The islands were used as a base during exploration expeditions in 1848 and 1873. The lighthouse on Russell Island, built in 1929 and converted to solar power in 1989, is an important link in the chain of navigation aids along the coast. The wreck of a steel boat lies off Normanby Island, and a wreck has been recorded off High Island. No formal assessment of these wrecks has been undertaken.

**Scenic and aesthetic**

The islands have a high scenic value due to their relatively natural state. The slopes, covered in dense green vegetation, rise in strong contrast against the backdrop of clear blue open waters, varying shades of blue-green reef flat shallows and coral sand beaches. There is no evidence of human activity or disturbance on the islands when viewed from the water.

**Scientific and educational**

The geological, biological and historical characteristics of the Group provide excellent material and opportunities for educational and research programs.

**Recreation and tourism**

The major recreational value of the Group lies in its natural condition and its easy accessibility to mainland population centres.

High Island is a popular site for recreational fishing and a well-used anchorage for trawlers during the day. It is also highly favoured by the local community for camping although, this is limited by the small area which can accommodate only a small number of campers.

Russell Island can accommodate a larger number of campers and is the most popular island destination for recreational camping in the Cairns Section of GBRMP. No commercial camping is allowed. Groups from local schools have camped on the island, although facilities are limited.

A single commercial tour operator, authorised for 100 persons, conducts a regular day trip to Normanby Island. This operation has a commercial activity permit which allows access to the national park component of the island (i.e. beyond the beach) and to the surrounding waters.

One other commercial activity permit has been issued. This allows access to High and Round Islands, but is limited to twice weekly access for a total of ten persons. Records indicate present use levels are minimal.

The reefs around the islands are diverse and provide excellent snorkelling opportunities. Marine Park operators have access to waters adjacent to the islands on a limited basis, but are excluded from accessing the intertidal area (i.e. beach).

Limited forms of fishing and collecting are allowed in the waters surrounding the islands.

**Summary**

This management plan provides the framework and guidelines on how Frankland Group National Park will be managed. It sets out the considerations, outcomes and strategies that are proposed to form the basis on which day-to-day management decisions are made.

This plan was prepared in May 1998 and, in accordance with s125 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992, will be reviewed not later than 10 years after its approval. For further information on this plan or the planning process, please contact the Department of Environment's Far North Regional Centre in Cairns on (07) 4052 3096 during business hours.

This management plan was prepared by Department of Environment staff. Thanks are due to those groups and individuals who made submissions in response to the draft plan.

**Frankland Group National Park**

**Management plan**

Wet tropical coast biogeographic region
1. Management directions and purposes
1.1 Management directions
Frankland Group National Park is one of 13 island national parks in the Cairns Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP), all of which will be managed in a co-ordinated, strategic manner to provide for a range of conservation and recreational settings.

The national park islands of the Frankland Group are dedicated under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and must be managed in accordance with s17 of the Act:
- to provide for the permanent preservation of their natural condition to the greatest possible extent;
- to protect and present their cultural and natural resource values; and
- to ensure that the only use of the islands is nature based and ecologically sustainable.

One of the prime purposes of management is to preserve the highly significant natural and cultural values of the islands whilst providing and managing a range of visitor settings.

The islands will generally be managed to maintain them in an undisturbed state with visitor numbers kept to levels which have a low impact on the islands and the experience of fellow users. No permanent facilities, other than management related infrastructure, will be permitted. Use will be closely monitored for adverse impacts on the islands’ values.

Conflict between commercial operators and private recreational users will be minimised by separating these user groups where possible and by restricting the currently permitted large-scale operation to Normanby Island. No further permits will be issued for large-scale commercial operations (i.e. more than 15 persons). Small-scale commercial operations of a suitable nature may be considered. Efforts will be made to ensure that local recreational use is not displaced by commercial tourism.

The park has no permanent ranger presence but is visited regularly by marine park Rangers. No facilities are provided, other than the toilets on Russell Island. Visitors need to be self-reliant. The islands are suited to those who wish to birdwatch, snorkel on the adjacent reefs and generally engage in minimal-impact, nature-based recreational activities in a natural undeveloped setting.

