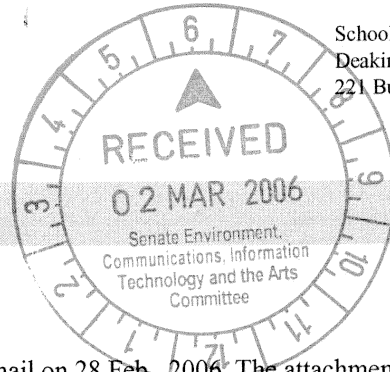


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February 28, 2006

(Please Note: the text below was sent as an email on 28 Feb. 2006. The attachments below were not available electronically and hence this 'hard copy'.

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission.

I must start with an apology – this submission is nowhere near as detailed or comprehensive as I would have liked it to be given my experience and involvement in Protected Area management over the past 25 years. (See below).

This inadequacy in the submission is due to a whole series of external factors. But what I have tried to do below, and in the attachments, is to ensure that I have forwarded a basic submission by the closing date and if you are interested I can further discuss and/or expand on these points later in the process.

First may I briefly outline my experience in the field. I was the Deputy Chair of the Board of Directors of Parks Victoria in 2003 and 2004 and a member of the Board from 2000 to 2004. I was a member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee of the Board throughout this period and Chaired that committee in 2004. Previously I had been the Chair of the statutory Victorian National Parks Advisory Council from 1986 to 1993 and was a member of the Council from 1983 to 1993. I have been a member of the World Commission for Protected Areas of the IUCN since 1990 and have attended the two most recent World Parks Congresses of the IUCN in 2003 (Durban) and 1992 (Caracas). Last year I was a Theme Coordinator and a member of the Program Committee for the First International Marine Protected Areas Congress and have been involved in MPAs in Victoria for 20 years and at a national level through my membership on the National Oceans Advisory Group since 1999. I have also been a member of the Victorian National Parks Association since 1975 and have served on their Council.

I have attached copies of three papers (two of which are now some what dated) in which I will base the proposal I wish to put to this Inquiry.

The basic proposal I wish to put to the Inquiry is outlined in a more basic form on pages 338-339 of Paper 1 (Australia's Distinctive National Parks System: attached).

Australia needs to establish a properly resourced, truly national, park system. In particularly interstate rivalries and 'point-scoring' between the Commonwealth Government and the State and Territory Governments need to be put aside in the

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interests of planning and managing a world class national park system which is properly resourced and has as its clear an unequivocal primary objective: nature (biodiversity) conservation. (Biodiversity is a rather limited term in this context as one of the obvious features of Australia's parks is that geology is critical to their splendour, beauty and ecological uniqueness).

To establish such a system will require the Commonwealth and State Governments to rise above petty politics and bureaucratically overbearing contracts and act in the national interest.

There is no doubt that the current funding of parks and protected areas in Australia is inadequate. You will be given various figures / data on this from various sources much better informed than I. But in Paper 1 (attached) I draw your attention to Table 3 on page 338. The Australian data is drawn from the much larger table on page 334 (Table 2). One unfortunate feature of modern Government accounting and reporting practices is that if I was to try to repeat these tables (or the even more detailed Table 6, page 216 in Paper 2, showing over 20 years of continuous data from Victoria) I could no longer do so. Below is a slide I present to Year 1 students:

Money Spent on Park Management:

From Marc Hockings of the University of Queensland, July 1998:

<u>Country/region:</u>	<u>\$ spent per sq km:</u>
Australia	359
S & SE Asia	390
Global ave.	776

<u>Country/region</u>	<u>Staff per 1000 sq km:</u>
Australia	2.6*
Global ave.	24.5

* = lowest in the world.

Why is this the case?

