

**SENATE ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL PARKS,  
CONSERVATION RESERVES AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE  
PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION**

## **ECITA Inquiry into national parks – Environment and Heritage Portfolio**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (the Department) and portfolio agencies welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas. This submission incorporates the views of all agencies within the Australian Government's Environment and Heritage portfolio.

The Department and portfolio agencies support the development of networks of protected areas (including national parks) to conserve biodiversity, protect ecosystem services and provide nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities.

The Department and other portfolio agencies<sup>1</sup> have responsibility for a number of policy matters related to Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas.

The overview below provides the context for Australian Government involvement in these issues, a brief history, the location of the current parks, reserves and protected areas and their management arrangements.

#### **Context**

Responsibility for most terrestrial park management in Australia rests with the states and self-governing territories. However, the Australian Government manages a number of terrestrial parks including several located in Commonwealth territories (both internal and external).

Management of Australia's marine jurisdiction is shared between the Australian and state and territory governments. Unless otherwise determined in accordance with legislation, the state and Northern Territory governments are responsible for areas up to three nautical miles out from the territorial sea baseline (generally the low water mark). The Australian Government is responsible for all other waters within the outer limit of Australia's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone and may declare Commonwealth reserves over the Commonwealth marine area, which includes not only this exclusive economic zone but waters over the continental shelf. The Australian Government manages a number of marine protected areas located within Commonwealth waters. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park includes waters extending seaward from the low water mark of the Queensland coast.

The location of the Australian Government protected areas reflects the Commonwealth's constitutional responsibility for territories accepted by the Commonwealth under s.122 of the Constitution and for external affairs. In relation to marine protected areas, it reflects also Australia's rights and obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with respect to the territorial sea and exclusive economic zone and takes account of the Offshore Constitutional Settlement between the Australian Government and the states and Northern Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> Director of National Parks, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Bureau of Meteorology

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Australian Government terrestrial parks and marine protected areas are managed by the Director of National Parks and the Department under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), apart from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park which is managed by a separate Commonwealth statutory authority – the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

In this submission, each responsibility of the Environment and Heritage portfolio is explored against the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

### **History**

Australia has a long tradition in the declaration and management of reserves.

The first reserve to be declared in Australia was the Jenolan Caves Reserve (New South Wales) in 1866, closely followed by Tower Hill public park (Victoria) (which was upgraded in 1892 to national park status), and in 1871 Kings Park (Western Australia). The first national park was declared in 1879 – Royal National Park in New South Wales, followed in 1891 by Belair National Park in South Australia. Tasmania and Queensland began their declarations in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Mt Field and McPherson Ranges National Parks.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) defines a protected area as follows

*An area of land and /or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.*

It will be noted that the areas described in this submission have a variety of names including national park, marine protected area, marine park, reserve, national nature reserve. Despite this they all meet the above definition of a protected area.

The Australian Government's own parks service, the Director of National Parks, assisted by the then Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, was established in 1975 by the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*. The first terrestrial national parks were established under the Act in 1977 (Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park) and 1979 (Kakadu National Park). The *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* was replaced in 2000 by the EPBC Act. The Director and all parks and reserves established under the former Act continue under the EPBC Act.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was established in 1975 as a multiple-use marine park. It was declared a World Heritage Area<sup>2</sup> in 1981, internationally recognised for its outstanding natural values. It comprises one of the world's largest and most complex ecosystems, ranging from fringing coastal reefs to mid-shelf lagoons, outer reefs and then to the open ocean. As the world's largest coral reef ecosystem, and a comparatively pristine area with

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<sup>2</sup> Those parts of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area not included in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are islands under State (Queensland) jurisdiction; internal waters of Queensland (most of which are State Marine Parks); and a number of small exclusion areas (State waters) around major ports/urban centres.

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lower human pressure compared to other coral reef systems in the world, it is also a critical global resource.

Following the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the earliest marine reserves—Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve and Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve—were both declared on 16 August 1982 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*.

Australia ratified the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) on 18 June 1993 and it came into force on 29 December 1993. The international community has also agreed through the outcomes from the World Summit on Sustainable Development to work towards the establishment of a representative system of Marine Protected Areas by 2012. This commitment is being pursued in Australia under the initiative of the Australian and state and territory governments to establish the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

### **Current national parks, conservation areas and reserves**

Currently, in addition to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, there are six Commonwealth national parks, 13 marine protected areas and two botanic gardens. These properties managed by the Australian Government represent 3 per cent of Australia's terrestrial protected area estate counted in the National Reserves System. On the other hand, of Australia's current marine protected area estate, 98 per cent of the area is managed by the Australian Government.

### Terrestrial national parks, botanic gardens and marine protected areas

The total Australian (all governments) terrestrial protected area estate in November 2004 covered 80.89 million hectares or 10.52 per cent of the Australian land area<sup>3</sup>. The seven Australian Government managed terrestrial reserves cover a diverse range of ecosystems ranging from the unique systems found in the external island territories through to the desert landscapes of Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park (see Figure 1). In addition to the natural systems managed within national parks, the Australian Government is also responsible for the management of two botanic gardens, including the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra.

Location of the terrestrial reserves primarily in remote areas means that they provide significant social and economic benefits to surrounding areas. For example, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has estimated that Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park is responsible for generating an annual contribution of \$400 million to the Australian economy. All reserves provide employment and training opportunities for local residents. This is particularly important for those Aboriginal communities located in and around the Kakadu, Uluru – Kata Tjuta and Booderee National Parks that are managed jointly with Aboriginal traditional owners.

The Australian Government marine protected area estate is also very diverse, comprising marine reserves from the tropical north to the sub-Antarctic. They range in size from relatively small tropical reefs to extensive areas of oceanic waters. Some reserves are close

