

Chapter 9

Effective planning for conservation

9.1 There are various reasons why people use national parks, and the management of these uses is discussed in chapter 10. Effective planning for conservation cannot occur without taking into consideration, in addition to environmental conservation objectives, the use of parks and reserves by people. The level of public access as well as other potential uses of protected areas needs, however, to be related to the objectives of the protected area. Effective planning will take account of these factors.

9.2 This chapter examines the whole-of-landscape approach to planning for conservation; the development of management plans and planning processes; and the development of Indigenous Protected Areas. The chapter also considers the need for co-ordination between stakeholders.

A whole of landscape approach

9.3 An integrated approach to Protected Areas (PAs) and the surrounding areas of land or sea is critical to effective environmental conservation.¹ Various called the 'whole of landscape', bioregional or ecosystem networks approach, the concept reflects the fundamental thinking of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere concept and the science of conservation biology.² This whole of landscape approach is an important factor in the formulation of management plans for parks and reserves.

9.4 The Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System* (Directions Statement), acknowledged the need to establish and manage protected areas within a landscape context on the basis that conservation objectives can best be achieved through an integrated approach at the landscape level.³ The Ministerial Council document represents the collective efforts of Commonwealth and state and territory governments over several years to develop a common approach on key issues for the future of the National Reserve System (NRS).⁴

1 TWS, *Submission 131*, pp 1–4; WCPA, *Submission 137*, pp 20–21.

2 The UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda and capacity building to improve the relationship of people with their environment globally. The Programme targets the ecological, social and economic dimensions of biodiversity loss and the reduction of this loss. It uses its World Network of Biosphere Reserves as a vehicle for knowledge-sharing, research and monitoring. See www.unesco.org/mab

3 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, 2005, p. 7.

4 Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Submission 126*, pp 7–8.

9.5 The concept of 'ecological networks' has strong backing in Australia and is being actively promoted by national non-government organisations (NGOs), especially Greening Australia and the Wilderness Society under the name *WildCountry*, which is discussed below. This approach recognises that connectivity and argues that 'turning islands to networks' is the way to achieve the international goal of 'benefits beyond boundaries' and is essential to management effectiveness and a key component for building resilience in the face of rapid change, especially climate change, into the system.

9.6 The Wilderness Society (TWS) stated that:

The conservation of biodiversity and our natural heritage demands a landscape-wide approach that recognises the importance of ecological connectivity. The processes that sustain and regenerate ecological systems and all their components operate across a range of spatial and time scales. Many, if not most, work at space and time scale exceed those at which humans manage land and natural resources. Thus, many important ecological processes involve connections at scales not considered by conventional conservation planning and management.⁵

9.7 The National Parks Association of NSW noted that:

Increasingly it is recognised that isolated reserves will not on their own safeguard our native biodiversity, particularly in light of growing threats due to climate change, invasive species, and even large bushfires. It is important the reserves are connected to allow species migration and movement, and improve long-term viability. This will require a range of approaches from all land managers – public and private. The concept of 'managing the matrix' will ensure that the reserve system is seen in a large context of connected landscape elements.⁶

9.8 The Commonwealth and state and territory governments have endorsed this approach. The SA Department for Environment and Heritage stated that:

Parks will not survive as islands. They have to be managed as a part of a bigger landscape, and that is where the resilience comes in and so Nature Links is about establishing connectivity in some form or another. It is not necessarily vegetation corridors. It involves biological connectivity based on a series of core protected areas, highly protected areas, buffered and then joined by areas that are managed for conservation objectives, and they can be in addition to production objectives and everything else, but that then provides those linkages that we are trying to achieve.⁷

9.9 The marine equivalent of the 'whole of landscape' approach is the zoned marine protected area. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park World Heritage Area

5 *Submission 131*, p.2.

6 *Submission 130*, p. 14. See also National Parks Association Queensland, *Submission 134*, p. 5.

7 Mr Greg Leaman, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 52.

pioneered the idea of cooperation and coordination across a large area between user groups and zoning for a spectrum of conservation management regimes.

9.10 While there is a broad consensus on the desirability of such multiple-tenure models based around core conservation lands, only a few working examples have emerged to date, such as the Gondwana Link project which is discussed below. The primary impediment to the further development of this model remains the cost and complexity of putting together different land tenures and sea uses, gaining the cooperation of the many government departments and agencies in a federal system, as well as coordinating the private and community input. This will only occur with real and sustained commitment of policy and funding by both national, state and territory and local governments. The emergence of a vibrant and innovative private conservation sector will be vital component in pursuing the goal of large ecological networks. The private sector can complement and add value to public protected areas.⁸

9.11 As noted in Chapter 7, South Australia has developed the *NatureLinks* concept for landscape-scale conservation whereby public protected areas are to be managed as core conservation areas and a range of complementary conservation and land management measures can be applied across the landscape to achieve long-term conservation outcomes.⁹

9.12 The South Australian Government noted that many conservation programs in the state adopt a landscape scale approach to addressing threats to the conservation values of reserves. This recognises that most reserves are not large and pristine enough to be self-sustaining in the face of threats. There is an additional benefit in adopting an approach that looks beyond park boundaries, as these programs can engage directly with adjoining landholders and local communities and encourage them to participate in on-and off-park activities.¹⁰

9.13 Submissions noted that the national reserve system cannot be built solely on public lands. Dr Robyn Bartel of the University of New England noted that the historic division between public and private property management has been damaging for the environment. Conservation aims must be pursued on both private and public lands not only to meet environmental outcomes but also to trigger institutional changes that will ensure more effective and environmentally conscious management of all land. Dr Bartel argued that new community participation and processes are evolving to manage land degradation, native vegetation and water management issues on private land, such as Catchment Management Authorities and Landcare groups. Similar bodies and processes may be brought into play to assist in the management of public lands.¹¹

8 World Commission on Protected Areas, *Submission 137*, p. 20.

9 Department for the Environment and Heritage, SA Government, *Submission 194*, p. 13.

10 Department for the Environment and Heritage, SA Government, *Submission 194*, p. 16.

11 *Submission 47*, pp 1–5.

9.14 Witnesses emphasised the need to build resilience into reserve system, planning to especially take account of such issues as climate change. Mr Chris Tallentire, Director of the Conservation Council of WA stated that:

...we need to maintain the linkages to act as some sort of safety for climate change effects. The resilience is dependent on the ability of adjacent land forms to accommodate the ecological system that has to migrate somewhere else. I think the resilience could in fact be a test to see whether or not we have the connections that will provide for the future of those systems that will need to move because of moving rainfall patterns or increasing temperatures.¹²

9.15 Mr Andreas Glanznig, Senior Policy Adviser with WWF-Australia also noted that:

...if you put resilience into the CAR sort of approach, it highlights the need for these very large conservation corridors. One of the options...is an eastern escarpment conservation corridor which could span from Cairns right through nearly to Eden. Of course, being an escarpment, it would include a range of altitudinal climes, and a lot of that is already within the national parks estate. So the opportunity with a proactive response to climate change is to think big, and really to build in as many opportunities for our ecosystems and species to adapt.¹³

9.16 Targeted acquisition, private land conservation (especially in situations where the only remaining healthy examples of particular ecosystems are on private land), reform of agriculture, revegetation, zoning and urban growth boundaries provide mechanisms for restoring natural ecological function in areas around and between national parks.¹⁴

Gondwana Link

9.17 The Gondwana Link project was cited in evidence as an effective model for landscape scale work in Australia.¹⁵ The project involves national, state and other groups cooperating to reconnect fragmented natural vegetation country over a distance of almost 1,000 kilometres between the ecosystems of inland Western Australia and the unique tall karri and jarrah forests of the south west corner. This region is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots where exceptional concentrations of endemic species are suffering extensive loss of habitat through fragmentation and other threatening processes. The project seeks to restore ecological connectivity and maintain ecosystems. Major government, community and non-government players are involved with the project, and a crucial element of the project is the purchase of key properties by private land trusts, including the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, one of the key

12 *Committee Hansard*, 1 September 2006, p. 8.

