

# Indigenous Protected Areas in the Torres Strait

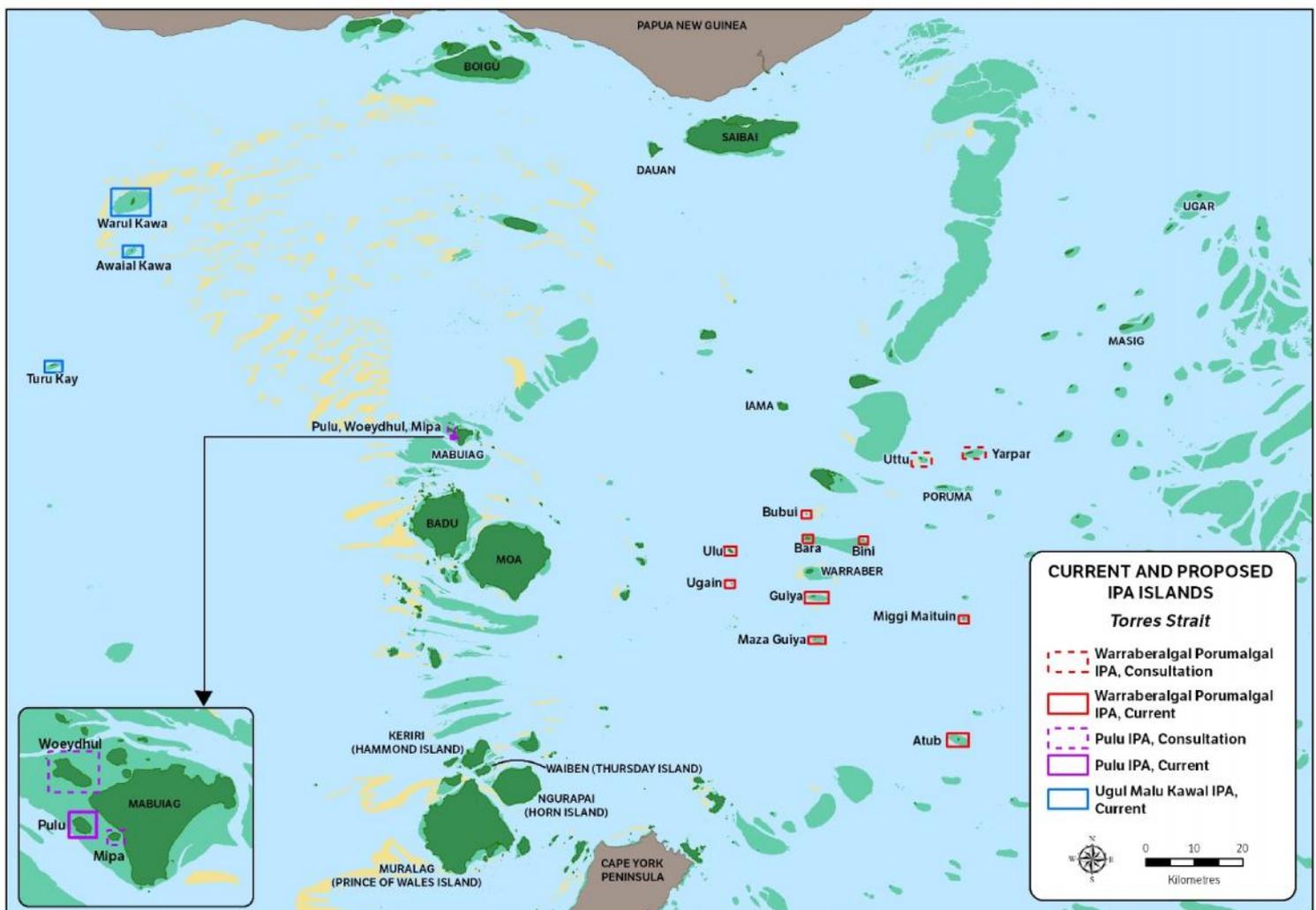
An **Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)** is an area of Indigenous-owned land or sea where Traditional Owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian Government to promote biodiversity and the conservation of their countries natural and cultural resources.