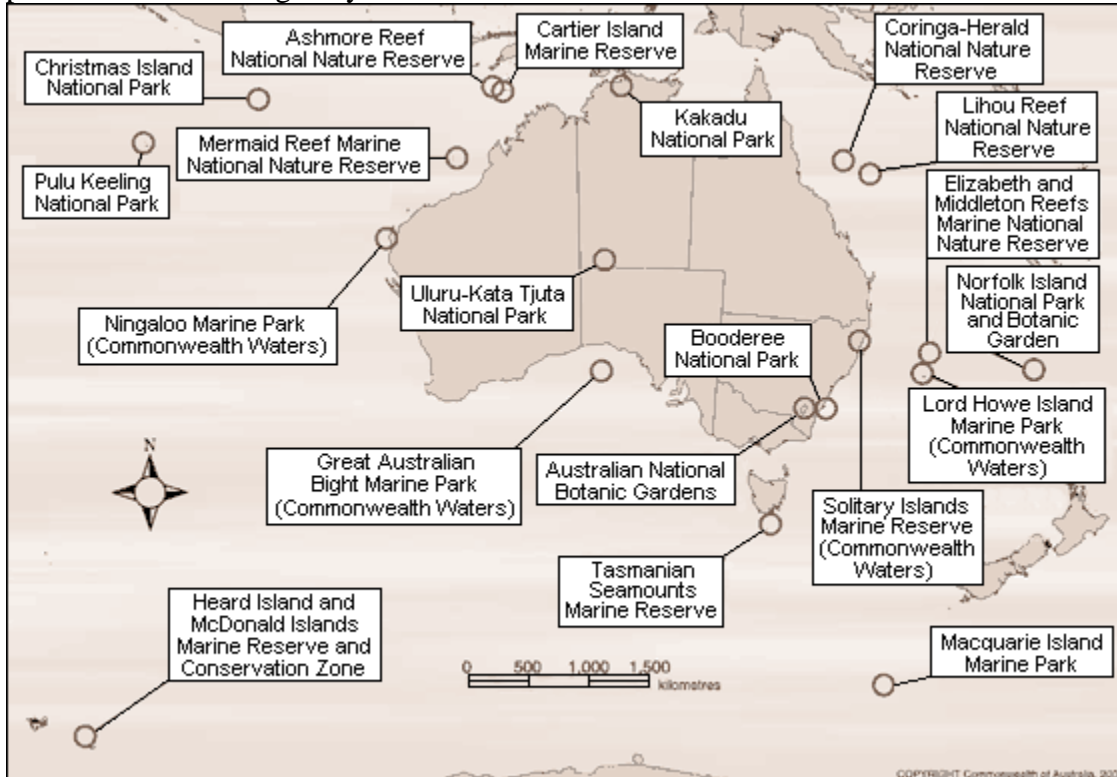
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<sup>3</sup>CAPAD 2004

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to the coast adjacent to reserves in state jurisdictions and managed cooperatively with the relevant state. Others are in remote locations a long way from shore and managed directly by the Australian Government.

Figure 1: Locations of Australian Government national parks, botanic gardens and marine protected areas managed by or on behalf of the Director of National Parks in 2004-05



### Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is unique in its size, extending more than 2,300 km along the Queensland coast, and covering approximately 344,400 square kilometres. It is one of the largest marine protected areas in the world (larger than the total area of Victoria and Tasmania combined) and extends from low water mark on the mainland coast, to the outer (seaward) boundary up to 280 km offshore. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was established in 1975 as a multiple-use marine park, allowing a range of ecologically sustainable uses with an overriding conservation objective; this means that most reasonable activities are permitted, but zoned and regulated to minimise impacts and conflicts.

The Great Barrier Reef is a significant component in the Australian economy which, along with other attractions in the region, contributes \$5.8 billion annually. This comprises \$5.1 billion from the tourism industry, \$610 million from recreational activity and \$149 million from commercial fishing<sup>4</sup>. This economic activity generates about 63 thousand jobs, mostly in the tourism industry, which brings over 1.9 million visitors to the Reef each year. About 69 thousand recreational vessels are registered in the area adjoining the Reef. The flow-on effect of these industries, which rely on the continued health of the Reef system

<sup>4</sup> Access Economics, 2005

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for long-term economic sustainability, underpins a significant and growing proportion of Queensland's regional economy.

### **Management arrangements**

Management arrangements within the Australian Government are spread across the Director of National Parks (assisted by Parks Australia, the Marine Division and the Australian Antarctic Division of the Department) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

#### The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks<sup>5</sup> is the statutory agency responsible for the Australian Government's protected area estate, both terrestrial and marine (with the exception of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park). The Director is assisted by Parks Australia, a division of the Department, in carrying out the Director's responsibilities for management of terrestrial reserves. Management of marine protected areas is undertaken on behalf of the Director of National Parks by the Department's Marine Division and Australian Antarctic Division.

#### *Terrestrial reserves*

The Director of National Parks and Parks Australia manage the seven terrestrial reserves (comprising six national parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens). There were 264 full-time equivalent staff around Australia, as at 1 July 2005.

Three of the six national parks, namely Kakadu National Park and Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory and Booderee National Park in the Jervis Bay Territory are managed jointly with their Aboriginal traditional owners. The other three national parks protect unique island ecosystems within the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island (located in the Indian Ocean) and the Norfolk Island Territory (in the South Pacific).

The Director of National Parks is a corporation sole under the EPBC Act. The corporation has a single director—the person appointed to the office that is also named the Director of National Parks. The current office holder is Mr Peter Cochrane.

The EPBC Act requires the Director to perform functions and exercise powers in accordance with any directions given by the Minister, unless the Act provides otherwise.

The EPBC Act provides for the proclamation and management of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones. The term 'Commonwealth reserves' includes all the areas proclaimed under the EPBC Act with names such as national parks, marine parks, national nature reserves, marine national nature reserves, marine reserves, and botanic gardens.

#### *Marine Protected Areas*

The Director of National Parks has delegated the management of 12 marine protected areas declared under the EPBC Act to the Marine Division of the Department. Management of Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve has been delegated to the Australian

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<sup>5</sup> The Director of National Parks is the name of the office holder and the name of the statutory authority established under the EPBC Act.

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Antarctic Division. All Australian Government marine reserves are listed in Table 1. The locations of these reserves can be seen on Figure 1.

Table 1: Australian Government marine protected areas declared under the EPBC Act

Name of Commonwealth Reserve	Date
	Declared
Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve	16 August 1982
Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve	16 August 1982
Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve	16 August 1983
Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve	23 December 1987
Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters)	20 May 1987 5 Aug 1992
Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve	10 April 1991
Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters)	3 March 1993
Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters)	22 April 1998
Macquarie Island Marine Park	27 October 1999
Tasmanian Seamounts Marine Reserve	19 May 1999
Lord Howe Island Marine Park	21 June 2000
Cartier Island Marine Reserve	21 June 2000
Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve	16 October 2002

### Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is established under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* as a Commonwealth Statutory Authority. The Authority is the principal adviser to the Australian Government on the planning and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

### A. VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

Values and objectives for the declaration and purpose of reserves have been developed from a range of policy agreements. The agreements give effect to a number of international and national policies including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the [National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development \(1992\)](#); and the [National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity \(1996\)](#).

The main goals of the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity are to protect biological diversity and to maintain ecological processes and systems. The Strategy states that central to the conservation of Australia's biological diversity is the following principle:

*the establishment of a comprehensive, representative and adequate system of ecologically viable protected areas integrated with the sympathetic management of all other areas, including agricultural and other resource production systems.*

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In addition, the Department adheres to the Australian Public Service Values<sup>6</sup>, and core values as set out in the Corporate Plan<sup>7</sup>, including caring for the environment. The Department's vision is 'A sustainable Australia'. Across the Department and portfolio agencies there are also a range of values and objectives set for reserves creation and management.

### Parks Australia

Parks Australia's mission for terrestrial parks and reserves includes to:

- assist the Minister and the Department of the Environment and Heritage in the conservation and appreciation of Australia's biological diversity and associated cultural heritage, through leadership and cooperation in the management of the Australian Government's protected areas;
- establish and manage Commonwealth reserves under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*; and
- assist with the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas in Australia.

