

Australia

State of the Environment

2011

Parks heads of agencies - State of the environment 2011 workshop – summary notes

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FOR the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
ON BEHALF OF the State of the Environment 2011 Committee



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Cover image

Kantju Gorge, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT

Photo by Director of National Parks

Preface

This report was developed for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to help inform the Australia State of the Environment (SoE) 2011 report.

The Minister for Environment is required, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, to table a report in Parliament every five years on the State of the Environment.

The Australia State of the Environment (SoE) 2011 report is a substantive, hardcopy report compiled by an independent committee appointed by the Minister for Environment. The report is an assessment of the current condition of the Australian environment, the pressures on it and the drivers of those pressures. It details management initiatives in place to address environmental concerns and the effectiveness of those initiatives.

The main purpose of SoE 2011 is to provide relevant and useful information on environmental issues to the public and decision-makers, in order to raise awareness and support more informed environmental management decisions that lead to more sustainable use and effective conservation of environmental assets.

The 2011 SoE report, commissioned technical reports and other supplementary products are available online at www.environment.gov.au/soe.

Parks Heads of Agencies – State of the Environment 2011 Workshop

Paroo Meeting Room, DECCW, Level 14, 59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW

Friday 27 August 2010, 11.45am to 1.30pm

PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION	STATE
Ms Sally Barnes	Head, Parks and Wildlife Group NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water	NSW
Mr Mark Stone	Chief Executive Parks Victoria	VIC
Mr Jim Sharp	Deputy Director General, Parks and Conservation WA Department of Environment and Conservation	WA
Mr Greg Leaman	Executive Director, Conservation Policy and Programs SA Department for Environment and Natural Resources	SA
Mr Peter Mooney	General Manager Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service	TAS
Mr Russell Watkinson	Director, Parks Conservation and Lands ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services	ACT
Mr Graham Phelps	Executive Director, Parks and Wildlife NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport	NT
Mr Peter Cochrane	Director of National Parks Parks Australia	Cth
Mr Andrew Skeat	General Manager, Marine Park Management Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	GBR
Mr Kevin O'Connor (for Al Morrison)	General Manager, Research and Development Group Department of Conservation New Zealand	NZ
Ben Phillips (Secretary) (for Lisa Walkington)	Director, Parks Policy and Biodiscovery Section Parks Australia	Cth
Prof Richard Mackay, AM	Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd / State of the Environment 2011 Committee	Cth - SoE
Ms Lynette Sebo	State of the Environment 2011 Team Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Cth - SoE
Ms Andrea Leverington (apology)	Assistant Director General Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service	QLD

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Workshop Overview:

The heads of the Australian national parks agencies participated in a workshop as part of the preparation of the Australian State of the Environment 2011 Report (SoE Report) to the Commonwealth Parliament. The meeting had no 'official' status, but did provide a useful forum for sharing information and gathering informed opinion in relation to reserved lands.

The workshop was facilitated by Richard Mackay in his role as a member of the State of Environment 2011 Committee. For the purposes of the SoE Report and the workshop, 'heritage' encompasses both natural and cultural heritage – whether formally listed or not – and both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous heritage.

This workshop had three purposes:

- to share the current version of an evolving draft Table of Contents for the 'heritage' section of the SoE Report and to invite comment;
- to seek advice on potential information sources; and
- to gather high level opinion on major threats, responses and outlooks for Australia's natural heritage.

Introduction

The workshop opened with Richard Mackay providing an outline on the SoE reporting approach, including the Committee's intention to address drivers, risk assessment, management effectiveness and outlooks in the report. It was noted that the aim of the workshop was to obtain the collegiate view on threats, pressures, risks and management responses as they relate to natural heritage, together with recommendations on suitable contacts and data sources.

Richard Mackay advised participants that approaches may be made to parks agencies from other SoE Committee members regarding information and advice on parks and protected areas for SoE reporting.

Some questions regarding SoE reporting purpose and approach were raised by participants that included:

Q What did the last SoE report achieve?

A One of the key messages arising from the previous report was that there was a lack of relevant information to develop informed conclusions. Richard informed the group of the aims of the National Plan for Environmental Information and the role of BOM as the primary information collection agency. Ambitions to progress the NEIS and environmental accounts in the future were also noted.

Q Will the report be developing recommendations?

A The report will not deliver recommendations but will convey key messages – supported by key facts.

Natural Heritage Definition/Scope

There was some discussion around the definition of 'reserved lands'. Questions raised by the group included:

- Why does natural heritage feature in the heritage chapter?
- Would the chapter focus on nature conservation?
- Would linkages between natural heritage and biodiversity be considered? and
- Will there be examples of good news / bad news stories? (Richard response – yes, case studies will seek to represent all types of heritage, issues and regions, as well as good/bad news stories).