13 *Committee Hansard*, 31 March 2006, pp 19–19.

14 National Parks Association of Queensland, *Submission 134*, p. 5.

15 Dr Michael Looker, The Nature Conservancy, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006 pp 35–36.

players in private conservation in Australia, and Greening Australia (WA)¹⁶ as well as the Australian Government's significant investment under the NRS Programme.

9.18 Dr Beth Schultz, Director of the Conservation Council of WA, further elaborated on the operation of the project:

[The Gondwana Link] are trying to acquire the remaining bits of native vegetation and they are buying other properties and replanting them with native species and also with commercial species. They are trying to grow Sandalwood to provide an income to provide funds for management. So this is an area where there has been extensive fragmentation but it is being addressed in this way.

That is one illustration of the problem that exists and an attempt to address it. The ultimate goal is to have a belt of native vegetation starting at Margaret River and going right across the south west—on the South Coast, especially in the forested areas, there is still native vegetation—and to link it up through Stirling Range, across to Fitzgerald River, to Alice Springs and then eventually right across the country. It is a huge vision but they are moving on it and it has created a lot of excitement because it is such a worthwhile project.¹⁷

9.19 The Gascoyne-Murchison Strategy (GMS) in Western Australia provides another example of a recent development in strategic broad scale planning for protected area establishment. The Strategy was developed to address the environmental, economic, and social needs of this rangelands area in Western Australia. When the GMS was announced in 1998, approximately one million hectares, or 2 per cent of the Strategy area, was within conservation reserves. The Strategy area covers some of the most arid land in WA but is known to have high biological diversity. A concerted effort to identify gaps in representation of ecosystem's of the region's protected areas subsequently led to the strategic purchase of nearly 4 million hectares of pastoral leasehold properties. By November 2004, about 5 million hectares, or 8.8 per cent of the GMS area was within conservation reserves or had been purchased for reservation as part of the formal conservation reserve system in WA. This has resulted in 74 vegetation types within the reserve system, bringing the total to 148 or 57.1 per cent of all vegetation types in the region of which 83 (32 per cent) have more than 10 per cent of their area represented.¹⁸

WildCountry

9.20 The Wilderness Society (TWS) has developed a conservation planning framework – *WildCountry* – which integrates protected area design and natural

16 World Commission on Protected Areas, *Submission 137*, p. 20.

17 *Committee Hansard*, 1 September 2006, p. 12.

18 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, 2005, p. 25; See also Mr Keiran McNamara, WA Department of Environment and Conservation, *Committee Hansard*, 1 September 2006, p. 34.

resource management to achieve biodiversity conservation objectives at a landscape scale. Central to the approach being developed is the need to evaluate biodiversity and identify priorities for biodiversity protection and restoration at a range of scales – continental, regional and landscape.

9.21 Using a new understanding of large-scale connections across the continent, *WildCountry* is developing a science-based, continent-wide approach to conservation planning that involves both protecting the best of what is left of Australia's natural environment, and restoring important areas. *WildCountry* has a particular focus on maintaining and/or restoring ecological connections in landscapes and seascapes.

Establishing core protected areas, free from destructive and degrading practices, is a cornerstone of *WildCountry*. We know if we are to ensure the long term survival of species and ecosystems, we must establish resilient fully protected areas as well as significantly reduce the impacts of all human activity across marine and terrestrial environments. In this context, it is important that the establishment of highly protected areas should occur on both public and private lands and with support from both the public and private sector.¹⁹

9.22 *WildCountry* provides a scientific framework for tackling protected area network design, as well as for tackling threats to nature such as land clearing, intensive logging and damage to river, marine and other aquatic systems. *WildCountry* aims to provide a framework of conservation priorities which will give long term relevance to today's environmental issues and promote close cooperation with, and integration across, a wide range of community, public and private conservation programs.²⁰

9.23 The fundamental principles underlying the approach being taken include:

- Conservation planning must take a large-scale perspective (in space and time);
- The key elements to long term conservation planning include large, relatively undisturbed core areas, embedded within a landscape matrix of buffers and linkages;
- Core reserves must be complemented by appropriate off-reserve management that together ensure connectivity of key ecological patterns and processes, particularly at larger space/time scales. Off-reserve management can involve formal private conservation reserves such as conservation agreements and nature refuges or wider regulatory approaches or the protection of vegetation through vegetation clearing laws and regulations; and

19 The Wilderness Society, *Submission 131*, p. 1.

20 The Wilderness Society, *Submission 131*, p. 1; Ms Young, The Wilderness Society, *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, pp 91–94.

- 'Connectivity processes' need to be brought together in an integrated framework and applied in a substantial way to inform and guide conservation planning.²¹

9.24 *WildCountry* is working with the South Australian and Northern Territory Governments on several projects. The Northern Territory Government is a partner in one of the Australian Research Council projects – the project is attempting to look at the reasons why species are becoming extinct in Northern Australia. The South Australian Government has been working on trophic regulation. The Government has provided their state environmental data to the program and *WildCountry* is working with them on a number of levels, attempting to better inform their biodiversity strategy for the state.²²

Biosphere reserves

9.25 Biosphere Reserves are areas designated by the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and Biosphere program of UNESCO.²³

9.26 Biosphere Reserves are a landscape-based approach to environmental conservation and its sites are recognized under UNESCO's 'Man and the Biosphere Programme' which innovate and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development.²⁴ Biosphere Reserve designations are flexible and proactive declarations of a commitment to sustainable development, and are one of the few international environmental mechanisms that can be applied to urban areas.²⁵

9.27 UNESCO's aims in designating Biosphere Reserves are to:

- (a) Foster sustainable economic and human development;
- (b) Preserve landscapes ecosystems, species, and genetic resources; and
- (c) Support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

9.28 They remain under national sovereign jurisdiction, yet share their experience and ideas nationally, regionally and internationally within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

21 The Wilderness Society, *Submission 131*, p. 3.

22 Ms Young,, The Wilderness Society, *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 93.

23 *The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, s. 337.

24 UNESCO web site, *Biosphere reserves: reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with economic development*, <http://www.unesco.org/mab/BRs.shtml>, accessed 2 March 2007.

25 Christine Alfsen-Norodom, 'Urban Biosphere and Society: Partnership of Cities: Introduction', in C. Alfsen-Norodom, Benjamin D. Lane, and Melody Corry (eds), *Urban Biosphere and Society: Partnership of Cities*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 1023, pp 1–9, 2004.