### National Reserve System programme

The National Reserve System Programme was established in 1993. The national objective of the National Reserve System Programme is:

*To assist with the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of reserves in Australia.*

The National Reserve System Programme achieves this objective by working with all levels of government, industry and the community to:

1. establish and manage new, ecologically-significant protected areas for addition to Australia's terrestrial reserve system (National Reserve System);
2. provide incentives for Indigenous people to participate in the National Reserve System through voluntary declaration of protected areas on their lands and support for greater involvement of Indigenous people in the management of existing statutory protected areas;
3. provide incentives for landholders (both private landholders and leaseholders) to strategically enhance Australia's National Reserve System; and
4. develop and implement best practice standards for management of the National Reserve System.

Recently the Australian and state and territory governments re-affirmed their commitment to developing a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of terrestrial protected areas in the publication "*Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*"<sup>8</sup>. This document outlines the policy framework for the future development of the terrestrial component of the National Reserve System and will help guide aspects of the delivery of the National Reserve System programme. It represents the collective efforts of

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications02/values.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://draft.deh.gov.au/about/publications/corporate-plan/vision.html#places>

<sup>8</sup> Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005



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state and territory governments and the Australian government over several years to develop a common approach on key issues for the future of the national reserve system.

Further details are available from departmental publications including performance performance information for individual Commonwealth reserves included in the Director of Parks Annual Report 2004–05<sup>9</sup>.

### National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas

[Australia's Oceans Policy \(1999\)](#) outlines Australian Government actions towards the establishment of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA) in Commonwealth waters. Guidelines for the development of the NRSMPA were agreed by the then Australian and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council in 1998.

The Commonwealth Marine Protected Area Programme, managed by the Marine Division of the Department, is the vehicle for establishing the NRSMPA as part of regional marine planning.

The aim of the NRSMPA is to contribute to the long-term ecological viability of marine and estuarine systems, to maintain ecological processes and systems and to protect Australia's biological diversity at all levels. The NRSMPA exists within a broader range of national and state and territory mechanisms to achieve biodiversity conservation and the complementary sustainable management of Australia's marine jurisdiction.

The primary goal of the NRSMPA is to build a national system of marine protected areas that will be:

- Comprehensive - include marine protected areas that sample the full range of Australia's marine ecosystems;
- Adequate - include marine protected areas of appropriate size and configuration to ensure the conservation of marine biodiversity and integrity of ecological processes; and
- Representative – include marine protected areas that reflect the marine life and habitats of the area they are chosen to represent.

Some secondary goals of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas include:

- to promote integrated ecosystem management;
- to manage human activities;
- to provide scientific reference sites;
- to provide for the needs of species and ecological communities; and
- to provide for the recreational, aesthetic, cultural and economic needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, where these are compatible with the primary goal.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/index.html>

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### **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**

The Goal of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is:

*To provide for the protection, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef in perpetuity through the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.*

Subordinate to this primary Goal, the Corporate Plan 2004–2009 lists a number of Corporate Aims that need to be read in conjunction with the Goal and with each other<sup>10</sup>.

The Authority's legislative objectives are set out in section 5 of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Act 1975* and specific functions are defined in sections 7 and 7A<sup>11</sup>.

The Authority also operates within the statutory framework of the EPBC Act. Various other legislation under Commonwealth and Queensland State law, together with international conventions, also impact on governance and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, in consultation with the rest of the Environment Portfolio, ensures that its policies and decisions align with national strategies and policies and give locally appropriate effect to Australian Government priorities. For example, the recent rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef implements key components of the Australian Government's Oceans Policy relating to a commitment to integrated and ecosystem-based planning and management, and a representative system of marine protection. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was one of the key agencies involved in developing the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan that encompasses several policy initiatives of the Australian Government and provides an implementation framework at a regional level. The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and the rezoning are fundamental for maintaining the health and integrity of marine ecosystems, which is another key aspect of the Oceans Policy.

A wide range of systematic monitoring programs and other periodic assessments exist, and continue to be used to evaluate and report achievements against stated objectives. Since 2004–05, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has used seven Key Performance Indicators to provide information on the extent to which the Authority is achieving its Goal and proposed Outcomes. The seven Key Performance Indicators are derived from three major components of the Authority's Goal, and are linked to the seven Outputs in the Portfolio Budget Statement. Details of the seven Key Performance Indicators are in the Authority's Annual Report<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/about\\_gbrmpa/documents/gbrmpa\\_corporate\\_plan.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/about_gbrmpa/documents/gbrmpa_corporate_plan.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.frli.gov.au/comlaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/E067C2FA34D555BCCA256FB90030A6FD/\\$file/GrtBarrierRfMarPk1975WD02.pdf](http://www.frli.gov.au/comlaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/E067C2FA34D555BCCA256FB90030A6FD/$file/GrtBarrierRfMarPk1975WD02.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/publications/annual\\_reports/index.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/annual_reports/index.html)

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### **B. SUFFICIENT GOVERNMENT RESOURCES TO MEET OBJECTIVES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

This section sets out government appropriations to each of the management agencies responsible for Commonwealth reserves. In some cases revenue is also raised; for example, there are entry fees to Uluru National Park.

#### **Commonwealth Reserves under the EPBC Act**

The EPBC Act makes provision for funding the Director of National Parks. The Department receives the appropriation for the Director of National Parks. In effect, the Department purchases park management services from the Director to contribute to the Department's Outcome 1: *The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved.* The Director is the sole provider of statutory functions and powers for establishing and managing Commonwealth reserves.

The Department also has a cross-agency arrangement with the Director whereby the Department provides corporate services to the Director. The Department's Parks Australia Division supports the Director's work.

In the 2004–2005 financial year, the total revenue for the Director of National Parks was \$58.8 million, total expenses were \$59 million and staffing was 264, for 7 reserves covering 2 131 300 hectares<sup>13</sup>.

The Director of National Parks employed 264 staff as at 30 June 2005. The largest number of staff (124) are rangers, with 51 technical staff, 70 operational, policy and planning positions, seven cadets, eight park managers or section heads and four executive. The majority of staff work in Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. There are also small offices in remote locations, including Norfolk Island in the South Pacific Ocean and Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean.

In 2004–05, \$5.0 million including 21 staff was available for the establishment and management of Commonwealth marine protected areas. This figure increased to \$6.8 million including 25 staff in 2005–06.

Each of the seven terrestrial and 13 marine reserves has a management plan proclaimed under the EPBC Act, in place or in preparation. Each management plan has an implementation schedule which translates the aspirations of the management plan to the practical operational activities which are then reflected in work plans for staffing units and individuals.

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<sup>13</sup> Further detail can be found in the 2004–2005 Director of National Parks Annual Report (<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05>) and Department of Environment and Heritage Annual Report 2004–05 (<http://www.deh.gov.au/about/annual-report/04-05>).

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The day-to-day management arrangements for the current marine protected areas network vary from reserve to reserve. In some reserves management services are provided by state national parks agencies under business agreements with the Director of National Parks. In other reserves the Department of the Environment and Heritage directly manages the reserves and engages agencies such as the Australian Customs Service and state fisheries departments to provide compliance and enforcement services.