Information/Data

Richard noted that traditionally there has been an input focus and that there is limited data on the monitoring or management of heritage generally which has led to a lack of information to develop informed conclusions on the condition of heritage. For the 2011 SoE reporting cycle, the SoE Committee will seek to address notable information gaps with supporting data where possible, but will use qualitative information measures where data is lacking.

Other comments from the group

- the importance of connections between protected areas and the surrounding landscape;
- the significance of the aesthetics of landscapes has not been given adequate attention;
- *NSW State of Parks* was noted as being a good management/strategic planning tool but less successful as a public communications tool;
- proposed approach for workshop session – to identify the desired policy outcomes required to address the range of natural heritage issues – what changes do we wish for and what would we like to see happen.

DRAFT TABLE OF CONTENTS

Richard tabled the draft table of contents for the heritage section of the SoE Report and explained the intended format of the heritage component. Richard explained that the Commonwealth Minister is supportive of the format and presentation of the 'Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Outlook Report' and that a similar approach would be taken in preparing this report; in particular, the graphical representation of information.

Richard also advised that it was his intention to have regard to the 'Indicators' from the 2006 SoE Report as they provided both a consistency in trend data and a high level strategic assessment criteria.

Richard invited participants to comment, mark up and return the draft heritage chapter outline with information that should be included/omitted/changed.

Parks Heads of Agencies - State of the Environment 2011 Workshop – Information Sources and Contacts

Participants in the workshop provided the following information sources and contacts

State	Name	Agency	Data/Information/ Content
ACT	Gerhard Zschler	ACT Commissioner of Environment Studies	Temperate grasslands, yellow gum/red box woodlands
NSW	Greg Storer (Hurstville)	State of Parks	
NSW	Zoe de Zaram	DECCW Cultural Heritage NSW SoE report (coordinator)	
GBR	Kirstin Dobbs	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	
Cth	Peter Cochrane	Annual Report of Parks Australia – online summary ERIN – protected areas	
SA	Professor Andy Lowe, Head of Science Brian Samuels, Cultural Heritage	Head of Science, SA	
VIC	Ian Walker	Parks Victoria	3 rd SoE Climate change adaptation Fire x 3
WA		WA Heritage Council Annual Report	Indigenous heritage elsewhere
TAS	Pete Smith Stuart Lennox (Natural Heritage)	Heritage Tasmania Natural Heritage - Mini State of Parks & SoE	
NT	Mac Moyses Michael Wells	NT	Parks values Heritage
QLD	Andrea Levington	QLD	

Heads of Parks Agencies - State of the Environment 2011 Workshop - Workshop exercise

Richard facilitated a workshop exercise where participants were asked to identify issues, threats, driving forces and management responses.

Driver/ Threat / Issue	What to say	Info/Example
<p>Fire Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> altered/altering natural fire regimes shift in habitats and associated change in biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> property assets vs heritage assets move towards natural regimes – biodiversity / carbon store / cultural positives north/south of Australia – different burning regimes required – consider wet/dry season in the north and arid climate in the south, moist in SE and SW corner jurisdictions also have different burning regimes – ACT, Vic, Blue Mountains solution – change fire regimes, but reintroduction of natural fire regimes– easy/difficult depending on region early season burning vs late season burning – outcomes for biodiversity and carbon stores megafires less likely to occur if above practices are implemented new burning regimes emerging in response to climate change fire protection management regimes focus primarily on assets; biodiversity needs to be recognised as an asset just like the built environment all jurisdictions have a focus on saving lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> difference between wet tropics, tropical savannah, arid zone and Mediterranean-type climate
<p>Impact of climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effects on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fire management invasive species habitat wet season natural events: storms, hurricane, extreme events climate change adds uncertainty and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climate change is not the issue to be managed by parks agencies. The effects on the landscape and biodiversity as a result of climate change is the issue to be managed by parks agencies. need people on ground to identify changes early need to plan more/ re-allocate resources need to be more nimble changed rainfall can lead to less hazard reduction burning opportunities (narrower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> national parks can help mitigate (carbon stock). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Arnhem Fire Abatement and Revegetation program – protecting carbon stocks CSIRO: Great Western Woodlands Brendan Mackay report on SE Australia (ANU) NRS Climate Change Report – Michal Dunlop & others Marine Climate Change report and others consensus – need to unpack climate change levels of management – response to climate

