



14 March 2006

Committee Secretary  
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the  
Arts  
Reference Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**  
Email: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au

**Foundation for  
National Parks &  
Wildlife**

ABN 90107744771

Level 6/2 Bligh Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

GPO Box 2666  
Sydney NSW 2001

**P: (02) 9221 1949**  
**F: (02) 9233 3615**  
**E: fnpw@fnpw.org.au**  
**W: www.fnpw.org.au**

## **Submission for the Senate Inquiry into Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas**

The Australian community can contribute significantly to meeting the objectives of Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas through the provision of funds and resources to assist Government park managers.

The public requires avenues through which they can be involved in and support national parks in a positive manner.

This submission provides an insight into the role that an environmental philanthropy organisation can play in engaging the public to provide this support. It is also an invitation to Governments to support, promote and encourage environmental philanthropy to increase funding and resources for the Australian protected area system.

### **Introduction:**

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife makes this submission to the inquiry as a private not-for-profit organisation that raises funds and awareness for the conservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

Since 1970 our donors have contributed more than \$38 million that has;

- added over 350,000 hectares of land to the National Reserve system
- saved 3 endangered species from extinction, the Lord Howe Island Woodhen, the NSW population of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby and the Mallee Fowl
- funded recovery actions for over 40 threatened plant and animal species – scientific research, monitoring, surveys, genetic testing, captive breeding, feral pest control & monitoring, weed control, habitat restoration, recovery plans, community awareness & education programs, volunteer activities, rescue and rehabilitation, plans of management

- built park infrastructure for visitors – visitor centres, boardwalks, look-outs
- educated the public about the need for conservation of parks – school education programs, interpretive signage and displays, publications, awareness-raising programs, guided tours
- facilitated volunteering for parks – bush regeneration, fundraising
- conserved cultural heritage in parks – Aboriginal and European built heritage, historic site purchase, interpretation of sites, training for aboriginal tour guides

The Foundation accomplishes its work on-ground through funding projects that are undertaken by land conservation managers, particularly Government agencies. We work cooperatively with land management agencies, assisting them in achieving their conservation objectives in protected areas.

We see this as a job for the entire community and offer ways for the public to get involved in a positive, proactive manner. We believe there is plenty of work to do in conserving our natural and cultural heritage and support Governments to reach their conservation goals.

## Terms of Reference

**The funding and resources available to meet the objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to:**

- a) the values and objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;**

The Australian protected area system protects areas of natural, cultural and social significance for the benefit of current and future generations.

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife assists Governments with funds and programs to protect these values in our national parks.

We are committed to creating safe habitats for our native species and to conserve **biodiversity**. This commitment is based not only on purchasing land for national parks, but also on caring for the acquired land.

The Foundation researches other reasons why many **native species** are disappearing and what is needed to bring them back from the brink of extinction; habitat regeneration, pest eradication and short and long-term recovery projects.

Our cultural heritage, the legacy of **Aboriginal and European history**, is a vital part of Australia's identity. Our national parks protect the diverse traces of people's connections with the land, including Aboriginal sites, the

built heritage of the colonisation years and cultural landscapes of early rural Australia.

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife funds the preservation of our heritage icons to protect them as sources of inspiration for future generations of Australians and **visitors from across the world**.

Bushwalking takes us into the heart of our national parks and wilderness areas and lets us truly experience the beauty and diversity of Australia's natural heritage. At the same time every visitor to a national park or wilderness area has an impact on the natural environment.

Well established and maintained **walking tracks** protect both bushwalkers and the surrounding native vegetation. By funding walkways and viewing platforms we enable people to enjoy Australia's natural environment without damaging it. We also fund special facilities for the mobility impaired, so that everyone can go bush.

Only when we understand our fragile natural environment will we be able to conserve it. To **grow appreciation and awareness** of environmental issues we fund projects that inform about the need for conservation and about the many ways in which people can get involved.

**b) whether governments are providing sufficient resources to meet those objectives and their management requirements;**

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife was founded in 1970 by the Premier of New South Wales, the Honourable Tom Lewis. He saw that the NSW Government was not able to provide all necessary funds to create and maintain the national parks system and that a private philanthropic foundation was needed to gain the support of the public.

The Foundation funds projects for which public funding is not available. These projects include high profile conservation efforts of national importance.

