case for shared research and information sharing amongst island managers to increase the efficacy and efficiency of their efforts (Woinarski *et al.* 2018).

An obstacle to this shared effort lies partially in the challenges in cooperation and communication among Australia's multitude of jurisdictions, Territory, State and Commonwealth, in addition to the private, local and other non-governmental sectors. Collective national assessments and prioritisations of islands with high biological and cultural values have been trialled (Ecosure 2009), and State-level assessments continue to provide some guidance to economic prioritisation (Lohr *et al.* 2018). However, continued directions for national-level strategic conservation planning for island conservation remains lacking or confused, with sometimes unclear and/or overlapping responsibilities amongst managers from different jurisdictions. Further, government actors often manage islands based on a single pillar of nature conservation with insufficient consideration for actions needed to sustain other societal aspirations and needs.

Compounding this situation is a recognised inadequacy in national management plans and funding allocation for the special conservation needs for Australia's island biodiversity and ecosystems. Woinarski *et al.* (2018) identify that Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030 does not afford special mention or recognition of islands despite their significant biodiversity values. Subsequently, the authors postulate that there are clear opportunities to recalibrate the national focus on islands. However, amending national plans, strategy and management focus requires a coordinated national approach for cohesive action.

An analysis of conservation tenure across Australian islands shows there are currently 7036 designated protected areas on ~3000 islands, with some having as many as nine different types of conservation tenures (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 2013). There are 38 different tenure categories ranging from privately protected areas to national parks. Additionally, there are over 500 Indigenous Peoples' groups

across Australia with interests in islands (Australians together: First Nations kinship 2022). This is complemented by the plethora of other island stakeholders, including residents, visitors, tourism operators, industry and so forth. With such a diversity of tenure and associated statutes, and the large number of stakeholders involved, effective island conservation requires substantial collaboration.

Moving forward

The principal opportunities we identify for more effective conservation include research and knowledge sharing, improved cooperation and communication, and a strong focus on collaboration among stakeholders (Kark *et al.* 2015). However, Australia currently lacks a program, platform, institution or organisation capable of fully leveraging these opportunities for island conservation. Australian Island Arks, a loose collective of interested organisations and individuals, has, through its regular symposia and its members' publications since 2009, partly addressed some of these opportunities. However, this informal organisation may need to morph into something more fit for contemporary purpose because it currently remains identified mostly as a conference platform.

To date, as far as we are aware, Australian islands have not been the primary focus of most nationwide initiatives. The various Cooperative Research Centres, Research Hubs, or Centres of Excellence have been established primarily for research purposes and to investigate target landscapes (e.g. tropical savannahs, rainforests, freshwater ecology) or to manage repositories of field data (e.g. the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network). These are often research-focused, and accommodate researchers and academics, and maintain little advocacy roles as national entities that provide a platform for improving collaborative policy response. A platform for networking, leading and representing Australia's biological, cultural and social values on islands is needed.

Existing national environment coordination entities

Here, we identify examples of established federal and non-government organisations and networks across Australia that serve coordination roles for environmental programs of national importance (Table 1). In choosing a cross-section of examples, we have focused on those with national-level remits that aim to connect agencies and organisations across the country as a collective. We do not aim to review each entity, yet provide a brief summary and a website address to each for further information. Rather, we illustrate a spectrum of initiatives showcasing the organisation's objectives, governance, and primary funding stream in an effort to

Table 1. Examples of existing organisations in Australia with a remit to coordinate and lead directions in environmental programs of national importance.