Driver/ Threat / Issue	What to say	Info/Example
<p>to natural events and water regimes. Events and changes in cycles increase pressure.</p>	<p>‘windows’ for burning safely)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased fire can lead to increased weeds flow on impacts to GHG from fire managed regimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> change vs weeds and habitat management weed issue is independent of climate change, but climate change is a major influence
<p>Invasive species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weeds, ferals rabbits, cats quarantine has focussed on primary industries; opportunity to address post border response no quarantine mechanism for protection of natural values post border control – who’s responsible – examples fire ants, cane toads pasture grasses a major issue in Kakadu and Top End 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> control does not result in eradication animals are often the primary focus/priority for management micro-invasives/pathogens (modern trend?) examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> entry and spread of fire ants – management \$200M+ Vic \$43M post border locusts NZ \$50M possums NSW sea stars Darling Harbour Calici virus II attempting to manage current and old threats – in some states there are legacy issues being dealt with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phytopthera: damage to SW forests and threat to World Biosphere Reserve in the Fitzgerald NP National Plan for Fire Ants (DSEWPAC) proactive biological controls Prime Ministers Science Innovation Council – message - prevention is 100 times more effective than cure NSW bitou bush eradication - many control programs do not result in eradication. prioritisation TAS pathogens – there is little understanding, easy transferability leads to increased biosecurity risk camels all jurisdictions are working on the control of invasive species – but clear and robust measures of management for invasive species are needed ongoing introduction of pasture grasses by departments of primary industries NT major pest species deliberately introduced (e.g. Gamba grass) biosecurity – anemone fungus
<p>Adequacy of reserved lands system (CAR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> moving towards a more representative system need to invest in “asset maintenance” adequate in: environmental, social, economic – sense? more work to do in QLD WA differentiated: comprehensiveness, adequacy, representativeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving but more to do needs to be differentiated divergence: big new parks vs management cost adequacy not well defined in jurisdictions global trend – relationship with context reservation provides statutory protection and constraints. (Nexus: reserved lands and surrounds) connectiveness biodiversity and Indigenous cultural/social/tourism perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> around 4,700 (½ of) listed areas occur as pockets less than 100 ha or 0.1% of the NRS estate 82% of conserved estate occur in blocks of 100,000 ha or more need for complementary management roles by government, land holders and NRM groups across all land tenures - management regimes that are complementary in and outside of reserves are tenure blind, eg. regional fire control regimes need for pooling of government and private funding for complementary management activities

Driver/ Threat / Issue	What to say	Info/Example
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor management is better than loss representativeness is defined in jurisdictions managed lands in non-reserve landscape tenure blind reservation of land offers statutory protection landscape-scale connectivity conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> importance of large parks and reserve connectivity one of the growing opportunities is landscape-scale connectivity conservation; Continental-scale activities are taking off and provide strong links between NRS, NRM and the broader community. Examples include Gondwana Link (WA) Habitat 141 (Vic/SA), Great Eastern Ranges (NSW, VIC, QLD)
<p>Use/tourism/visitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outdoor recreation commonly occurs in parks eco-system services provided by parks eg. water, fish marine heritage values are not well identified eg. top diving or fishing sites <p>Sustainable Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> impact of tourism/visitation outdoor recreation in parks compatibility with social, cultural and economic values benefits of ecosystem services that parks produce – this area needs a lot more investigation eg. water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visitation to protected areas underpin tourist dollars (good news story) benefit of return to regional economies – data and stories patchy economic value of tourism (Australian Alps) economic and social value - given the value produced by parks, the level of investment in maintenance is low and return on investment is high (need data for this) lack of monetary value makes it difficult to recognise as an asset high maintenance costs require high investment impact of extraction activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eco-tourism in protected areas eco-system services impact on broader economic values park based studies NSW – multi day walks or accommodation – Eden experience with commercial partner – low NSW government investment Australian Alps study Vic – nature based tourism – economic value \$9B - \$18B ACT – bring economic argument into SoE WA – tented camping accommodation WA – costs of not managing assets see “Healthy Parks Health People” at congress.org.au
<p>Ignorance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of appreciation of values lack of knowledge or understanding of values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the parks and reserves system is not widely known and understood; it is therefore underutilised – could do a lot more pressure in conflict with values massive investment and asset base not getting message out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not regarded or managed as “assets” eg: Jenolan Caves previous issue – lack of knowledge current issue – have knowledge, lack of appreciation communication of issues – not conveying the right message
<p>Data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no consistent data collection standards across jurisdictions. Information collections driven by state needs. is lack of data a threat or opportunity? 	