Through the NHT National Reserve System Programme, financial assistance of \$4.4 million was provided in 2004–05 to purchase or covenant 22 properties, covering 212,895 hectares of land for inclusion in the National Reserve System. The 254 projects approved to date for funding under the National Reserve System Programme exceed \$80 million and cover more than 20 million hectares.

### Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Details of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's financial operations and staffing resources are provided in the Authority's Annual Report<sup>14</sup>. The Authority's financial operations can be summarised as follows.

Total appropriation for 2004–05 of \$23.975 million (\$1.862 million more than 2003–04, primarily due to a change in 2003–04 to adjust the accounting treatment of the Special Appropriation from the collection of the Environmental Management Charge).

Revenue from other sources for 2004–05 was \$14.553 million (\$6.111 million more than 2003–04). This increase was primarily due to funding provided from the Natural Heritage Trust for education about the new Zoning Plan, compliance and enforcement of the new Zoning Plan and for monitoring of the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*. Revenue from Reef HQ admission sales and retail operations was up on 2003–04. In addition, a \$0.4 million Natural Heritage Trust grant was received to assist with measures to control crown-of-thorns starfish. Funding was also received from the Australian Greenhouse Office for the Great Barrier Reef Climate Change Programme.

Operating revenues by source in 2004–05 were:

Source	%
Commonwealth appropriation	43
Special Appropriation /Environment Management Charge	20
Queensland Government	13
Reef HQ Aquarium	6
Related Entity (eg Natural Heritage Trust)	16
Other	2

The operating expense of managing the Marine Park in 2004–05 was \$37.188 million (an increase of \$5.243 million from 2003–04). Employee expenses increased due to the second stage of the 2003–2006 Agency Certified Agreement and an increase in staff numbers associated with compliance and enforcement of the new Zoning Plan and the Climate Change Programme. Expenses for suppliers were higher than the previous year with resources

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/publications/annual\\_reports/AR2004-2005.pdf](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/annual_reports/AR2004-2005.pdf).

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allocated to the education phase and to the compliance and enforcement programme for the new Zoning Plan.

The Authority achieved an operating surplus of \$1.340 million in 2004–05 to offset the significant expenditure on implementation of the new Zoning Plan that resulted in an operating deficit of \$1.390 million in 2003–04.

Despite various complexities, the integrated governance and management model that has been functioning in the Great Barrier Reef has proven to be effective and successful. However, the actual size and complexity of the tasks to be addressed by the Day-to-Day Management Programme have increased markedly in line with the increasing pressures on the Park and management. In 2002–03, a number of reforms were implemented to provide improved focus and clear priorities based on risk-assessment and supported by enhanced reporting and accountability.

On 23 August 2005, the Australian Government announced a review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. This review will consider the functions of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the role of its office holders, accountability frameworks and consultation mechanism. The review will also consider the interaction between the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and the EPBC Act. It is expected that the review report will be provided to government in April 2006.

The Day-to-Day Management Programme, a jointly funded co-operative partnership between the Australian Government and the State of Queensland, coordinates the routine day-to-day activities and field operations required for the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area.

Implementation of the Day-to-Day Management Programme is undertaken by a number of Queensland and Australian Government agencies working under contract or other less formal arrangements with the Authority. For example, the major work provider, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, operates under a memorandum of understanding and a jointly agreed annual business programme. Other government agencies involved in day-to-day management include the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, the Queensland Water Police, Coastwatch, the National Marine Unit (Customs), and the Australian Federal Police.

This fundamental working relationship between the Authority and the Queensland Government and various State and Australian Government agencies is of critical importance for effective management of the Great Barrier Reef, and consequently is afforded high priority by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Board and the Executive. In carrying out its functions, the Authority maintains strong partnership with a wide range of agencies, stakeholders, and community members with an interest in the protection, wise use, understanding and enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef.

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### **C. THREATS TO OBJECTIVES AND MANAGEMENT**

To achieve the Australian Government and joint management objectives and to manage national parks, other conservation areas and marine protected areas, a range of threats must be mitigated. There are a range of conservation risks including invasive species (pests) both marine and terrestrial, human induced impacts, climate change and natural events.

#### **Conservation risks**

##### Invasive Species (Pests) both Marine and Terrestrial

###### *Terrestrial Parks*

Invasive species pose a significant threat to the conservation of biodiversity and cultural values in protected areas. Examples of invasive species which have had or are having significant impacts are cane toads, salvinia and *Mimosa pigra* in Kakadu, crazy ants on Christmas Island, buffel grass in Uluru, bitou bush, foxes and cats in Booderee. Management of these invasive pests is addressed in the plans of management and annual operating plans.

###### *Marine Protected Areas*

To manage invasive marine pests the Department cooperates with Australian, state and territory government agencies in the National System for the Prevention and Management of Introduced Marine Pest Incursions. The National System is a way for government agencies to coordinate their efforts to control new pest outbreaks, pest control plans, and administer Australia's international convention responsibilities through a coastal regime for managing ballast water and biofouling.

The Department manages existing and potential invasive species through:

- conducting scientific baseline surveys of park biota in both marine and terrestrial environments. For example monitoring seabird nesting on Macquarie Island; and
- conducting risk assessments of invasion by marine pests, such as at Macquarie Island which is serviced by vessels which often sail from Hobart, a port with a suite of recently established marine pests including the Pacific sea star.

Marine protected area management measures include:

- active management controls of activities in reserves via a permit system, which includes quarantine measures; and
- direct controls of invasive pests and weeds through development and implementation of eradication plans.

##### Human induced impacts

###### *Parks Australia*

On average about 30 per cent of park budgets are allocated to visitor management. Visitors to national parks create opportunities and pressures. Opportunities include raising awareness and appreciation of the values of our natural and cultural landscapes and their plants and animals; education; enjoyment; healthy activities; and business opportunities for local communities. Pressures include physical and social impacts; pressures on and adequacy of infrastructure; and cultural impacts.

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### *Marine Protected Areas*

The Commonwealth marine protected area estate is designed to minimise human induced impacts on the marine environment to the greatest extent possible, while still allowing for certain uses compatible with the reserve values and objectives. Each marine protected area has had a risk assessment completed. This is designed to highlight the threats posed by human activities to reserve values, and inform the development of management responses to mitigate these threats.

Examples of human impacts on marine protected areas are:

- illegal fishing;
- the deliberate or accidental capture of protected species;
- damage to physical habitat through poor anchoring practices or trawling;
- interference with protected species such as cetaceans, birds or sharks by sightseers or divers not following the relevant guidelines or permit conditions;
- ship or boating accidents resulting in physical habitat damage and pollution; and
- the introduction of invasive species through vectors such as vessel hulls and ballast water.

For example, illegal fishing poses a direct threat as it diminishes the resource, interferes with the conservation of the protected area and (in the case of illegal longlining) directly threatens non target species such as albatrosses and petrels. Unregulated and Unreported fishing outside of Australia's exclusive economic zone has an indirect, but potentially severe impact on marine resources, biodiversity and the conservation values of marine protected areas by directly depleting fish stock which straddle Australia's exclusive economic zone. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources estimated that hundreds of thousands of sea birds have been killed by unregulated longline fishing since 1996.