Using donor funds, in the early 1970's the Foundation purchased some of the first parks in NSW – Sturt, Bouddi, Yathong and Myall Lakes. In the past year we have acquired additions to Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, Morton National Park and Dural Nature Reserve.

The purchase of Coturaundee Nature Reserve in Mutawintji National Park was to save the last habitat for the endangered Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby in NSW. Foundation funded scientific research and recovery activities have saved the endangered Mallee Fowl and the Lord Howe Island Woodhen. This year we are funding national captive breeding programs for the endangered Southern Corroboree Frog, the Lord Howe Island Land Snail and the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby.

Our first pest eradication project was goat and pig control to protect the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. Today we fund studies into the feasibility of eradication of rats and mice from the Lord Howe Island World Heritage area.

The Foundation's first cultural heritage project was the restoration of Captain Cook's Landing Place in Botany Bay National Park and the restoration of Greycliffe House. In the past year we have funded the restoration of Greycliffe heritage gardens and a cannon from the "Endeavour".

In 1973 the Foundation funded a Youth Activity Centre in Kosciuszko National Park and visitor amenities at Hill End and Kiandra Historic Sites. In the past year we have funded the restoration of the visitor area at Barrenjoey Lighthouse and an on-park biodiversity education program for high school students.

Funding was also provided for a fencing project in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. 35 kilometres of fencing, fronting six properties, were surveyed and 17 methods of fence construction tested. The results are a guide to efficient fence maintenance procedures for park management.

Currently the Foundation is seeking funding for over 60 projects that meet the objectives of the corporate and management plans for national parks.

**c) any threats to the objectives and management of our national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;**

The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife is committed not only to **purchase of national parks**, but also for caring for them. The Foundation has funded wetland ecology studies, biodiversity and archaeological surveys and studies of the ecology of bottle-nosed dolphins to assist with the development of plans of management for parks and native species.

**Pest eradication** targeting invasive species, including feral animals and weeds is a top priority of the Foundation. The Foundation funded for example research into suitable methods for pest control using 1080 poisoning. It recently funded studies into rodent eradication on Lord Howe Island. Foundation funds have eradicated feral cats, foxes, goats, pigs, rats, rabbits, cane toads and gambusia.

The Foundation has supported **bush-regeneration** in many areas across New South Wales including Lord Howe Island, Sydney Harbour National Park and Boat Harbour Nature Reserve. We have also supported volunteer bush regeneration groups through our Friends of National Parks program.

To save the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby and the Malleefowl, the Foundation concentrated all resources on buying habitat and on eradicating feral predators. This combined strategy proved successful, rescuing both species.

For the past 10 years the Foundation has financially supported habitat studies and GPS mapping to determine the effects of **climate change** on the last remaining populations of the endangered Mountain Pygmy Possum.

For 30 years the Foundation has funded koala studies including research into the adverse **effects of bushfires** on koalas. The results have been used to assist local councils in producing development plans that allow for the impacts of natural disasters on koalas.

Parks are attracting increasing numbers of visitors, providing opportunities for education and **revenue-raising**. With the advent of “user pays” park stakeholders are converted into customers increasing the need for visitor facilities and customer servicing. The Foundation funded the development of the Discovery guided tour program that has been successful in providing an educational parks experience on a cost-recovery basis.

Our most recent project looks at the **effects of logging** on wildlife, creating a proactive forest management regime that protects threatened forest fauna.

**d) the responsibilities of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to long-term plans; and**

The Foundation believes that currently the highest level of long-term protection is that of both Commonwealth and State national parks estate. It is protected under legislation in perpetuity and as property of the Australian people.

Private conservation organisations in Australia and overseas are beginning to buy and manage wildlife habitat themselves. These efforts, however, are still at an experimental stage, tying the future of the properties to the fate of the organisation. A financial crisis of the care-taking organisation often puts the land and the wildlife at risk of being sold on. The Foundation will continue to monitor and evaluate the success of these organisations.

To meet the targets of the International Convention on Biological Diversity, the Australian Government needs to adequately protect 15% of land representing our unique 85 bioregions. There is a global responsibility to conserve these ecosystems for the benefit of all humankind.

Much of the early acquisition for national parks developed around non-agricultural land or land unsuited for urban development. Therefore it is likely that more than 15% of the continent needs to be secured in protected areas to meet the Comprehensive Adequate and Representative System (CARS) targets.

Philanthropic environmental organisations have some advantages as buyers of land for national parks.

As a non-government charitable organisation we can competitively negotiate price on the open market and act independently of any political imperative to secure land of high conservation value.