The national park islands of the Frankland Group and the Commonwealth-owned Russell Island and their surrounds will be managed in a complementary manner. Continued close co-operation between Department of Environment (DoE) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is essential if key natural values of the Frankland Group are to be protected.

In managing the Frankland Group National Park, opportunities will be provided to traditional owners, stakeholders and the general community to be involved in and consulted about planning and management. Involvement of traditional owners will be promoted. This plan is not intended to erode or extinguish any native title rights.

1.2 Purposes
The major purposes of management will be to ensure that:
- island fauna, in particular breeding seabirds, and their habitats are conserved and protected;
- the diversity of vegetation types is maintained;
- rare and threatened species are identified and conserved through specific management strategies;
- the natural setting is maintained to provide recreational opportunities consistent with a peaceful, low intensity, undeveloped, semi-wilderness experience;
- the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with traditional affiliations to the islands are recognised; and
- feral animals and noxious plants are controlled and eradicated if possible.

2. Basis for Management
2.1 Bioregional context
The Frankland Group comprises five continental islands surrounded by fringing reefs, located 10 km offshore from the mouth of the Russell-Mulgrave Rivers and 45 km south of Cairns. They are of significant conservation, recreational and educational value due to their diverse landforms; flora and fauna; cultural associations and sites; and undisturbed, remote setting.

The island Group is within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP). Four of the islands, High, Normanby, Mabel and Round are national parks under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. The intertidal area around these islands is part of the Cairns State Marine Park. Part of the fifth island, Russell Island, is a Commonwealth lighthouse reserve — the balance is a National Park Zone under the Cairns Section of the GBRMP.

The waters surrounding Russell and Round Island are zoned Conservation Park, while High Island reef and waters are a Habitat Protection Zone. The area is a No Structures Sub-zone (i.e. pontoons or other structures are not allowed).

The Frankland Group is one of the few island groups in the Cairns Section of GBRMP easily accessible to small private vessels in most weather conditions and still relatively free from commercial tourism development. Because of these factors, and their outstanding natural beauty, the islands have very high social and recreational value for the Cairns and surrounding local communities.

2.2 Values of the Frankland Group National Park
Geology and landform
The islands are outcrops of weathered metamorphic rock, once part of the coastal mountain range, separated from the mainland by a rise in sea level. Mabel and Round Islands are smaller rocky outcrops, Normanby and Russell Islands are high islands with elevations up to 163 m above sea level and attached sand spits with areas of 6 ha and 20 ha respectively. High Island, 10 km to the north of the other islands, is a steep rainforest clad island and, at 69 ha, is the largest of the Group.

The island landforms are diverse and contrasting, including shallow rocky reefs, mangroves, sand spits, beaches, open woodland, exposed rock faces and dense rainforest. Extensive fringing reefs encircle the islands.

Plants and animals
The flora of the islands has not been extensively studied, but may contain species of conservation significance. The islands have a high diversity of vegetation communities including lush tropical rainforest on the rugged high rocky areas, low woodlands on sand spits supporting beach she-oak, Casuarina equisetifolia, beach almond Terminalia arenicola, Cardwell cabbage Sceliole sericea and octopus bush Argusia argentea. Beach dunal vegetation is dominated by goatsfoot Ipomoea pes-caprae, sea bean Canavalia rosea and mangrove communities, predominantly Avicennia marina.

Eleven species of birds have been recorded including the little tern and the beach stone-curlew (vulnerable), black-naped tern, osprey, white-breasted woodswallow, pied imperial-pigeon and a variety of honeyeaters and large raptors.

Russell Island supports a colony of black flying fox which roost in the rainforest canopy near the lighthouse. A small insectivorous bat is found in the caves on the rocky island adjacent to the sand spit.

Cultural heritage
The islands are part of ‘sea country’ of the Yidinji and Gungadju peoples. The waters and fringing reefs around the islands are still the focus for traditional use of natural resources. A fish trap has been reported at High Island but a cultural heritage survey has not yet been undertaken.

Captain Cook named the islands in 1770 after two 18th century sailors — the Lord of the Admiralty and his nephew — both named Sir Thomas Frankland. A short-lived beche-de-mer station was established in 1866.