I refer you to a detailed discussion on pages 338 and 339 of Paper 1. The situation remains essentially the same. In brief a State funded system has increased substantially in size in the last quarter of the last century (see Table 1, page 333 of Paper 1 and for Victoria, Paper 2 Table 1, page 212). This has occurred at the very times that State Governments (of the older states in particular) had to increasingly spend more of their funds on ailing infrastructure AND meet increasing health,

education, police and transport costs in particular. To put it another way: the State expenditure "pie" was decreasing in size at the very time that parks and protected areas were expanding, leaving the parks with a slightly increasing 'slice' of a smaller pie.

During this time the Commonwealth Government was nowhere to be seen. After a brief flurry / engagement on the possibility of a National Ecological Reserve System (Fenner, 1975, Paper 1 page 340) the Commonwealth has shown little interest since in providing funds to assist in the operational costs of running Australia's (i.e. the national protected area system. (The funding of procurements for the National Reserve System is a story in its own right. This program has primarily supplied funds to often comparatively well off State governments to purchase land etc that other less well funded governments have had to use their own funds to establish).

In conclusion I propose that:

- 1) all governments sponsor an analysis of the existing national parks and protected areas in Australia, and based on the CAR approach **identify the existing parks in Australia which would form the basis of a national ecological reserve system (almost "super" national parks if you like).**
- 2) That the Commonwealth Government enters an agreement with the State and Territory Governments to fund the parks that form part of this National Park system at a new and adequate level to meet their primary objective of nature conservation (this will include such critical individual matters such as the control and eventual eradication of introduced plant and animal species).
- 3) This level of funding should be bench marked at the Canadian or similar level and the aim should be raising it to this level of funding within a three year period.
- 4) The State and Territory Governments (as the governments with the park management experience and knowledge already in hand) would continue to directly manage these parks (although the Federal funding would be clearly identified in the parks as it is in road funding projects)
- 5) That in turn the State and territory Governments would agree to transfer the funding currently provided for these national protected areas to other protected areas in their States and territories (to avoid cost shifting) and all governments would agree to increase the operational funding annually across all parks by at the least CPI plus 1 % (to increase real funding over time.). I can brief the Inquiry here, if interested, in a similar transfer which occurred when Parks Victoria was established concerning metropolitan and rural parks in Victoria. Also I can brief you on the Melbourne Park Levy as an example of an alternative source of some park funding which has been obtained with very little complaint from the tax / rate payers.

- 6) I emphasise that the proposed approach above would require genuine cooperation between governments and for example the Commonwealth Government would have to resist its historical temptation to provide funds with incredible layers of bureaucratic conditions and the State would have to resist the temptation to see the whole exercise as 'cost shifting' out of park management.

The objective in this proposal is to establish in terms of QUALITY of management (rather than simply beauty and splendour) a well resourced World Class National Protected Area System (see the discussion on this challenge in Paper 2 for Victoria).

The Australian tax payer deserves no less and certainly does not deserve any bickering between levels of government in such a critically important area.

Unfortunately I have run out of time to discuss MPAs in detail but I have appended a paper (Paper 3 attached) which I have submitted for publication which may be of some interest. In general the major issue is the funding of operational management of these MPAs – most work outside the GBR Marine Park has concentrated on obtaining and then planning a MPA system and now the emphasis needs to shift nationally to funding the MPA system. It would be wonderful if the Commonwealth would look at the lessons from the terrestrial park system and not repeat the same mistakes as outlined above.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor Geoff Wescott B.Sc. (Hons), M.Sc. (Melb) M.Sc. (London) Ph.D. (Deakin). FEIA, MIBA.

Attached: Paper 1: Wescott, G. 1991. Australia's Distinctive National Parks System. Environmental Conservation 18: 331-340

Paper 2: Wescott, G. 1995. Victoria's National park System: can the transition from quantity of parks to quality of management be successful? Austn. J. of Environmental Management: 2: 210-223.

Paper 3: Wescott, G. (submitted to Ocean and Coastal Management) The long and winding road: the development of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of highly protected marine protected areas in Victoria, Australia.