Agency	Objective	Governance structure	Funding model
Federally coordinated (site-focused, primarily single tenure)			
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)	<p>Australia's main management agency for the Great Barrier Reef.</p> <p>GBRMPA provides for the long-term protection, ecologically sustainable use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef for all Australians and the international community through the care and development of the Marine Park.</p> <p>A Corporate Plan defines the strategic direction of the Authority and includes: advising on policy and governance of the Reef by working collaboratively with a range of sectors to implement the Australian and Queensland governments' Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, working with the tourism sector to support balanced use of the Reef for sustainable long-term use, and capacity development of the people who work in the Authority (www.gbrmpa.gov.au).</p>	<p>Board that reports to the Australian Government Environment Minister.</p> <p>Several Advisory Committees chosen from an expression of interest process, and three platforms (Reef Strategy, Reef Production, Corporate Services). Main and regional offices in Queensland, and Canberra.</p>	<p>In 2019–2020 FY, 45% of revenue was derived from Commonwealth funding. State revenue contributed 14% of total income.</p> <p>Additional income is through partnerships with Traditional Owners, other Australian and Queensland government agencies, industry, community organisations, and individuals (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2020).</p>
Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)	<p>Federal organisation with a key objective to undertake science in Australia's Antarctic Territory and subantarctic islands.</p> <p>The programme is focused on conducting world-class science of critical national importance and global significance that delivers on Australian Antarctic policy and operational priorities (https://www.antarctica.gov.au).</p> <p>A whole-of-government Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan sets out Australia's national Antarctic interests and vision for the nation's future engagement in Antarctica (Australian Government 2016).</p> <p>The AAD fulfils multiple roles: Operator, Science Leader, Science Manager, Data Manager.</p>	<p>The AAD is an agency under the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment of the Australian Government.</p>	<p>Operational and administrative funding comes from the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Science funding is from Commonwealth and other funding grants administered through a scientific program.</p>
Federally coordinated (primarily research orientated)			
Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Associations	<p>A national body operating to enhance Australia's industrial, commercial, and economic growth with a research and innovation focus (www.cooperativeresearch.org.au).</p> <p>CRCs provide national funding towards thematic areas and promote cross-institution partnerships.</p>	<p>Large and medium scale co-funded grant system, supported by a CRC Advisory Committee.</p> <p>This Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of Industry Innovation and Science Australia which itself is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.</p>	<p>CRCs grants provide Federal funding for up to 50% towards collaborations to solve industry identified problems.</p> <p>Grants may be medium to long-term, with a strong focus on industry-led research collaborations primarily through universities.</p> <p>Federal funding supports the budget portfolio. Funding partnerships must include at least one industry partner.</p>

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Table 1. (Continued).

Agency	Objective	Governance structure	Funding model
Geoscience Australia	National advisor of information on Australia's geology and geography for government, industry and community decision making. Applies science and technology to describe and understand the Earth for the benefit of Australia (www.ga.gov.au).	CEO with four Divisions (Minerals, Energy, Groundwater; Place, Space and Communities; Corporate; Office of the Chief Scientist). Governance framework includes advisory bodies and committees, as well as Accountable Authority Instructions, policies, procedures and guidelines.	Federal funding supports the budget portfolio.
Non-government Organisation (primarily research)			
Ecological Society of Australia (ESA)	Provides support to members in the field of ecology through the provision of research and development grants, the provision of conference and other training courses and modules, publication of journals, science communication, and through policy response and engagement programs (www.ecolsoc.org.au ; Ecological Society of Australia 2019). The core drivers are scientists.	Board is elected by members from a membership base, and supported by a series of Working Groups. ESA has a Policy Working Group that responds to policy consultations and engages with policymakers.	Membership based Public Company. During the 2020–2021 FY, 65% income was from donations and bequests (www.acnc.gov.au/charity).
Non-government networks (formalised governance, multi-tenure)			
The Darwin Agreement	An alliance of non-profit environmental organisations from across Australia to coordinate activities of Australian NGOs working towards shared outcomes under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (Armitage <i>et al.</i> 2021).	Each member organisation works in environmental conservation including ecosystem restoration. No formal governance currently exists for this (new) consortium.	
Indigenous Desert Alliance	Organisation strengthening the existing connections between Indigenous desert people, empowering them to look after their country and by connecting the desert story with the story of our country. Provides opportunities for Indigenous Rangers in the desert regions to access networks, and training and professional development in land management (www.indigenousdesertalliance.com). The core drivers are the IDA staff in partnership with Indigenous Ranger groups.	Board, supported by a Team (CEO, General Manager, Governance and Legal Officer, Program Leader and Development Officer). Membership from Indigenous land management organisations.	74% of income in 2020–2021 FY was from government grants (www.acnc.gov.au/charity).
Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA)	Provides flagship initiatives to build capacity, empower and upskill practitioners and provide critical connection with – and between – regional communities, businesses and cross-sector partners (www.alca.org.au). Advocates for national biodiversity policy and regulatory reform. Encourages commercial entities that fund conservation and land restoration to grow a future sustainable economy.	ALCA Directors are CEOs or senior executives of these organisations with each member having a Board position. Board and sub-committees guide a strategy in three key areas including Sector Development, Finance Risk and Audit, and Policy and Government Relations. Organisations with land management remits can be members of ALCA.	Funded by NGO (land management) member organisations to raise the profile of and support for private land conservation nationally. In 2020–2021 FY, 84% of income was from donations and bequests (www.acnc.gov.au/charity).