Donors also benefit from giving to organisations such as the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife through;

- Tax deductibility for donations of money over \$2
- Donor choice of location and land type
- Transparency in reporting and financial management
- Tax deductibility for donations of land for conservation regardless of when the land was acquired
- Opportunity to apportion the tax deduction over 5 years (if over \$5000)
- Capital gains tax exemption for testamentary gifts of property over \$5000
- All contributions will be used, no matter how small, to purchase a lasting legacy

Many under-represented ecosystems and wildlife corridors occur in areas of high land value out of the reach of Governments to purchase. The Foundation facilitates conservation on private land through the promotion of private land conservation programs.

There are opportunities for Governments to reach their NRS targets through partnerships with philanthropic environmental organisations in promoting fundraising for land purchase, negotiating purchases, securing land of high conservation value and developing new tax incentives for contributors to land conservation.

Private organisations such as the Foundation are well-positioned to manage public funds for on-ground conservation initiatives, particularly on private land.

**e) the record of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas.**

When the Foundation was first founded in 1970 less than 2% of Australia was protected. In 2006 there is around 8% of the continent within the protected area system. The target of 15% could be reached by round 2050 at this rate of creation or sooner if Governments ramp up their efforts to balance growing land development.

By liaison with national park managers and as a member of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund Reference Group the Foundation identifies land suitable for acquisition. Through purchase, bequest or donation, we acquire suitable

land to create and extend national parks and wilderness areas, so that more of Australia's wild lands will remain intact.

The Foundation has gifted over 350,000 hectares of land to the Australian people for the protected area system to protect a range of natural, cultural and social values. The acquisitions have been in New South Wales. All properties are listed on the Register of the National Estate and include areas of international conservation significance ie; World Heritage Areas, UNESCO biosphere reserves and Ramsar Wetlands.

**Blue Mountains National Park** – inholding to assist management, bushwalking access point – part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

**Bouddi National Park** – inholding to forestall development that would have affected scenic values

**Cathedral Rocks National Park** – core park purchase – geological formations and species habitat

**Crowdy Bay National Park** – private inholding – water bird refuge, feeding and breeding grounds

**Maroota Historic Site (Devils Rock)** – cultural heritage site purchase – most significant aboriginal rock art & engraving site in Australia

**Mallee Cliffs National Park** – core park purchase – representative bioregion – Mallee Fowl habitat

**Mutawintji National Park** – Coturaundee Nature Reserve purchased to protect habitat of the endangered Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby

**Mutawintji Historic Site** – purchased to protect aboriginal art and engravings

**Morton National Park** – 3 inholdings to improve park access for visitors and protect water catchment

**Mungo National Park** – core park purchase – part of Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage site - representative bioregion – important Australian archaeological site containing oldest human remains found in Australia

**Myall Lakes National Park** – addition to protect coastal swampland- Ramsar Wetland

**Oxley Wild Rivers National Park** – addition to protect habitat for Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, wildlife corridor, World Heritage CERRA dry rainforest addition and protection of 3 river systems

**Sturt National Park** - core park acquisition to research farming of red kangaroos

**Warrabah National Park** – addition to remnant vegetation Nature Reserve on Namoi River to lift protection status to national park

**Washpool National Park** – addition to enable wilderness declaration to protect World Heritage CERRA rainforest

**Willandra National Park** - park purchase of representative bioregion, cultural heritage pastoral station

**Yuraygir National Park** – core park purchases (Angourie & Minnie Waters) to protect natural coastal landscape

**Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve** – swampland for study of water birds

**Davis Scrub Nature Reserve** – endangered sub-tropical rainforest, boating & recreational area – part of the Big Scrub Nature Reserves

**Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve** – Ramsar Wetland - endangered high altitude wetland

**Nombinnie Nature Reserve & State Conservation Area and Yathong Nature Reserve** – largest contiguous area of mallee scrub and associated species including Mallee Fowl, much cannot be declared national park due to mining exploration interests. Yathong is a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

### **Summary:**

Environmental philanthropy contributes significantly to meeting the objectives of Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas and conserving their values. It contributes funds for vital conservation projects and provides a positive avenue for community participation and involvement.

Governments can increase resources and funding for the Australian protected area system by supporting, promoting and encouraging environmental philanthropy.

Partnerships between Governments and environmental philanthropy organisations can deliver an enhanced range of benefits to donors and conservation land managers.