9.29 Nomination of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as a Biosphere Reserve was suggested by the Nature and Society Forum during 2003,²⁶ and the ACT Government affirmed that it was pursuing the nomination in October 2005.²⁷ The proposal is currently before a committee of the ACT Legislative Assembly, and documentation and submissions on the proposal are publicly available.²⁸

9.30 The World Commission on Protected Areas in their submission to this inquiry noted that such a landscape-based approach reflects the fundamental thinking of the 'Man and the Biosphere' concept, and that such an approach had strong backing in Australia by all national Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).²⁹

Conclusion

9.31 The committee believes that planning for the conservation of biodiversity and our natural heritage demands a whole-of-landscape approach. It is abundantly evident that national parks and reserves will not survive as 'islands' and will have to be managed as part of a larger landscape.

9.32 The committee notes that the Directions Statement acknowledges the need to establish and manage protected areas within a landscape context on the basis that conservation objectives can best be achieved through an integrated approach at the landscape level. The committee is pleased to note various initiatives at the Commonwealth and state level, and by non-government organisations, to promote this approach and encourages all stakeholders to further develop initiatives in this area.

Management plans and planning processes

9.33 Once protected areas are declared, protected area managers must ameliorate or control current threats to the biodiversity values for which they were established and put in place arrangements for their long-term management. The Directions Statement notes that current protected area management reflects the growth in the acceptance by land managers of a landscape-based approach for the maintenance of ecological functions.

9.34 The Directions Statement notes that there are a series of underlying principles in relation to protected area management. These include the requirement that protected areas be managed through the development and implementation of appropriate plans

26 Australian National Commission for UNESCO, 'New Biosphere Reserve proposed', *UNESCO News*, 12 June 2003.

27 ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope made the announcement at the 'Making Canberra Sustainable' forum in October 2005.

28 See ACT Legislative Assembly web site, Standing Committee on Planning and the Environment, Inquiries, papers and reports: *ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve*, <http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/committees/index1.asp?committee=55&inquiry=226&category=14>, accessed 2 March 2007.

29 Submission 137, p. 20.

of management. Management plans should be based on good baseline biological information and involve stakeholder consultation. Management programs must be consistent with the primary aim of maintaining biodiversity values and relevant IUCN protected area category objectives. In addition, protected area agencies should have in place monitoring and evaluation programs.³⁰

9.35 The Directions Statement also notes that management plans:

...contain strategies and actions that will lead to the achievement of the primary management objective and inform the manager on the effectiveness of the actions undertaken.³¹

9.36 Management plans should contain performance indicators, be open to independent scrutiny and reporting, and must be authorised by the government or agency responsible for protected areas in the relevant jurisdiction.³² As pointed out in chapter 10, one of the challenges for parks managers is to take into consideration, along with environmental concerns, the various uses of parks by people. The Directions Statement notes that factors such as the level of public access, the extent of facility development, and all use of the area should be related to the objectives of the protected area, the relevant IUCN protected area category, and should be specified in management plans.³³

9.37 The Directions Statement provided two specific directions aimed at ensuring management plans were in place consistently across jurisdictions:

Direction 28: Management plans or, where this is not possible, statements of management intent, to be in place for all existing NRS reserves and for any new reserves within three years of establishment unless Native Title Act considerations preclude this;

Direction 29: Interim management guidelines to be in place within nine months of acquisition of protected areas under the NRS program.³⁴

9.38 The Directions Statement also outlined the key management issues that needed to be considered by protected area managers in the context of establishing management plans. These included the management of fire, introduced species,

30 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 50.

31 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 50.

32 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 50.

33 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 50.

34 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 51.

tourism/park visitation, neighbour relations, resource use, and stakeholder involvement.³⁵

9.39 Although the Directions Statement laid the foundations and set out directives for a more consistent reserve planning and management system, it seems that more work still needs to be done in State jurisdictions to achieve the aims of the Statement. This is apparent from some of the evidence presented to the committee during the inquiry.

Concerns about the current system

9.40 A range of explanations were presented during the inquiry as to why the current management planning regime was not working as well as it could. These related to factors such as a lack of a thorough knowledge of the values and objectives of management, a lack of resources and the lack of a 'knowledge-base' on which to make decisions.

9.41 Dr Marc Hockings cited a lack of clarity about values as affecting park planning:

Information on values is also needed by park management agencies for planning purposes. The inquiry has already heard that many national parks and protected areas around Australia lack management plans. Things are getting better; for example, in New South Wales a couple of years ago together with the park management agency we did a management assessment of every reserve in the state. The assessment revealed that 90 per cent of the protected areas of the state are covered by management plans, either in draft or completed. More significantly, the assessment showed the benefits of having management plans. Those parks that had management plans, either in draft or approved, were performing better in relation to a whole series of aspects of park management, such as those relating to the knowledge of the park or the park values and relating to the users of the park and the application of that information in decision making. They also performed better in terms of understanding and managing key impacts on the parks, and in terms of consultation with the community...If we have a better understanding than we have now of the values of the reserves then we can look at what are compatible uses in relation to that....The management plans that we have vary in terms of how well they do that.³⁶

9.42 Another issue raised by Dr Hockings was the tendency for park managers to write management plans around the availability of resources rather than what resources are actually needed to manage a park effectively.³⁷ This highlights the need

35 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, pp 51–53.

36 IUCN, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, pp 24 & 27.

37 IUCN, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 25.

for State governments in particular to commit recurrent resources for ongoing management of the national parks every time they expand their conservation estate.

9.43 Concerns were also raised about delays in incorporating information about such things as key threatening processes into plans, and that the need to facilitate more research before effective plans could be put into place was paramount:

Governments (State and Commonwealth) have been creating lists of key threatening processes (which apply more broadly than just to conservation reserves), but have been woefully slow in developing practical responses in terms of preparing and implementing threat abatement plans.³⁸

Conservation research tends to be ad hoc and opportunist and long term systematic data collection and monitoring is difficult to find...In our view governments need to give much more attention to planning to accommodate future environmental change – even if we cannot necessarily predict specific changes that change will occur is inevitable.³⁹

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that active management is essential to maintain the biodiversity values and forest health of this asset. In addition, given the significant value, there is evidence that national parks are not being well managed for the risks associated with such a large asset. If you have an asset worth over \$20 billion, it makes sense to have an active management plan to protect this asset from deterioration.⁴⁰

9.44 A lack of funding was cited as another major reason why managements plans had not been put into effect properly:

There is not enough funding towards the management planning side. A lot of time, money and effort has been put into draft plans and a lot of them have been sitting in the office for a long time. A lot of good work has been done but they have not been released for comment.⁴¹

The key threat that we mentioned is one of funding. Collectively as a community we may not allocate sufficient funds to the management of this asset. We know from any other asset resource that we may own collectively that it has to be maintained.⁴²

9.45 A lack of proper management plans can result in inappropriate uses being tolerated in parks. Dr Paul Williams pointed out some of the threats faced when there was a lack of adequate planning:

38 Coast and Wetlands Society, *Submission 7*, p. 3.

39 Coast and Wetlands Society, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

40 Mr Allan Hansard, National Association of Forest Industries, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 16.

41 Mr David Green, *Committee Hansard*, 30 June 2006, p. 27.

42 Mr Daniel Gschwind, Chief Executive, Queensland Tourism Industry Council, *Committee Hansard*, 21 April 2006, p. 64.

If we do not have a management plan, there are practices that can start up and, especially with commercial operations, can then be hard to deal with. If there is no management plan that, for example, says, 'This cannot be done in the national park,' and someone starts building up a business, later on it is very hard for the department to say, 'No, this is not really in tune with the Wet Tropics values or with the national park's values.' It becomes very hard to stop that operation because people have created a business.⁴³