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Table 1. (Continued).

Agency	Objective	Governance structure	Funding model
National Landcare Network	<p>A representative body for Landcare groups across States and Territories that advocates, supports and fosters the community Landcare movement (www.nln.org.au; Walker 2013).</p> <p>The core drivers are the landholders.</p>	<p>Board of Directors supported by a Members Council, CEO and support staff.</p> <p>Members belong to Landcare Australia groups within each State or Territory.</p> <p>Landcare Australia is a service provider for government programs and delivers major land restoration projects.</p>	<p>During the 2020–2021 FY 87% of income was from government grants (www.acnc.gov.au/charity).</p>
Gondwana Link	<p>Site-based NGO that supports and guides a variety of land management groups in the south-west of Australia to ecologically restore and manage multi-tenure lands to a high standard (Bradby 2013).</p> <p>Members are existing landcare groups working to achieve a decentralised conservation approach through the Company vision to connect and create environmental corridors.</p>	<p>Board with small number of staff.</p>	<p>During the 2020–2021 FY, 75% income was from donations and bequests (www.acnc.gov.au/charity).</p>
Non government organisation (no formalised governance, multi-tenure)			
Australian Wetlands Network	<p>Manages and delivers a broad range of small and large projects for wetlands in consultation with landowners and authorities (www.wetlandcare.com).</p> <p>A national network involved in advocating the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and promoting science-based techniques for the restoration and preservation of wetlands.</p> <p>Members represent peak organisations and national organisations, and regional and local groups involved in advocacy, education of wetland management.</p> <p>No longer functional.</p>	<p>No formal governance exists for this consortium.</p>	
Australian Connectivity Council	<p>The Council is a forum for the sharing of experience, knowledge, and the pursuit of issues that support or impact on the success of six of Australia's major wildlife corridors based on a (now shelved) National Wildlife Corridors Plan (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities 2012), and provision for a National Wildlife Corridors Council.</p>	<p>No formal governance exists for this Council.</p>	

contextualise what a future national platform focusing on Australia's islands across multiple regions and tenures may need to consider.

There are five dominant types of institutional designs for coordinating networks of specialists and land managers:

1. Federal-based, single tenure, site-focused institutions with a link to national legislation (e.g. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; GBRMPA), Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). The GBRMPA and AAD focus on explicit geographic areas within single tenures. GBRMPA is a statutory authority established under legislation to coordinate activities within a defined spatial area with

clear legal authority; i.e. the GBRMP that is almost entirely public land. This model, without the legal authority to coordinate across different jurisdictions (States) seems to have limited applicability for a national islands platform where there are multiple tenures across states. The AAD similarly leads, coordinates and delivers Australia's research efforts in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean based on Australia's obligations under Australia's Antarctic Treaty. While it has limited legal authority it does serve as an important leader for the nations' interests in the continent, and its strategic research direction (Australian Government 2016). Often a key role of the AAD is the assessment and disbursement of