### *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park*

Poor water quality is the greatest ubiquitous threat to marine species and marine ecosystems, particularly due to cumulative impacts, in the Great Barrier Reef. By far the greatest source of pollution leading to reduced water quality is land-based human activity.

Unsustainable fishing activities, whether commercial or recreational, can affect target and non-target species as well as their habitats, and consequently have the potential for producing ecological effects in both the fished areas and the adjoining areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Great Barrier Reef continues to be under pressure from a wide range of human use and natural impacts though the impacts are difficult to predict. Neither the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area nor the Marine Park are static and use patterns and technology are constantly changing. For example, the scale of use of the Marine Park has escalated rapidly in the 30 years since its establishment.

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Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has the potential to contribute in a positive manner to socio-economic gains, but at the same time, unless it is carefully managed, it also has the potential to cause environmental degradation, and the loss of local opportunities and traditional cultures.

### Climate Change

#### *Terrestrial Parks*

The principle concern associated with climate change impacts on Kakadu National Park is seawater intrusion to the extensive freshwater floodplains. The draft 5<sup>th</sup> management plan for Kakadu National Park<sup>15</sup> provides for monitoring the effects of saltwater intrusion and for the implementation of actions and programmes, where feasible, that will mitigate against the impacts of saltwater on significant freshwater habitats.

Recognising the importance of climate change as a key management risk, Parks Australia will be preparing a discussion paper on the potential implications of climate change for the management of Commonwealth Reserves.

#### *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park*

Of all the emerging issues facing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and marine environments worldwide, climate change is one of the most challenging. It is now considered to be a real, serious and long-term threat to our marine ecosystems, with the potential for changes to marine environments.

#### *Marine Protected Areas*

Within each marine protected area, management activities are undertaken to conserve the ecological values outlined in each reserve's management plan. Climate change, in particular, global warming, poses a threat to key biodiversity values of some marine protected areas.

Significant rises in sea water temperature over the last 5–7 years has resulted in coral bleaching events worldwide, including a number of marine protected areas in Australia. Marine reserve managers now need to consider options to monitor the onset of a likely coral bleaching event, manage the reserve in a way that reduces as far as possible all other pressures and have strategies at hand to respond post-event.

### Natural Events

#### *Terrestrial Parks and conservation areas*

Fires are both a threat and a management tool in reserves managed by the Director of National Parks. Considerable resources must be allocated to fire management, particularly where the safety of visitors and residents is at risk as well as where sensitive cultural and natural values need protecting.

In both Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, fire is used by park management and traditional owners as a management tool, as outlined in each management plan.

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<sup>15</sup> [www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/kakadu/mp-draft.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/kakadu/mp-draft.html)



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National parks incorporate areas of diverse environmental systems. Many are located in areas where bushfires, cyclones and storm surge pose a potential threat to the sustainable management of biodiversity and cultural sites.

### *Marine Protected Areas*

The impacts of natural events on the values of marine protected areas can be significant and virtually impossible to manage. Cyclones, high sea surface temperatures and naturally occurring invasive species, can all impact seriously on marine protected areas and the values for which they are declared.

Cyclones have caused damage, such as coral loss, to a number of marine protected areas. Recovery can be slow. Invasive species that are believed to have naturally established on the terrestrial areas of some marine protected areas have also impacted visibly on vegetation and seabirds.

Some recent research at Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reef Reserves shows that a combination of cyclone damage and coral mortality due to high water temperatures has resulted in a significant reduction of live coral cover. Conversely, at Elizabeth and Middleton Reef Reserve, coral is showing signs of significant recovery following previous cyclone and crown-of-thorns starfish damage.

Given the limited management options available to respond to natural events, a heavy emphasis is placed on research and monitoring as well as ensuring that any impacts by reserve users are minimised where appropriate.

## **D. GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CREATION AND MANAGEMENT**

The responsibilities of the Australian Government are set out in a range of legislation and policies.

### **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act**

The Director of National Parks is responsible for the administration of Divisions 4 and 5 of Part 15 of the EPBC Act (Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones) and regulations made for the purposes of those divisions. The functions of the Director as set out in subsection 514B(1) of the EPBC Act are:

- to administer, manage and control Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- to protect, conserve and manage biodiversity and heritage in Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- to cooperate with any country in matters relating to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves in that country
- to provide, and assist in the provision of, training in the knowledge and skills relevant to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves
- to carry out alone or in cooperation with other institutions and persons, and to arrange for any other institution or person to carry out, research and investigations relevant to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves
- to make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves

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- to administer the Australian National Parks Fund
- any other functions conferred on the Director under any other Act
- to do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the functions mentioned above.

The Director may delegate functions and powers under section 515 of the Act. As noted earlier, management of marine protected areas has been delegated to the Marine Division and Australian Antarctic Division of the Department.

The holder of the office of Director of National Parks has been delegated functions and powers by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Secretary of the Department of the Environment and Heritage for the National Reserve System Programme—a programme of the NHT.. Parks Australia staff administer this programme.

Section 366 of the EPBC Act requires the Director, or in the case of a jointly managed park, the Director and the relevant Board of Management, to prepare management plans for Commonwealth reserves. Management plans provide for the protection and conservation of the reserve. They must state how the reserve is to be managed and how the features of the reserve are to be protected and conserved.

At January 2006, the Director was responsible for the management of 20 Commonwealth reserves, 18 of which had management plans in place. Plans for the remaining two reserves are in preparation.

Parks Australia routinely prepares management plan implementation schedules to identify how and when each of the prescriptions in a management plan will be implemented. As such, implementation schedules contribute to determining the annual work plans for individual reserves.

### National Reserve System Programme for identification and declaration

The establishment of the National Reserve System Programme under the Australian Government's NHT in 1997 represented a major investment towards the development of the national reserve system in conjunction with existing acquisition programmes operating within each state and territory.

The Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) is the primary framework for measuring and monitoring progress towards meeting comprehensive, adequate and representative objectives. Guidance for the selection of areas for inclusion in the national reserve system were developed cooperatively with state and territory governments<sup>16</sup>; with a series of goals including:

- to contain samples of all ecosystems identified at an appropriate regional scale;
- to contain areas which are refugia or centres of species richness or endemism;
- to consider the ecological requirements of rare or threatened species and rare or threatened ecological communities and ecosystems, in particular those listed in the

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<sup>16</sup> *Australian Guidelines for Establishing the National Reserve System*, Commonwealth of Australia 1999

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- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and other state, territory and local government legislation or policy instruments; and
- to take account of special groups of organisms, eg. species with specialized habitat requirements or wide-ranging or migratory species, or species vulnerable to threatening processes that may depend on reservation for their conservation.

Within this context, priority for funding the establishment of new protected areas is being given to viable samples of native ecosystems or key fauna habitats in high priority bioregions, or poorly protected ecosystems/fauna habitats of national/state importance in other bioregions. Where large areas of remnants do not exist, priority is given to those areas managed as part of a larger network of protected areas to assist in maintaining the long-term viability of native biota. High priority bioregions are those with very low levels of reservation and high levels of threat to native biota.