9.46 The importance of the formation of management plans was strongly supported by conservation groups and land managers. Management plans are important, not just for publicly managed reserves, but for private landholdings as well. Dr Michael Looker from The Nature Conservancy stated:

In terms of our program, the formation of management plans is a very important part of what we do..... It is important... that we have smart objectives in those management plans so that we do know what to measure over time.... our organisations generally around the world that I know of, and certainly within TNC, have perhaps not attended to that end of things as much as they should or could have.... We have tended to work very hard to get hold of those opportunities when they arise and to protect those areas but then perhaps have not had the follow-through to get the management and monitoring to the level that we should.⁴⁴

9.47 Mr Atticus Fleming, Chief Executive of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy stressed the importance of such plans, but pointed out that management plans were not useful unless they became operational and resulted in appropriate actions:

We work primarily on the basis of what I call operational plans, not management plans. That might reflect my own bias. I see a lot of management plans sitting on the shelf and not making a lot of difference on the ground. We focus on our operational plans. We set out what our strategies are and we list the actions we are going to do in the field to achieve our objectives. The objective might be to reduce weeds along five kilometres of a particular river; it might be to de-stock 60,000 hectares; it might be to lay 70,000 baits before the end of June. We have operational plans for each of our properties that specify those sorts of actions and we report against them quarterly. It is a good question, because you can put a lot of resources into a management plan or a management planning process that does not necessarily translate into good on-ground outcomes. It is much more important to get straight to what you are going to do on the ground and then do it. That is why most of our staff is in the field and why most of our money goes into the field.⁴⁵

43 *Committee Hansard*, 30 June 2006, p. 32.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 33.

45 *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 42.

Recommendation 7

9.48 The committee recommends that management plans clearly identify practical on-ground outcomes and that protected area agencies have in place comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programs to continually assess management effectiveness and the extent to which protected area values are being maintained.

Co-ordination between stakeholders and conservation across tenures

9.49 Witnesses to the inquiry emphasised the importance of co-operation and co-ordination between governments, private land conservation groups and other stakeholders in furthering a whole-of-landscape approach to planning. Mr Atticus Fleming of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, provided examples of the benefits of a partnership approach involving the private sector and governments:

Even though the private sector conservation needs to be able to do more in Australia, a lot of what the private sector will do will be in partnership with governments, so that is where a lot of the real opportunities lie. Paruna sanctuary is a property in south-western Australia. We actually acquired six different properties to link those two national parks—Avon Valley National Park and Walyunga National Park. Without AWC acquiring that land, the national parks would have been isolated.

It is a great example of what you can do on a landscape scale approach with government and private sector working together. Having done that, we then worked with the WA conservation department to implement a regional baiting program, a regional fire management program and together we have re-introduced over five mammals that were extinct in this region. That would not have occurred if it was only government and it would not have occurred if it was only the private sector but together we have achieved quite a lot there.⁴⁶

9.50 The need to encourage cross-tenure networks of significant lands that could be planned and managed collaboratively was also emphasised. Mr Brian Gilligan cited several positive examples of where this is occurring:

...certainly there are some positive examples of things like the collection of reserves in the Gascoyne-Murchison in Western Australia, or the collaboration that has been possible with the Australian Alps. The Australian Alps is a pretty good example where the Commonwealth, without having a direct land management role, has sat very comfortably at the table with the state jurisdictions and collaborated in the management of the Australian Alps collection of parks and reserves. There have been various discussions—which I presume are still going on.

From time to time there have been discussions about what could and should happen, say, along the Murray River. You would need a collaborative arrangement between New South Wales and Victoria—and presumably also

46 *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, pp 37–38.

South Australia—but maybe with some involvement of the Commonwealth to get a particular kind of protected area regime along that linear area. I think those things are possible but the challenge is there also. In south-eastern New South Wales, for example, some good work was done at the time of the Eden regional forests agreement. Some areas went into reserves and voluntary conservation agreements were entered into to establish and secure the linkages between some of the areas that would not have otherwise been able to be secured.⁴⁷

9.51 Mr Gilligan suggested that pilot arrangements could be undertaken on cross-tenure collaborations in relation to land management. Such pilots could be funded or co-ordinated by the Commonwealth.⁴⁸

9.52 The Directions Statement highlights the critical role of partnerships between all governments and non-government organisations in ensuring the success of the National Reserve System.⁴⁹

9.53 Evidence indicated the need for greater co-operation between stakeholders in furthering a whole-of-landscape approach. The Australian government has increased the range of stakeholders it deals with to include sectors that were previously ignored; these included private landholders.

9.54 Some private land conservation groups also raised issues related to the level of co-operation with state governments. Mr Atticus Fleming argued that the level of co-operation with these governments has been 'mixed'. He added however that 'overall, all of the state agencies are positive, but in each of the states you come up with resistance at various levels at various times'.⁵⁰

9.55 Witnesses pointed to the need to further cultural change within stakeholder groups and develop trust between the various players seeking to achieve a common aim:

...That sort of thing [the Gondwana Link] cannot happen without partnerships, and partnerships cannot happen without trust. So how do you get trust if you are representing government? You have to sit down and build trust. That is really the only way to do it. So initiatives designed to bring about those sorts of cultural changes within government and within the private sector are the sorts of initiatives which will reap enormous rewards. And it is not just in government agencies or this level of

47 *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 5.

48 *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, pp 5–6.

49 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005, p. 7.

50 Australian Wildlife Conservancy, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 42.

government where the resistance lies. I certainly notice it within government, but I notice it equally within the private sector.⁵¹

9.56 Mr Peter Cochrane, Director of National Parks, however, pointed to examples of effective cooperation between the Commonwealth and the states and with other stakeholders arguing that current arrangements generally work well:

[the committee] heard evidence before from the Bush Heritage Fund as to some of those things that have been put in place and others that would be desirable. So there is good interagency cooperation on that. There is very good cooperation between our staff who work on the Indigenous Protected Areas Program and other parts of the portfolio—the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, the Indigenous Land Corporation and state agencies.

...most of these activities do not sit entirely within any one portfolio and therefore collaboration and cooperation are essential for us to achieve our objectives. I do not think I could point to a relationship that is not functioning well. Perhaps some of them could function better or more effectively, but that is probably true in many other areas of government. In general, I would have to say that our cooperative arrangements work very well at both the Commonwealth level and the Commonwealth-state level.⁵²

Coordination of conservation across jurisdictions

9.57 A number of submissions noted inconsistencies and conflict between Commonwealth and state jurisdictions, and called for the Commonwealth to lead the co-ordination of marine legislation and program direction:

Much of the process to date has been the states or the Commonwealth doing their own thing with very little commitment to engaging the other side of government in the process...There is a lot of resistance at the moment through the south-east process about the fact that the states believe they were largely left out of it and it was run by the Commonwealth...

The worst thing that industry can see is one government implementing a set of criteria and arrangements in an area only to see a different set of rules supposedly addressing the same principles applied in another jurisdiction. From our perspective, an enhancement and improvement in the system would be a greater level of engagement between state and Commonwealth agencies and in the planning process generally.⁵³

9.58 One way of ensuring a consistent legal and policy framework to deal with marine environments would be to develop a Commonwealth Act in collaboration with the states. Mr Anthony Flaherty referred to a discussion paper on the need for national

51 Dr John Bailey, Conservation Commission of WA, *Committee Hansard*, 1 September 2006, p. 83.

52 *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, pp 68–69.