- consultancies and/or grants with outcomes aligned to the Division's strategic objectives. Both GBRMPA and the AAD are primarily based in one city with offices in Canberra.
2. Science and research organisations within the government sector (e.g. Cooperative Research Centre Associations, GeoScience Australia). These entities serve to coordinate the national research and development agenda for the nations targeted research. They administer funding drawn from federal budgets, and the funds are primarily used by academics and researchers and promote cross-institution partnerships. Both rely on Advisory Committees to support a Board or Chief Executive Officer (CEO), although GeoScience Australia has a large workforce of paid staff to deliver the organisations' Corporate Plan. These types of entities are entirely reliant on government funding of relatively short-term (3–7 year) duration.
 3. Non-government organisations (NGO) primarily with a research membership base (e.g. The Ecological Society of Australia; ESA). The ESA is, in many ways, an example of a science and research focused organisation operating in the private and charity sector, and offers an alternative governance model to that of government. ESA relies on memberships, subscriptions to journals and donations to support its functioning (<https://www.ecolsoc.org.au/about/governance>). Its core members are scientists in academic or government agencies. The ESA Board are elected by the members of the membership base. All Board members are volunteers, other than staff who hold ex officio membership positions. The Board is supported by a series of Working Groups driving the ESA initiatives, events, and public policy. Members assist with research, training and development grants, the provision of conference and other training courses and modules, and the submission of responses to government policy consultations, environmental policy development, land management and broadening the community's ecological knowledge base. The ESA also acts as a national voice and submits Statements related to public policy consultations and matters of public interest that are relevant to ecology.
 4. Non-governmental networks across multiple tenures connecting national, regional or local initiatives with participatory planning and implementation, policy engagement and public outreach programs, and for which are the responsibility of different players (e.g. The Darwin Agreement, Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA), Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA), National Landcare Network and Gondwana Link). Within the NGO sector, a common model often used is that of member organisations coming together into an overarching collective entity. Two organisations are notable for their operating model as overarching coordination organisations. The ALCA is based on a structure where 11 separate member organisations maximise their collective impact towards common objectives by contributions from each of their CEOs to an ALCA Board (i.e. each member organisation holds a place on the ALCA Board, www.alca.org.au). ALCA CEOs bridge to existing organisations to support their administration through membership fees. While each member entity (which includes notable organisations such as Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage, Greening Australia) maintains its own organisational capacities and governance, the collective member base that forms ALCA offers a union of NGOs that focuses on nationwide goals for coordinating land conservation across multiple tenures. This Board is guided by a sub-committee to strategically direct the initiatives of ALCA across its platform so that it has a strong voice on national and international matters of environmental significance. The strength in this NGO is demonstrated in its major source of income: in the 2020–21 financial year, 84% of its income came from donations and bequests (www.acnc.gov.au/charity). A second multi-tenure entity with a cross-jurisdiction network is the National Landcare Network. Volunteers play a central role in sustainable agricultural practices and conservation activities. These volunteers form state-wide collectives that are state-based Landcare networks. Networks have representatives from each State and Territory Landcare peak body who come together to represent, support and foster the community Landcare movement (Walker 2013). The NLN aims to tell a collective story that reflects the shared experiences of Landcarers across Australia and advocates for the community Landcare movement to enable it to continue its essential work of building resilient and productive landscapes and protecting our natural environment. In addition, Landcare State and Territory Organisations represent and support Landcare groups and networks, including volunteers, to work together to increase biodiversity and promote sustainable land management in local communities in their region. The core drivers for the NLN and Landcare Australia are the landholders (Walker 2013). They are the ones who facilitate the understanding, the coordinated planning, the implementation of change management, and the ongoing support necessary to entrench the changed attitudes that indicate 'ownership' of land management rather than compliance to a policy.
 5. NGOs with no formalised governance and targeting focus habitats (e.g. Australian Wetlands Network, Australian Connectivity Council). Networks across multiple tenures and targeted at specific national assets is not a new concept in Australia (see Fitzsimons *et al.* 2013 for a review of several networks). Some, such as the Australian Wetlands Network, or the Australian Connectivity Council (supporting the National Wildlife Corridors Plan, Mackey *et al.* 2013; Zammit 2013), were developed and promoted with vigour and a strong community and federal interest, yet have experienced little momentum, or (as in the case of the Australian Wetlands Network) ceased. In both of these examples, a lack of strong governance and

long-term investment funding seem to be common factors that may have contributed to, or prevented, the collectives from developing longevity.

Advancing island solutions: the right model, the right structure

There are recognised deficiencies that national networks or similar ones have experienced: the scale of land management at hand, the importance of a shared vision and maintaining interest among a network's stakeholders, the importance of maintaining leadership, strong (but not complex) governance frameworks, longevity in funding and investment at scale, maintaining a communication system so members are linked together, among others (Fitzsimons *et al.* 2013). With these in mind, and moving forwards, we propose the formation of an island platform capable of leveraging the opportunities to shared research and knowledge, improve cooperation and communication, and improve networking among its island stakeholders. The primary remit of this national Australian scale organisation would be to identify and develop the emerging themes, such as those unidentified by Ball *et al.* (2018).

Coordinating island advocacy and management at a national level presents the opportunity to share lessons for island conservation and management among all jurisdictions. A multi-disciplinary platform for enhancing and sharing island solutions could take the form of a national island network, centre or hub (Fig. 1). This will lead activities with inter-connected natural and human components towards enhancing sustainable and resilient island communities, biodiversity and ecosystem services (Fig. 1).

In addition, a national platform could advise and support islanders, island managers, and other practitioners with a remit to work across or with islands. Governments, however, typically cannot be members of NGOs such as those in Table 1, but they can be part of less formal 'coordination networks'. For an organisational platform with islands as its core focus, it will need to recognise the critical role of government in island management, and ensure a coordination structure is going to be inclusive of them.