Future priorities for the further development of the national reserve system are being reviewed as part of the implementation of the “*Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach*”<sup>17</sup>.

### National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas

The Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia (IMCRA) and the more recent National Marine Bioregionalisation of Australia (NMBA) is the primary framework for measuring progress towards meeting the Government’s comprehensive, adequate and representative objectives for marine protected areas.

IMCRA, was agreed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council in 1998, to be the regional framework for planning resource use and biodiversity conservation including establishing the NRSMPA. The framework’s ecosystem-scale (100s – 1000s kilometres) classification of the Australian continental shelf has identified 60 bioregions in Australian waters. The Marine Bioregionalisation of Australia, released in 2005, complements the IMCRA management framework by extending regionalisations beyond the continental shelf to cover all of Australia’s exclusive economic zone.

As the agreed planning framework for marine conservation, IMCRA provides the basis for developing a nationally agreed policy framework to support the identification and selection of marine protected areas. IMCRA continues to underpin the identification and selection of marine protected areas and jurisdictions seek to locate at least one marine protected area in each bioregion as part of developing the NRSMPA. This aim is set out in the Guidelines for Establishing the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas agreed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council in 1998.

Each jurisdiction is responsible for the implementation of the NRSMPA through the IMCRA framework in their waters. For example, Victoria has recently established a representative network of marine protected areas and South Australia has announced a series of candidate marine protected areas. The Australian Government has taken considerable steps to meet its

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<sup>17</sup> Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005.

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obligations under the NRSMPA, with the release of 14 candidate marine protected areas in the South-east marine region, and with work on identifying representative marine protected areas in the Northern planning area and the South-west region ongoing.

While each jurisdiction is responsible for implementing the NRSMPA in a manner which best suits the particular requirements of their respective marine areas, all jurisdictions are represented on the Marine Protected Areas Working Group. This Working Group is established as a sub-committee of the Marine and Coastal Committee of the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, and is charged with overseeing the implementation of the NRSMPA policy in a consistent manner across all jurisdictions.

### **The Great Barrier Reef**

A range of activities is undertaken to ensure the protection of the Great Barrier Reef now and into the future. For example, the revised Zoning Plan, which came into effect on 1 July 2004, provided an increase in the protection for the Great Barrier Reef. Whilst the entire Marine Park has legislative protection, now 33.3 per cent (over 114,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of the Marine Park is within the world's largest network of highly protected zones.

A healthy Great Barrier Reef means a secure economy, and coastal communities can continue to enjoy the Reef with certainty that these benefits will flow onto future generations. Managing this complex task requires balancing reasonable human use with the maintenance of the area's natural and cultural integrity. The enormity of the task is due, in part, to the sheer size and diversity of the Marine Park, its economic importance, the political interests (local, state, national and international) and the jurisdictional complexities determined by Australia's system of Federalism. Moreover, the close proximity of rural and urban populations to the coast, the range of users and interest groups whose use patterns frequently compete with each other, the need for equity and fairness in facilitating use and access to the Marine Park, and the ecological diversity of the region are all factors that the management and policy framework need to consider.

In addition to the Day-to-Day Management arrangements, Queensland Government agencies with state responsibilities for policy co-ordination, environment, local government, maritime matters, catchments and land use and fisheries are actively involved in administration and management of issues pertinent to the health and operation of the Marine Park. To carry out its functions effectively, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority maintains comprehensive liaison and policy co-ordination arrangements with all of these, both at the operational and strategic levels. This close working partnership between Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has evolved over 30 years, including such aspects as complementary zoning and joint permits. This strong working partnership has ensured the effective management of the complex and inter-related mix of marine, coastal and island issues, and provides for integrated management of the Great Barrier Reef on a whole-of-ecosystem basis. This situation is unique in terms of management of marine and coastal areas involving multiple jurisdictions around the world.

The Authority also recognises that the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Act 1975* has not been holistically reviewed for a long time and there is currently a review to ensure the Act accords with best practice and provides greater complementarity and harmonisation with

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the Australian Government's primary legislation for environmental regulation, the EPBC Act.

### **E. THE RECORD OF GOVERNMENTS ON CREATION AND MANAGEMENT**

The successful record of the Australian Government in the creation and management of the parks, reserves and marine protected areas within its jurisdiction is well documented. There is regular monitoring and review of the National Reserve System and marine protected areas management arrangements. The State of the Parks Report details the performance for each reserve. The government also seeks to continuously improve the management and protection of its reserves.

#### **Parks Australia**

Each year the Director of National Parks prepares a State of the Parks report which appears as part of the Annual Report. The State of the Parks reports are drawn from the more detailed park profiles<sup>18</sup>. A full list of these reports is at Appendix A.

The State of the Parks report summarises:

- each reserve's biogeographic context;
- the relevance of international agreements;
- the occurrence of species listed under the EPBC Act as threatened, migratory or marine, and the status of relevant recovery plans;
- information on the total number of different types of plant and animal species recorded, to the extent of available knowledge;
- major monitoring efforts for the year;
- future planning and future challenges;
- management arrangements (such as boards of management, committees, management agreements with state agencies); and
- information by key result area on major issues, actions and performance results for 2004–05.

An understanding of Australian Government achievements in the six national parks, Australian National Botanic Gardens and 13 marine protected areas, can best be gained by reviewing the State of the Parks reports. The reports are readily available on the internet and have not been reproduced for this Submission. The State of the Parks reports also highlight the good administration, funds management and planning adhered to in the Australian government managed parks, conservation areas and reserves. The range of achievements in joint management, community involvement and conservation and biodiversity outcomes to name a few are however, best demonstrated by reference to some example case studies. These can be viewed in full in the State of the Parks reports. Some example highlights are included below for interest.

For example the Christmas Island report<sup>19</sup> provides details of crab road crossings installed for the the largest and most diverse land crab community in the world, the Island's 90 million

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/sotpr.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/christmas.html>

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red crabs (*Gecarcoidea natalis*.) The crossings have helped reduce crab mortality from vehicles to around 300,000 per migration season, down from the million or so that were killed before these management measures were introduced.

This report also details the crazy ant control programme on Christmas Island.



*A crab's eye view of a roadway 'crab crossing'.*

The Kakadu National Park report<sup>20</sup> includes the Uwagi – Aboriginal burning and research on country project proposed by the Limilngan traditional owners from Kakadu.



*Limilngan traditional owners and park staff burning a firebreak along Kakadu's north western boundary*

Around Uluru, Conservation Volunteers Australia have, for four years, been involved in the buffel grass eradication programme. Now, with the Mutitjulu Green Corps programme launched in April 2005, park staff and community members work on eradicating buffel grass within the Mutitjulu community, propagating native plants to rehabilitate the cleared area and building fences. As well as improving the environment in the community, Green Corps is helping *Anangu* men and women to develop skills in land management<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/kakadu.html>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/uluru.html>

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*Volunteers removing buffel grass*

In 2003, Booderee National Park entered into a contract relationship with the Centre for Resource and Environmental Science at the Australian National University to study the impact of Booderee's fire management strategy on the fauna of the park. Achievements to date include rediscovering, in 2006, the white-footed dunnart, a small carnivorous marsupial apparently absent from the Park for 28 years. An even more striking finding was that the endangered Eastern Bristlebird is much more common and widespread in the national park than previously thought.