53 Mr Neil MacDonald, SA Fishing Industry Council, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 22.

legislation, prepared by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Environmental Law Association:

Until you start to get consistent legislative and jurisdictional approaches to land and sea management you will always get inconsistencies between states, which means you will get inconsistencies in the way things are managed and conserved between states. That is important in the marine environment when you have a range of wildlife that is highly migratory but when you have impacts in marine environments that are across jurisdictions—things like marine pests and marine pollution.⁵⁴

9.59 The CSIRO's submission noted that insufficient coordination of government efforts at federal, state and local levels, and between government and non-government agencies, poses a threat to the achievement of the objectives of protected areas.⁵⁵

9.60 This observation was supported by a number of people who had prepared submissions based on their personal experiences dealing with various agencies about parks or related matters. Ms Lynda Newnam wrote:

In my experience there is a lack of coordination between government agencies and at each level of government. There appears to be no commitment to bringing players to the table to solve problems in a whole of government approach and certainly no commitment to provide leadership in the solution of any such problems.⁵⁶

9.61 Dr Richard Kenchington noted that even within governments, there is a lack of co-ordination between agencies who are key stakeholders in marine policy development:

...there are a number of sectoral areas that are not involved in the development of oceans policy. One, of course, is the area of defence and national security, which is integral to it. In fact, I think there are nine departments of state which have major maritime interests, whether it is transport or fisheries or science—they all come under different areas. I think there is this lack of a clearing house.⁵⁷

9.62 Ms Claire deLacey and Mr Steven Chamberlain also referred to 'lack of co-operation and co-ordination between various government agencies...particularly where large-scale or potentially damaging processes such as bushfire are being considered'. They also noted that 'policy emphasis often differs between different levels of government, often to the detriment of biodiversity values.'⁵⁸

54 Marine and Coastal Community Network, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 8.

55 *Submission 41*, p.9.

56 *Submission 50*, p. 2.

57 Australian Association for Maritime Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 36.

58 *Submission 21*, p. 1.

9.63 Inconsistent policies and practices have ramifications in many areas of marine park development and management. Dr Gina Newton provided the example of inconsistent data collection protocols, that impede the collation and comparison of historical information:

One of the fundamental issues regarding governments relates to data collection. Because there are so many jurisdictions involved, often data that informs science is collected in different manners at different spatial scales or time scales and therefore it is difficult sometimes to get national pictures or even large cross-state pictures of what is going on because the data is not compatible. So from that point of view and from a scientific understanding point of view, that is an important issue. If there could be standard and consistent methodologies and data collection protocols, that would be very helpful.⁵⁹

Marine planning – a case of the need for national planning

9.64 The need for the Commonwealth and the states to have a complementary and collaborative approach to the planning and design for MPAs was highlighted in regard to the fish stock and marine protection.⁶⁰ Mr Craig Bohm from the Australian Marine Conservation Society told the committee:

There needs to be a network because of the fluidity of the systems. The network is important. For example, a snapper coming out of a river in south-eastern New South Wales moves up the coast towards Wollongong or Sydney and grows larger. At some stage it might migrate back or it might stay up there to produce a lot of babies, if it is allowed to grow big enough. You can have a marine park in the nursery area where that snapper comes from, but if you do not have one where the fish ends up, the big fish might be able to be caught but you lose the productivity because the big fish that produce all the babies are killed before they get a chance to spawn.⁶¹

9.65 Similarly, Professor Frank Talbot from the Australian Marine Sciences Association told the committee:

One of the issues here is what your fish actually do, what your organisms do—the distribution pattern of your organisms. If you were trying to protect an area fairly thoroughly where there are species that are migratory and they migrate well beyond that area and get into a fishery, you will do just as much damage as if it were not there. So you really have to look at what you are trying to protect.⁶²

59 Australian Marine Sciences Association, *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 47.

60 Mr Craig Bohm, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard* 6 June 2006, p. 33.

61 *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 25.

62 *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 47.

9.66 The committee was told the despite the offshore constitutional arrangements between Commonwealth and state managed fisheries there remains some difficulty in linking up the management regime of governments and fishermen:

So I think there are still some areas, but probably at the margin, where the offshore constitutional settlement has not really resolved some of those issues.⁶³

9.67 Similarly the committee heard:

In some cases there is good cooperation between states where fishermen are working both inside and outside the three-mile limit. It is a problem in that, in some cases, people given a licence to fish by the Commonwealth actually cross the border—the three-mile limit—and fish inside a state where they do not have a licence and would not get one. So there is no question that the issue is an important one and that some conformity would be enormously useful. How you achieve that I do not know. It does need cooperation between the states and the Commonwealth. Any move in that direction I think would help marine protected areas enormously.⁶⁴

9.68 The need for greater Commonwealth and state, and state to state, legislative consistency was raised across a wide range of marine management issues. For example:

When you look at specific wildlife management issues there is a need to manage wildlife populations consistently under similar legislation. So for seal populations across southern Australia we should have state legislation that is similar to that for whales. We have come some way with whales. It also extends to fisheries regulations and aquaculture regulations—the whole gamut.⁶⁵

Some would argue that there is a need for a national oceans policy. We had an oceans policy which was developed and launched by the Commonwealth government, but it was a Commonwealth policy. It was very hard to get commitment across the states, as is the case with any of these things unless there is some funding tied to it...

Until you start to get consistent legislative and jurisdictional approaches to land and sea management you will always get inconsistencies between states, which means you will get inconsistencies in the way things are managed and conserved between states. That is important in the marine environment when you have a range of wildlife that is highly migratory but

63 Mr Peter Franklin, Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Committee Hansard* 16 June 2006, p. 24.

64 Professor Frank Talbot, Australian Marine Sciences Association, *Committee Hansard* 16 June 2006, p. 47.

65 Mr Anthony Flaherty, Marine and Coastal Community Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 8.

when you have impacts in marine environments that are across jurisdictions—things like marine pests and marine pollution.⁶⁶

Marine parks or marine reserve no-take zones are certainly one tool in the toolbox for managing the marine environment. What has been done in Victoria is admirable, but if there is ineffective fisheries management adjacent to those marine parks or if you then have large oil and gas leases or areas of prospectivity sitting over other areas of high biodiversity, it negates the benefits that you would have from establishing those marine reserves.⁶⁷

9.69 A lack of complementary management practices between fishery management and environmental protection agencies has meant that at times there is a poor overlay of areas which have been closed to the fishing industry:

For example, in fisheries management, quite often spatial closures are introduced for specific reasons—maybe to protect spawning areas or pupping areas for sharks. There is a whole range of reasons why you might have a spatial closure. It is important that, as the marine protected areas roll out, there is some engagement between the conservation agency and the fisheries agency to try and develop the synergies and make sure that those area closures complement each other rather than being developed in isolation so you have an area closed off for fisheries management reasons and another area that is close by is that closed off for conservation reasons.⁶⁸

9.70 A lack of high quality data recognised and trusted by all stakeholders may also be discouraging progress, as disagreements continue around important matters such as the status of fish stocks:

State fisheries reports are not independent. The Department of the Environment and Heritage strategic fisheries assessments are not independent—they are not an audit and they are not able to be applied at a generic level across the country for us to get that picture which you asked for. I wish we had that, and I think it is something which the Commonwealth could take stronger leadership on. I have certainly been lobbying for a group like the Bureau of Rural Sciences to have massively increased funding to provide that marine audit function at least on our fish stocks, let alone the broader marine ecosystem and the impacts we may be having on it.⁶⁹

66 Mr Anthony Flaherty, Marine and Coastal Community Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 8.

67 Mr Richard Leck, National Marine and Coastal Policy Officer, WWF Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 April 2006, p. 45.

