

# Island Arks Symposium VIII -Kangaroo Island

Statement : National Island Collective for  
Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation



Performing Arts Centre, Kangaroo Island Community Education, 26-29 August 2024

The Island Arks Symposia continue to bring together a network of practitioners (First Nations Peoples, community members, scientists, managers, policy officers), and across a diverse group of organisations with a common vision: working on offshore islands – primarily around Australia but extending to New Zealand – to support traditional customs, nature conservation, and economic development within a cultural and environmental context.

Island Arks Symposia have been the mechanism these people and organisations have come together to celebrate, recognise, and share their knowledge of offshore island ecosystems and health. Since the first symposium in 2009, these forums have been held around Australia to accommodate the diversity of national interest in islands as important assets for maintaining their values for cultural connection and biodiversity.



In 2024, this community of practice -informally referred to as the Islands Alliance - held its 8<sup>th</sup> symposium on Kangaroo Island, SA. The symposium brought together and supported a vibrant network of 130 island managers. Speakers showcased projects and concepts which related to 15 separate islands across all Australian States and Territories. In addition, a workshop was held with the aim of showcasing key messages the network believed was prevalent from the preceding days of talks. Participants at the workshop were asked to discuss the following questions:

1. The development of an Australian Island Alliance Statement will be explored. The purpose of the Statement being to articulate the unique challenges and opportunities that islands present within today's political and environmental context. From your perspective what should be included in this Statement?
2. Symposiums and conferences like this create incredible connection and inspiration, some of this persists, much of this rapidly drops away. What opportunities for collaboration have you identified and would like to explore further?

This Statement is a synthesis of these discussions.

# Policy Statement: National Island Collective for Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation

## Introduction

The workshop at Island Arks Symposium VIII underscored a vital consensus among island practitioners: Australian islands are invaluable assets, rich in cultural heritage, community spirit, and biodiversity. Their ongoing protection and restoration are essential not only for the health of our ecosystems but also for the cultural identity of both Traditional Owners and local (island) communities.

## Purpose

This policy statement advocates for the identity of a National Island Collective (informally referred to as the Australian Island Alliance) dedicated to enhancing the recognition and protection of Australia's islands. This collective aims to identify, protect and conserve offshore islands as areas of particular importance around Australia, ensuring that the unique values of these islands are acknowledged by national funding and nature repair schemes. Through this collective effort, the Australian Island Alliance can act as a national identify and voice.

## Objectives of a collective voice for islands

1. **Recognize Islands as National Assets:** Advocate for the classification of islands as integral components of Australia's important environmental and cultural landscape, highlighting their biodiversity, cultural and local community significance, and their value for supporting national schemes for nature repair and climate change.
2. **Secure Financial Commitment:** Promote ongoing financial support for on-ground management initiatives that facilitate nature repair, ensuring islands receive equitable funding compared to larger land masses.
3. **Enhance Traditional Knowledge:** Support the connection of Traditional Owner perspectives and participation to biodiversity conservation and community initiatives, reinforcing the importance of local customs including the connection to Sea Country.
4. **Foster Collaboration:** Strengthen connections between Australian islands, New Zealand, and surrounding island nations, creating a network that amplifies our shared values and collective voices.
5. **Promote Local Employment:** Advocate for policies that translate support for islands into local employment opportunities, fostering sustainable economies and the local resilience of island communities.

## **Conclusion**

Halting and reversing biodiversity loss across Australia will require efforts from multiple sectors, and from multiple locations, which include offshore islands. The formation of a national Australian Island Alliance will empower island communities to have a unified identity and voice that can advocate their interests, foster collaborations, and secure vital resources for cultural and nature conservation. As one delegate aptly stated, “As islanders, we are isolated, but we are connected and we are working together for generations to come.”

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