### **Marine protected areas**

The Australian Government has made significant progress over the past decade in extending the estate of Commonwealth marine protected areas. The total area of Commonwealth waters protected has almost doubled since 1998 (having been around 35 million hectares from 1980 to 1998 the total area covered by Commonwealth marine reserves, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, is now 61,724,080 ha).

In recent years the declaration of significant reserves in southern temperate waters such as the Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters), the Macquarie Island Marine Park, the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve and the Tasmanian Seamounts Marine Reserve have significantly increased the representation of temperate and sub Antarctic waters in the Commonwealth Reserve system.

### Regional Marine Planning

Consistent with Australia's Oceans Policy, the Australian Government develops systems of representative marine protected areas in Commonwealth waters as part of a broader regional marine planning process.

The South-east Marine Region was the first region identified for planning under Australia's Oceans Policy. The South-east Regional Marine Plan was released in May 2004 and this was the first time the regional marine planning process has been used to strategically design a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine protected areas in Commonwealth waters. It was also the first time a system-wide approach has been taken to establish representative marine protected areas within a large-scale deep offshore marine region.

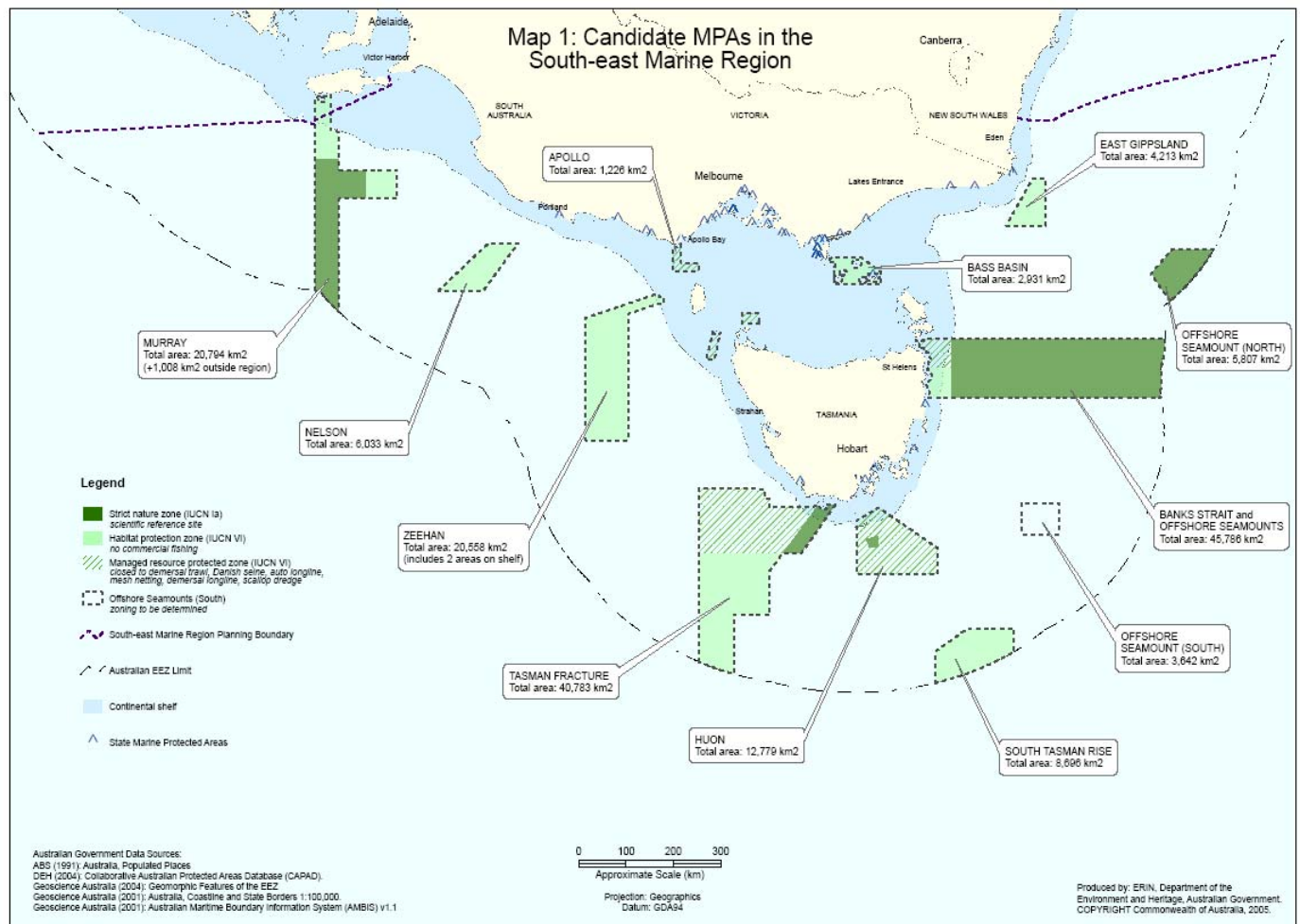
On 14 December 2005 the Australian Government released proposals for an extensive network of up to 14 marine protected areas covering 171,000 square kilometres of

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Commonwealth waters in the South-east Marine Region off Tasmania, Victoria, eastern South Australia and far southern New South Wales. The proposed marine protected area network was subject to public consultation during January and February and the Australian Government is planning to have the final marine protected area boundaries settled by April 2006 and formally declared under the EPBC Act by the end of 2006 (See Figure 3).

The South-east Marine Region's system of representative Marine Protected Areas will build on the two existing Commonwealth Marine Protected Areas in the region (the Tasmanian Seamounts Marine Reserve and the Macquarie Island Marine Park) as well as complementing marine protected areas established in adjoining state waters.

Figure 3 Map of South-east Australia showing candidate Marine Protected Areas.



### Marine Protected Areas Management

Twelve of the 13 marine protected areas managed under the provisions of the EPBC Act have management plans in place and one plan is in preparation. Management of the Marine Reserves declared under the EPBC Act has concentrated in recent years on increasing the efficiency and consistency of management processes across the estate, particularly in the



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areas of compliance and enforcement and performance assessment. Details of the management achievements and challenges can be found in the 2004–5 Annual Report of the Director of National Parks<sup>22</sup>.

The Department of the Environment and Heritage works closely with other government departments to enforce the EPBC Act. The Department has improved its communication and cooperation with its partners through workshops that address issues including risk management, surveillance and response coordination, permitting and performance assessment.

As an example, advanced training has been provided to state-based law enforcement officers who have Commonwealth law enforcement responsibilities, to make best use of the full range of enforcement options available under the EPBC Act. The training gives officers the knowledge they need to tackle illegal activities in marine protected areas and in Commonwealth waters generally.

There are currently 116 law enforcement officers appointed to manage marine related incidents under the EPBC Act. Of these, 23 officers are from the Department, 50 are from the Australian Customs Service and 43 are from partner state agencies.