68 Mr Peter Franklin, Commonwealth Fisheries Association, *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, p. 15.

69 Mr Craig Bohm, Australian Marine Conservation Society, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 28.

9.71 Evidence to the inquiry indicated the need for the Commonwealth and the states to adopt a complementary and collaborative approach to marine planning issues, including the design of MPAs and the relationship between governments and stakeholders. Evidence also highlighted the need for greater consistency between Commonwealth and state and territory legislation across a range of marine management issues.

Public consultation

9.72 Discussion of the management planning system cannot take place without taking into consideration the role of public and community consultation in the process. The contributions and views of the wider community certainly play a role in the establishment of management plans for parks and reserves, and also in the creation of new reserves. During the inquiry the committee heard about concerns with the poor coordination and communication extended to dealings with stakeholders. Mr Dudley Maslen, the Shire President of Carnavon (WA) noted that 'the biggest threat that I see here...is communication or consultation with the local communities.'⁷⁰

9.73 Mr Maslen's concerns were shared by a diverse range of organisations. The Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria described their experience of consultation prior to the creation of new national parks in Victoria:

We spent an enormous amount of our resources to ensure our involvement was as detailed and complete as possible. This was largely a waste of time and money and we believe that we were only given minimal consideration.

It became clear early in the process that there was a pre-determined outcome. There would be a series of parks, nothing was going to stop this.

While the ECC claimed to consult with those affected, it was obvious that their idea of 'consultation' was to bring us in for meetings and send us away with a condescending pat on the head while ignoring anything we had said. It was patronisation, not consultation.⁷¹

9.74 The Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish) attached to its submission a recent letter to Senator the Hon Ian Campbell, Minister for Environment and Heritage, reporting its exclusion from consultative processes prior to the creation of Marine Protected Areas in Tasmania:

The establishment of these MPAs has fallen far short of 'due process' and genuine consultation. Your press release on 5 May 2006 stated that the MPA network was 'the culmination of extensive discussions with stakeholders...' As a major stakeholder, TARFish is astonished by the fact that it has NOT been invited to participate in this process, despite our ongoing requests for such involvement. We understand that, alarmingly, our

70 *Committee Hansard*, 31 August 2006, p. 2.

71 *Submission 153*, p. 5.

national body, Recfish Australia, was also excluded from the consultative process.⁷²

9.75 The Snowy Mountains Horse Riders' Association described their sense that there had been no consultation with local stakeholders about significant changes to horse access within Kosciusko National Park:

Our Association and the local community is still at a loss to understand how such major changes could be made that would affect the community at large, unopposed and without public consultation.

The local community was not notified nor consulted –our heritage has been hijacked!!⁷³

9.76 The Head of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS), Dr Tony Fleming, understood the consultation process in relation to Kosciusko differently, and told the committee:

We are continually trying new ways of consulting with the community. The development of the Kosciuszko plan of management involved extensive community consultation and tried novel approaches to achieve effective engagement with the community in what finally appeared in that plan.⁷⁴

9.77 The Australian Trail Horse Riders' Association, a participant in the Kosciusko consultations, described their usual experience with consultation in NSW:

The usual sequence of events is that a draft plan of management is drawn up by park staff. It is then placed out for public consultation for a period of three months. People make submissions. There are some modifications—usually basically no modifications—to the plan of management that then goes to the local advisory committee, of which there are, I think, 19 in New South Wales, that has some input. It then goes back to the service and maybe some minor changes are made. It then goes to the peak body, the advisory council, and from there to the minister for ratification.

Our experience is that, once a plan has actually been scripted or drafted, there is generally no modification or very little modification.⁷⁵

9.78 The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) conducted a public Inquiry into Queensland National Parks in 2000. Their report found that relations between QPWS staff and their local communities varied significantly across the state:

While some Councils indicated a positive working relationship, others suggested that there was very limited consultation at a local level and little

72 *Submission 104A*, p. 1.

73 *Submission 205*, p. 4.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2006, pp 4–5.

75 Mr Graham Crossley, Australian Trail Horse Riders' Association, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2006, p. 58.

attempt to involve the local community. The Inquiry could not fully establish the basis of this variation, however, some explanation may lie in the poor resourcing issues and service culture.⁷⁶

9.79 The LGAQ report went on to recommend that:

An objective of QPWS should be to establish local community participation and involvement in Park Management. This will require development of consultative and advisory mechanisms, effective communication strategies as well as greater engagement of the local community by QPWS staff.⁷⁷

9.80 The WA Department of Environment and Conservation acknowledged the need for community engagement, but noted that their efforts produced variable results:

As part of our general processes, we engage with all the other jurisdictions and we have shared information and tried to develop approaches towards public participation, involvement and consultation. They can be quite variable, depending on what resources you have in the district, region or country town, and that is part of the variability there.⁷⁸

9.81 The Department also noted that some complaints about consultation processes arose when people did not get the results they sought:

There will always be some people who do not agree with the outcome and who also claim that there was not adequate consultation because they did not get the outcome that they specifically wanted. We try and get the majority of people to come to the point where there is an agreement with either a management plan or an approach.⁷⁹

9.82 Similar issues were raised in the marine park planning context, discussed in Chapter 4. The South Australian Fishing Council had argued:

When draft plans are put on the table, we would like to consider that the planning process is rigorous enough that it actually seeks the correct information and then balances it up before it releases even a draft plan, let alone seeks to finalise an arrangement.⁸⁰

9.83 The inquiry received a lot of input about community consultation, from many sources. Dissatisfaction with outcomes, and a failure to understand consultative processes, may account for some of the complaints and observations received. They can also be understood as signals that current consultation processes are not appropriate for particular situations, have been poorly explained to stakeholders, or have been finalised prematurely.

76 *Submission 163*, Attachment 1, p. iii.

77 *Submission 163*, Attachment 1, p. iv.

78 Mr James Sharp, *Committee Hansard* 10 September 2006, p. 42.

79 Mr James Sharp, *Committee Hansard*, 10 September 2006, p. 42.

80 Mr Neil MacDonald, *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 15.

9.84 NSW NPWS recognised that consultation processes need to be appropriate for particular times and community needs:

A technique of consultation may work at one time in history and then not work, so you have got to keep refining and improving those things. The fact that we are developing branch visitation management plans—which is just one part of the planning that we do—indicates that we recognise that there is a change in the landscape over the years.

