

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

**National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, Tasmania
April 2006**

We support in its entirety the submission made by the World Commission on Protected Areas (Australian and New Zealand). In our submission, we offer a few brief elaborations on the comments made in the WCPA document.

The establishment and effective management of a comprehensive, adequate and representative network of protected areas demands substantial on-going investment. Failure to secure this investment would seriously jeopardise the supply of a wide range of nationally and internationally significant economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. As noted in a forthcoming book on their management:

Protected areas are one of the most important land and sea uses on Earth. They are created out of human respect for, and desire to sustain, natural and cultural values. They provide critical elements of a response to the global environmental, social and economic challenges of contemporary societies. They conserve vital biodiversity and represent the variety of the Earth's landscapes and history. They offer one answer to how people can relate and engage with nature. They provide cultural, spiritual, social, economic and 'quality of life' benefits, and are one of the key mechanisms to sustain life on Earth. Protected areas play a critical role in sustaining the natural resource base that supports the livelihoods of people and the viability of economies and communities. Benefits that they offer city dwellers include education, health, watershed protection, scenic amenity, recreation opportunities and biodiversity conservation. Protected areas are sources of knowledge and offer educational experiences from connecting with nature that will become increasingly important as the world becomes more urbanised.

A sustainable funding base for the National Reserve System (NRS) should include:

- recurrent government funding;
- endowments, sinking funds and/or trusts;
- private sector funding as payment of access and use;
- investments by NGOs; and
- business enterprises that have the potential for generating stable income flows, employment and other benefits for the key stakeholders.

In Tasmania, total government and private investment is insufficient to effectively manage the existing reserve network – there is a funding gap (Tasmanian PWS Strategic Plan 2006-2008). Since the network is not yet complete (is not yet comprehensive, adequate and representative), there is potential for this gap to widen.

The NRS is a system. Government protected area agencies are the only institutions with the mandate and capacity to establish and manage such a system at state and national scales. An acceptable level of supply for many of the core values of protected areas requires the leadership, capacity, wide representation and engagement afforded by the public system. Crucially, governments need to continue to fund protected areas

because of the public good benefits that they provide, as well as meeting the wider obligation to maintain the intrinsic and non-use values of natural areas and protect the natural assets that belong to the people they serve. While some of this investment can come from private sources (private protected areas, fees associated with commercial ventures in public protected areas, philanthropy and so on) substantial on-going public investment is essential.

We applaud the diversification of protected area financing, governance and management beyond the public sector as a strengthening of the capacity to establish and manage a comprehensive NRS. Like other public agencies around Australia, significant efforts are being made by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to open up options for expanded revenue generation. Establishing a sustainable and secure financial base for protected areas generally requires a diversified funding strategy that provides a buffer against the failure or reduction in any one source. It also facilitates funding growth by establishing the policy mechanisms and institutional structures necessary to establish new partnerships. However public, private and co-management models of protected area governance and resourcing are complements rather than alternatives. Any erosion of public investment is likely to result in a serious decline in the flow of protected area benefits.

Management effectiveness is under pressure as per-hectare investment in protected areas continues to decline. This trend must be urgently reversed. Under-investment by governments, as representatives of community interest, means that protected areas are often struggling to meet the objectives set for them. Inadequate human and financial resources mean that some protected areas lack effective management. In sum, securing and maintaining an adequate and sustainable supply of protected area benefits will require:

- an expanded, secure and ongoing public sector investment in protected area establishment and management;
- enhanced partnerships between public sector agencies, local communities, NGOs and businesses that include resourcing and financing components; and
- enhanced private and NGO investment.