*Warden training aboard an Australian Customs Service vessel*

Scientific monitoring in marine parks has helped to improve understanding and management strategies to address threats to, for example:

- remote coral reefs (tropical survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Marine Science in 2003 improved understanding of the impacts and thresholds of bleaching events in tropical Commonwealth marine protected areas);
- soft-bottom benthic habitats (research by the South Australian Research and Development Institute in 2002 established an initial baseline and demonstrated the design of the Benthic Protection Zone in the Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters) is adequate and representative of the highly diverse benthic communities in the region);
- seamount communities (a study by CSIRO in 2001 provided insight on the diversity and endemism of the seamounts communities, clarified the relations between benthic and pelagic assemblages and demonstrated the adequacy of the zonation design of the Tasmanian Seamounts Marine Reserve); and

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/index.html>

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- whales (data collected over 13 years in the Great Australian Bight have resulted in a catalogue of over 500 individuals, which return to the park regularly).

A series of strategic plans for research and monitoring are being developed and finalised in order to guide future monitoring efforts and ensure that critical information is collected to evaluate and improve management effectiveness in the future.

Effective communication with Reserve users is a key to good management. The widespread use of advisory material in the form of brochures, website, face to face meetings, visitor centre displays and signs help to provide Reserve users with information regarding the values of each reserve and the rules for visiting the reserve. In addition the provisions of the EPBC Act provide significant opportunities for interested people to be involved in the declaration of new reserves and in the development of management plans for the reserves.

### Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

The government has put a high priority on meeting the wide range of challenges by improving the management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef. For example, in recent years the government has:

- developed a comprehensive *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan* (a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments), to help maintain the health and resilience of the Great Barrier Reef;
- passed Regulations which prohibit operations for the recovery of minerals in those parts of the Great Barrier Reef Region not currently part of the Marine Park;
- ensured that the major environmental improvements gained in recent years are well explained to the community, through the establishment of the Community Partnerships Group and four Regional Offices, and the use of a range of local and expertise-based Advisory Committees;
- in 2004, 28 coastal areas originally excluded from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park were added in recognition of their significant biological values and active use;
- established a world-first network of 16 Dugong Protection Areas in the southern Great Barrier Reef;
- developed a strong enforcement and compliance framework to reflect community demands for increased on-park policing;
- developed strong links with research providers, and published a set of clear research priorities to better inform management;
- developed with Queensland, trawl and reef line management plans that will satisfy the requirements for ecologically sustainable fishing; this includes a cap on fishing effort with a subsequent reduction to sustainable levels, as well as protection of areas from trawling and the mandatory use of by-catch reduction devices and turtle excluder devices on trawl nets within the World Heritage Area;
- passed Regulations for the management of aquaculture effluent which may impact on Great Barrier Reef waters and worked with Queensland to ensure ongoing implementation of provisions for aquaculture effluent management;
- entered into negotiations, in conjunction with Queensland, for the development of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements with a number of Traditional

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Owner groups, and recently signed the first agreement with Girringun Traditional Owners whose sea country includes the Hinchinbrook area;

- passed Regulations giving full legal effect to the Cairns, Whitsundays and Hinchinbrook Plans of Management, effectively managing potential conflicts of use and tourism development while protecting the natural values and amenity in the most heavily visited areas off Cairns, Whitsundays and Hinchinbrook;
- finalised a reef-wide tourism framework, in partnership with industry and the community, which provides for improved management of tourism activities (tourism continues to dominate the economic activity on the Reef, accounting for eighty-seven percent of the Gross Value of Production generated by the Marine Park);
- improved ship safety, with a comprehensive review of ship safety and pollution prevention measures in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area;
- established a reef protection programme with public moorings and reef protection marker buoys installed in many high use locations reef-wide;
- ensured stronger protection of whales and dolphins with a new conservation policy including the implementation of tourism permits for swimming with dwarf minke whales and an associated monitoring programme to assess the ecological sustainability of that industry;
- published a comprehensive basis for the management of rare and threatened species in the Marine Park and developed a number of policies based on that review; and
- introduced the Reef Guardians Schools Programme that has now spread to over 180 schools, producing positive changes in community actions and attitudes along the coast.

The Australian Government is also working with Queensland to:

- ensure that as soon as is practicable all fishing activities in the Marine Park are subject to management plans which are ecologically sustainable; and
- review and amend legislation relating to the use of mesh nets in Dugong Protection Areas along the coast to further reduce the threats to dugong.

The new regulatory framework introduced as part of the rezoning improves the conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the Marine Park. It brings great benefits to the conservation of the entire Great Barrier Reef ecosystem as well as providing benefits for all users and industries dependent on the Great Barrier Reef. It will enhance significantly the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef, assist industry to achieve increased levels of environmental and financial sustainability, and help to ensure the Great Barrier Reef and the surrounding areas remain as a healthy and sustainable ecosystem into the future.

Whilst the rezoning is a fundamental component, essential for conserving habitats and ecosystem processes, the Authority is well aware that the rezoning alone will not ensure the future of the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority therefore continues to implement a range of key strategies to increase the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef to cope with increasing pressures, including:

- improving water quality (*Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*)
- promoting sustainable fisheries (*Queensland Fisheries Management Plans*)
- developing sound policy regarding the effects of climate change on reefs (*Climate Change Action Plan*)

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- promoting sustainable tourism (*by implementing aspects of the Australian Government Tourism White Paper (2003)*)

## State of the Parks report

State of the Parks reports can be found at the following sites:

Australian National Botanic Gardens

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/anbg.html>

Booderee National Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/anbg.html>

Christmas Island National Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/christmas.html>

Kakadu National Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/kakadu.html>

Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/norfolk.html>

Pulu Keeling National Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/pulukeeling.html>

Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/uluru.html>

Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/ashmore.html>

Cartier Island Marine Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/cartier.html>

Coringa–Herald National Nature Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/coringa.html>

Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/elizabeth.html>

Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters)

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/gab.html>

Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve and Conservation Zone

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/himi.html>

Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/lihou.html>

Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters)

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/lordhowe.html>

Macquarie Island Marine Park

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/macquarie.html>

Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/mermaid.html>

Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters)

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/ningaloo.html>

Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters)

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/solitary.html>

Tasmanian Seamounts Marine Reserve

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/seamounts.html>

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Calperum and Taylorville Stations

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/publications/annual/04-05/calperum.html>

The State of the Parks report presents systematic and consistent background information on each Commonwealth reserve proclaimed under the EPBC Act as well as the additional responsibility of Calperum and Taylorville Stations.

The following information is common to the reports on each place:

- **Area and locational information** derived from the Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) is provided.

The State of the Great Barrier Reef Report can be found at:

[http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/publications/sotr/index.html](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/sotr/index.html)

The World Conservation Union (**IUCN**) **protected area management category** is identified for each reserve, and where parts of the reserve come under different categories this is indicated. The IUCN categories are formally assigned under the EPBC Act, and schedule 8 of the EPBC Regulations defines the Australian IUCN reserve management principles applying to each category.