There has been an increase, particularly in the eastern part of the state, in the amount of reserves, which has changed the balance of reserve to non-reserve land. We need to look carefully at what that means for recreational opportunities for people. That is one of the drivers behind the development of the Living Parks strategy and the need for these plans. It was not driven so much by the fact that we perceived our consultation was inadequate—I think there are always ways that we can look to improve our consultation. It was more about the changing nature of the landscape and building the reserve system.⁸¹

9.85 The Australian Trail Horse Riders' Association, having identified problems with the usual consultation processes they had encountered in NSW, went on to describe an alternative model, based on engaging stakeholders prior to the preparation of a written plan, which had proved more satisfactory:

We actually think that the process is the wrong way around. Public consultation should take place before the actual drafting of the plan of management. That way, people have a chance to have an input. The flavour for that particular area, specific issues and expert opinion from people who are actually out on the ground and know those areas can then be brought into the plan of management process. I have been involved in one single park where that has actually happened. The end result was a much better and more balanced plan of management without the usual level of antagonism and position-taking that has been our experience in the past.⁸²

9.86 This approach was endorsed by Mr John Harrison, CEO of RecFish Australia:

If you do not engage stakeholders—whether they are recreational, commercial or whoever—and you simply come up and plonk something on the table, there is the answer. That is when you are going to get people's backs up. Bring people into the debate and into the discussion when it starts and say: 'This is what we are trying to achieve. This is the big picture and the long-term objective. How can you help us in that process? Where is it going to impact on you? What are the areas that are critical to the long-term requirements for your particular sector—again, whether it be rec or commercial?' I think the best way to get an enemy is to force-feed someone—you know, the carrot and the stick. But, if you encourage people

81 Dr Tony Fleming, *Committee Hansard* 12 May 2006, pp 4–5.

82 Mr Graham Crossley, *Committee Hansard*, 12 May 2006, pp 58–59.

to contribute and participate, to be involved and to be part of the solution, you will get a good outcome.⁸³

9.87 There was widespread concern about the extent to which stakeholders are being consulted, particularly in the preparation of park management plans. As a number of stakeholders pointed out, consultations do not necessarily mean that every party gets what they want. Effective consultation processes can still lead to disappointment for some people.

9.88 The committee believes that earlier engagement with various user groups and neighbours could improve planning procedures. There emerged from the evidence a sense that there was little flexibility in reserve planning by the time interested parties got to have a say in the process. This appeared to emerge partly because conservation agencies' seemed sometimes too strongly committed to their initial drafts of management plans. The committee is of the view that stakeholders should be engaged from the very beginning of management plan development, not just once a draft plan is available for comment. It also believes that a landscape-based approach to planning should be cognisant of adjacent land uses, particularly when it comes to opportunities for recreational use, a topic discussed further in the next chapter.

Recommendation 8

9.89 The committee recommends that best practice preparation and revision of reserve management plans should ensure that stakeholders, are consulted at the commencement of planning processes, rather than beginning with seeking comment on draft plans.

Indigenous Protected Areas

9.90 Indigenous Australians are custodians of significant areas of Australia's land, important managers of the landscape, and crucial to the future of the reserve system. The Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Programme is part of the National Reserve System Programme (NRSP) which aims to establish a network of protected areas which includes a representative sample of all types of ecosystems across the country.

9.91 The IPA Programme seeks to provide a planning and land management framework for Indigenous owned lands to be managed as part of the NRSP. It is funded as part of the Natural Heritage Trust. Incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) organisations including land management agencies, community councils, land councils, ATSI land trusts or representative bodies as well as land management, nature conservation and cultural heritage agencies that wish to enter into cooperative management arrangements with ATSI organisations may apply for IPA

83 *Committee Hansard*, 21 April 2006, p. 49.

funding.⁸⁴ In 2005-06, the Commonwealth provided funding of \$2.5 million for the IPA Programme. This will increase to \$3.1 million in 2006-07.⁸⁵

9.92 With support from the IPA Programme, Indigenous landowners commit themselves to managing their lands for the protection of natural and cultural features in accordance with internationally recognised standards and guidelines.

9.93 The 22 declared IPAs cover a total of 14.9 million hectares representing 66 per cent of the total area of land added to the reserve system by the NRSP over the last decade. The land includes some of the most biodiverse and highly valued of all NRS properties. The IPA Programme funds management and practical work to protect natural and cultural features and to contribute to conserving biological diversity.⁸⁶

9.94 Evidence to the committee generally commented favourably on the operation of the Programme. The ACF noted that:

Indigenous Protected Areas are one Australian example of the IUCN governance type 'community conserved areas' and can provide another vehicle for empowering communities through pride in their land; enabling them to care for country and pass on important traditional ecological knowledge to successive generations. Moreover, Australia is only just beginning to appreciate the great value of Indigenous customary knowledge to conservation and natural resource management, i.e. what Indigenous Australians can teach non-Indigenous Australians about looking after the land and seas.⁸⁷

9.95 Similarly, The Wilderness Society (TWS) noted that it is critical that Commonwealth and state governments recognise the important biodiversity, scenic and cultural heritage benefits which accrue to the Australian community through the voluntary declaration by traditional owners of IPAs. TWS argued that governments should provide ongoing support to enable traditional owners to build and maintain management capacity based on Australian and international best practice standards.⁸⁸

9.96 The recent Gilligan report into the IPA Programme, which reviewed its overall effectiveness and its success in meeting the needs and aspirations of Indigenous participants, found that the Programme was highly cost-effective and

84 Department of the Environment and Water Resources, web site, *Indigenous Protected Areas Funding*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/funding.html>, accessed 27 March 2007.

85 Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Annual Report 2005-06*, p. 73; B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, pp 3,17.

86 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, p. 3; Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Annual Report 2005-06*, p. 73.

87 *Submission 178*, p. 9. See also the Wilderness Society, *Submission 131*, p. 8; Professor Robyn Bushell, *Submission 121*, p. 4.

88 *Submission 131*, p. 8. See also Professor Jon Altman, *Submission 167*, pp 2-5.

provided significant economic, social and cultural benefits to Indigenous communities.⁸⁹

9.97 Each of the IPAs have unique land management issues to address, such as introduced and invasive species such as *mimosa pigra*, Yellow Crazy Ants and cane toads. At the same time the landowners' activities help to maintain spiritual, cultural and natural values of the land by the promotion of customary practices such as fire management.

9.98 As noted above, the benefits of these projects are much broader than biodiversity and heritage management. Indigenous communities are linking their IPA activities to training and employment outcomes and working with the private sector to develop economic opportunities in remote areas. Mr Gilligan emphasised to the committee that IPAs 'offer enormous potential to achieve socioeconomic and community development goals' and are 'recognised as being very positive and worthwhile.'⁹⁰ The review that Mr Gilligan undertook into the IPA Programme confirmed these statements.⁹¹

9.99 Others commented on the importance of IPAs in meeting NRS targets:

If you look at Australia's land tenure and also start looking at where the priority bioregions are for consolidating NRS, the Indigenous Protected Areas program is absolutely critical to achieving the NRS target. Developing a way to partner with Indigenous organisations is absolutely crucial. I think the real challenge is that, obviously, it has to be in the interests of the Indigenous communities; it is their land.⁹²

9.100 CALM argued that, while supporting IPAs, they should be seen as complementary to, rather than substituting for, the formal public system of conservation reserves.⁹³ In other evidence, Mr Allan Holmes, Chief Executive of the SA Department for Environment and Heritage noted that in the Anangu Pitantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands there are two IPAs – 'not all that successful in many respects; work is in progress – but out of that has come this very positive story with the Watarru community'.⁹⁴

9.101 The *Kuku Kanyini at Watarru – Caring for Country* project is an innovative project for the protection of biodiversity and the conservation of a significant Indigenous environment in a remote area of South Australia. It combines scientific information gathered during a biological survey of the area with traditional Indigenous

89 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, pp 2–3.

90 *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006.

91 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, pp 2–4.

92 Mr Andreas Glanznig, WWF-Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 31 March 2006, p. 22.

93 *Submission 135*, pp 8–9.