Building an islands platform

We suggest that a future platform representing Australia's islands needs to include five elements: (1) be effective; (2) be equitable; (3) be inclusive and open to a shared vision and sharing knowledge; (4) be responsive as a collective voice; and (5) be financially robust in the long term across the institutional, structural, and procedural areas of governance. Effective governance requires appropriate institutional design and the right mix of expertise for collective impact. Crucial in

such designs is whether the entity can be an institution that addresses stakeholder goals that are socially acceptable, efficient and effective at meeting its environmental objectives (Ostrom 1990). For liaising and collaborating across multiple islands around Australia, effective governance must address the locally complex socio-economics across island tenures, the varied ecological threats facing islands, but also prioritise actions that will benefit multiple islands. Equitable representation of its stakeholders working on, with, or representing islands, is central to a functional and well-represented platform to manage risks to islands strategically and consistently. The involvement of the right mix of board member expertise with cross-disciplinary experiences such as custodial knowledge, science, business, legal, socio-economic and operational areas becomes vital to maintaining a credible platform that can deliver sensible outcomes for its stakeholder community. This representation needs to have a shared vision for the network, but also will enable knowledge sharing, and functioning as 'one national-scale voice' to advise government and other agencies in matters that may be relevant to the planning and decision-making processes related to islands or matters threatening island ecosystems and livelihoods. Finally, the financial stability of a platform needs to be driven centrally, be self-supporting, have longevity, and be accountable.

Opportunities for Australia also exist to develop a more consistent policy for biodiversity conservation on Australian islands. For example, there is a need to work on a revised national biodiversity strategy and develop a national risk assessment for biodiversity on all Australian islands, and provide support towards a national management fund focused on island biodiversity conservation. More support and resourcing is essential for local groups to manage the biosecurity risks to islands with high conservation values. It is critical, from a national and custodial stewardship perspective, to create standardised programs for island biodiversity surveys and long-term monitoring, including for less studied groups, such as insects. Additionally, improved collaboration, data and knowledge sharing supports sharing lessons from success and challenges across islands. Woinarski *et al.* (2014) argued for a national commitment to strategically include islands in the current *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* policy, and to prioritise systems that benefit biodiversity and island communities. More recently, Woinarski *et al.* (2018) suggested that a nationally-led hub could support the implementation of more effective policy to mitigate climate change impacts to islands nationally. This would provide a voice for protecting islands with outstanding conservation values or significant wildlife breeding aggregations as Matters of National Environmental Significance under the Commonwealth EPBC Act. The authors also suggest a need to include a data deficient category in the conservation status of the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1995* (EPBC Act) that addresses island species specifically (Woinarski *et al.* 2018).



Fig. 1. Activities directed on islands have inter-connected natural and human components that are required for enhancing sustainable and resilient island communities, biodiversity and ecosystem services. These components exist across global, national, and local scales, and action depends on cooperation across scales to organise funding, stakeholders, priorities, and on-ground support. With strategic collaborations such as knowledge sharing, improved prioritisation, threat mapping, and data exchange between stakeholders of island conservation and business entrepreneurship actions can be improved across Australia.

Ball *et al.* (2018) extended this thinking to suggest that nationwide coordination of islands should be built on four foundations to move island conservation forward: (1) management based on available evidence from accessible datasets; (2) maximise return on investment for island initiatives; (3) national coordination in partnership with State and Territory jurisdictions; and (4) strong community support from the individuals, communities and groups living on, or associated with, islands.

Concluding comments

The implementation of a national island organisation/platform through new, existing or hybrid environmental models is needed. Networks developed through existing

programs open up opportunities for new kinds of investment partnerships; for example, philanthropic organisations that traditionally support communities on islands to protect biodiversity, or with industry sectors and Indigenous peoples with large private land holdings and an interest in sustainable island management and biodiversity conservation.

Islands hold a special identity and responsibility for Australia, and many islands hold cultural and spiritual significance for Indigenous peoples, and include important areas for Australia's unique, rich, and endemic biodiversity. A collaborative network to support national accounting of Australia's islands to track their health and level of resilience in the face of change, and a first step to strategically nationally coordinate island communities, ecosystems and support island economies, is strongly needed. It is timely for

Australia to form an island coordination platform with representation and advice across State and Territory jurisdictions, and with the opportunity to seek common funding for nationwide island cultural and biodiversity values, including research and development goals.

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