Indigenous Protected Areas currently make up over 44% of Australia's National Reserve System, a nation-wide network of reserves especially set up to protect examples of Australia's unique landscapes, flora and fauna for current and future generations.

There are three Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) in the Torres Strait that are managed by Traditional Owners with support by the Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers employed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority. These are;

- Pulu IPA (on the western side of Mabuia)
- Ugul Malu Kawal IPA (north western Torres Strait)
- Warraberalgal/ Porumalgal IPA (central Torres Strait)

The TSRA Land and Sea Rangers visit their respective IPAs on regular ranger boat patrols and during regular Survey trips. In addition, Land and Sea Rangers raise awareness of the IPA, its management successes and challenges via regular reports and presentations to local communities, Regional Native Title Body Corporate's (RNTBC's), stakeholders and local schools.



## **Ugul Malu Kawal IPA**

Ugul Malu Kawal IPA includes the islands of Warul Kawa (Deliverance Island), Turu Kay (Norwest Sandbank) and Awaial Kawa (Kerr Islet). The islands of this IPA, in particular, Warul Kawa (meaning 'Island of the Turtles') is of great cultural significance to the five Torres Strait Islander communities of Boigu, Dauan, Saibai, Mabuiag and Badu. Warul Kawa is also an internationally significant nesting site for Flatback, Green and Hawksbill turtles. The Ugul Malu Kawal IPA was declared in 2001 (originally as Warul Kawa IPA) and the native title is held by Maluligal (TSI) Corporation RNTBC on behalf of the five Traditional Owner communities. Ugul Malu Kawal means 'Murky Water Islands' in *Kalaw Kawaw Ya*, the language of the northern Torres Strait islands of Boigu, Saibai and Dauan.

Due to its distance from Boigu and other Torres Strait islands, Ugul Malu Kawal IPA management activities are undertaken by Land and Sea Rangers during twice-yearly vessel surveys. These surveys incorporate turtle nesting and hatchling counts, cultural activities, pest and weed management activities, visitation management tasks and land and sea management activities. Traditional Owners from each of the five islands attend each survey to ensure cultural and visitation protocols are correctly implemented.

## **Pulu Islet**

Pulu islet is a small islet on the western side of Mabuyag (Mabuiag) Island. Pulu is the most important cultural place of the Goemulgaw (people from Mabuyag). The cultural significance centres around two key sites – the ceremonial complex or *Kod* and the totemic skull cave (Awgadhalkula). Both sites are central to Goemulgaw clan identity and revered across the western Torres Strait. Pulu is the site of Indigenous Australia's first-known pottery tradition, with red-slipped pottery made from Torres Strait clays dating back between 1500 & 2500 years.

Pulu IPA management activities are undertaken by Mabuyag rangers who make regular sea patrols to the site, undertaking activities to manage visitors to the island, work with Traditional Owners to conserve cultural heritage, reduce weeds, pests and marine debris and undertake cultural site preservation. For more information on Pulu IPA, visit [www.puluipa.org](http://www.puluipa.org)

## **Warraberalgal/ Porumalgal IPA**

The Warraberalgal/ Porumalgal IPA is a series of eleven islands around Warraber and Poruma in the Central Islands group. These islands are *Bara, Bini, Bubui, Ulu, Ugain, Guiya, Maza Guiya, Miggi Maituin, Uttu, Yarpar* and *Atub*. These islands were established as an IPA in 2014 by the Kulkalgal (people of Poruma and Warraber) in order to look after their ancestral lands and sea country in accordance with Kulkalgal traditions and customs. Native title to the Islands of the IPA is held by both Porumalgal and Warraberalgal Regional Native Title Body Corporates (RNTBCs) on behalf of the people of Warraber and Poruma.

IPA management activities are undertaken by the Warraber and Poruma rangers who, together with Traditional Owners undertake regular sea patrols to these islands. In addition, the TSRA LSMU coordinates regular Vessel surveys to visit all islands and undertake visitation management, cultural preservation, traditional knowledge preservation and land and sea management activities.

***For more information on the IPA project, contact Melinda McLean (IPA/ TEK Senior NRM Officer) on 4069 0827 or Kelly Harrington (Project Manager Ranger Policy and Planning) on 4069 0825 within the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit.***