94 *Committee Hansard*, 6 June 2006, p. 45.

knowledge and skills to enhance biodiversity, utilise traditional land management practices, provide employment, and improve health outcomes. There is widespread community support and involvement in the project and it has increased self-esteem, especially among young men. Positive results of the project include the monitoring of threatened species, the construction of fences to protect culturally significant areas; and the establishment of a sanctuary as a breeding ground for certain species.⁹⁵

Funding for the IPA Programme

9.102 As noted above, in 2005-06, the Commonwealth, under the Natural Heritage Trust, provided funding of \$2.5 million for the IPA Programme. This is scheduled to increase by \$600 000 in 2006-07 to \$3.1 million.⁹⁶

The program this current financial year is \$2.5 million. It has been at that level for a year or so but did increase a couple of years ago from \$2 million. So the program has grown, in those terms, significantly over the last few years.⁹⁷

9.103 Submissions commented that funding under the Programme was inadequate and that the Commonwealth needed to devote more resources to the Programme. Professor Jon Altman, Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, reflecting much of the evidence, stated that:

The current levels of funding within this program are grossly inadequate to meet the day-to-day management of the growing number of IPAs. IPAs are highly dependent on the CDEP program. There needs to be a firm commitment for on-going recurrent funding (that is not project based) for IPAs from the Australian, State and Territory governments.⁹⁸

9.104 Mr Andreas Glanznig of WWF-Australia also raised the issue of the need to provide appropriate resources 'to enable effective management or looking at how you could put an effective management regime in place to protect the biodiversity values that are within that IPA'.⁹⁹ Mr Peter Cochrane, Director of National Parks, conceded that the Programme could achieve more with additional resources.¹⁰⁰

9.105 The Gilligan report noted that at current funding levels, only very basic management of the lands is possible. The intention of the Programme has been to

95 SA Government, *Submission 194A*, pp 1–3.

96 Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Annual Report 2005-06*, p. 73; B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, pp 3, 17.

97 Mr Peter Cochrane, Department of the Environment and Heritage, *Committee Hansard*, 31 March 2006, p. 101.

98 *Submission 167*, pp 4–5. See also Professor Jon Altman, *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, pp 81, 84.

99 *Committee Hansard*, 31 March 2006, p. 22.

100 *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 60.

provide a planning framework and seed funding for ongoing land management rather than fully funding management at a level equivalent to state and territory public reserves.¹⁰¹

9.106 The report recommended that funding to at least a minimum base level of ongoing management of IPAs should be sought. This funding should be sought within a framework of tripartite agreements between Indigenous landowners, the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, if their full value to the NRS is to be realised. The report argued that, depending on the timing of new IPA declarations, maintenance of the current Programme at a basic level of operation would require a doubling of the current budget to around \$6 million in 2008-09 and further increases to around \$10 million by 2010-11.¹⁰²

9.107 The report argued that it is difficult to estimate the level of funding required for a fully fledged system of Indigenous managed protected areas, but if progress can be made in tripartite negotiations for an appropriate funding of different levels of Indigenous land management activity, \$20-30 million 'might be able to be well invested' by 2010-11, increasing to \$50 million in subsequent years. The report noted that increases of this magnitude in the scale of the IPA budget should be conditional on the achievement of well defined conservation outcomes by the IPA Programme. The report also recommended that management funds should be provided on the basis of three to five years forward estimates and that the recurrent funding formula should be reviewed to reflect different levels of Indigenous land management activity negotiated in tripartite agreements.¹⁰³

9.108 Several submissions highlighted the heavy dependence of IPAs on the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program (an Indigenous 'work-for-the-dole' program). Professor Jon Altman argued that Indigenous peoples' efforts to use CDEP to maintain biodiversity over large tracts of land in the absence of government agency support is an 'unacceptable form of cost shifting'.¹⁰⁴

9.109 The committee questioned DEW on the extent of CDEP moneys being used in the IPA Programme. Mr Peter Cochrane, Director of National Parks, stated that the majority of IPAs draw on CDEP funding in a type of 'partnership' arrangement:

...most of the IPAs around Australia...are built around either pre-existing or developing community ranger programs in the communities. Most, if not all, of those community ranger programs draw on CDEP funding for a core part of their resources. Therefore, you could see the IPAs as in a bit of a partnership with the CDEP program in that the community ranger

101 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, p.26.

102 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, p. 58.

103 B. Gilligan, *The Indigenous Protected Areas Programme: 2006 Evaluation*, 2006, pp 5-6, 58-59.

104 *Submission 167*, p. 3.

component is funded by CDEP and the funding that we provide helps with coordination of the program, management of the program and on the ground activities.¹⁰⁵

9.110 On a related funding issue, some submissions argued that few mechanisms exist to ensure ongoing public and private sector funding and management support for IPAs. The Wilderness Society argued that private sector interests, including industry, should be encouraged to support and fund management operations for IPAs.¹⁰⁶

9.111 DEW commented on the trend towards diversifying funding sources:

Quite an interesting part of the program is the innovation with which the communities seek resources from a variety of places. We think there is a great opportunity to continue to build a stronger relationship with state agencies and get more support from them. I think there is also a small but growing interest for the philanthropic sector in supporting Indigenous Protected Areas. They see Indigenous Protected Areas as a very useful framework in working more closely with Indigenous people in a constructive way that has a good track record, is a good framework within which to work and has good government support. So, yes, more resources would help and, along with our partners in the Indigenous communities, we are constantly looking at ways to find those resources.¹⁰⁷

9.112 Dr Michael Looker, Director, Australia Program, The Nature Conservancy noted that their partner organisations are beginning to provide funding to IPAs:

As an organisation we have only been here for a couple of years, so we are in the initial stages of thinking about that. Our partner organisations are working those managers, though, and essentially we have been working through them. In recent times, the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, for instance, has got more involved in Indigenous protected areas and management, and we have recently provided some funding for some of that work up on the Cape in particular.¹⁰⁸

Recommendation 9

9.113 The committee endorses the Gilligan report findings and recommends that the Commonwealth substantially increase funding to the Indigenous Protected Areas Programme, and that funding for this Programme also be provided by state and territory governments.

105 *Committee Hansard*, 31 March 2006, p. 101. See also *Committee Hansard*, 16 June 2006, pp 75–76.

106 *Submission 131*, p. 8.

107 Mr Peter Cochrane, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 60.

108 *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2006, p. 35.

Conclusion

9.114 A world-class conservation estate can only emerge through effective planning. The committee heard evidence of planning processes that have emerged at the national level, particularly through commitments to create a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system. These are supporting one of the most important parts of conservation planning: setting priorities and meeting targets for the conservation of under-represented ecosystems.

9.115 The committee also saw first hand some of the country's most spectacular parks, including a visit to the network of land tenures and reserves that make up the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in northern Queensland. Here the committee saw the importance of relationships between neighbours, and the crucial importance of conservation achieved not in isolation, but as an endeavour pursued within the social and ecological context of the surrounding landscape. Both at Uluru, and again in the Wet Tropics, committee members saw evidence of the benefits of engagement with Indigenous land holders in particular, but also barriers working against adequate recognition of their skills, knowledge and rights. Closer involvement of Indigenous stakeholders in management of Parks and other protected areas, and closer cooperation in planning processes between park managers and all stakeholders, together with more cross-jurisdictional cooperation, should deliver the planning necessary to create not only a CAR reserve system, but to sustain it in the face of the many threats and pressures that have already been outlined.