

The 2014 draft plan – key points:

1. Values of TWWHA

The 1999 plan includes a clear statement of the values of the TWWHA and many specific prescriptions for their protection. Little of this remains in the 2014 draft, which also focuses almost exclusively on the only the Outstanding Universal Values (Note – the World Heritage Operational Guidelines expect all level of values to be considered).

2. Conservation Management Principles

The 1999 Plan contains a set of ‘Key Guiding Documents and Principles’, all of which are well recognised internationally and/or nationally, which provide the fundamental framework for the management of the TWWHA. These have all been removed from the 2014 Draft Plan.

3. Zoning

Zoning is the main tool used in a management plan to maintain the values of the area while presenting it to visitors. It does this by defining what activities can be undertaken where. The 1999 plan clearly distinguished the activities permissible in the various zones in order to maintain the values of each zone. The zoning in the 2014 draft provides considerably less protection of values and contains so many discretionary uses that it is almost meaningless.

The 2014 draft also renames the ‘wilderness zone’, removing wilderness as an important tool for management, and renames it as a ‘remote recreation zone’ indicating a higher level of usage.

4. Process for assessment of development proposals

The 1999 plan contained a clearly-defined process for the assessment of major proposals. The PWS would provide the developer with guidelines for an environmental impact statement. This would be assessed by the PWS and the assessment included mandatory public comment.

In the 2014 plan this has been replaced with a reference to the PWS Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process. This is a less robust process and is non-statutory. i.e. it can be changed relatively easily. Of greater concern is the process for the assessment of proposals submitted under the Expressions of Interest (EoI) process. This appears to bypass the RAA and involves no opportunity for public comment unless the proposal requires planning approval from local government (e.g. it includes built structures).

The state government assures us that only sensible and appropriate development proposals will gain approval but this appears to depend largely on the opinion of the Minister – neither the 2014 draft plan nor the EoI process includes clear criteria or guarantees public scrutiny – they provide no confidence that this will be the outcome.

5. Provisions for Mining & Logging

The 2014 plan also potentially permits special species logging and mineral exploration and mining in large parts of the TWWHA. By contrast the 1999 plan does not permit logging and restricts mining to the Adamsfield Conservation Area, where it ceased several years ago. The future of the areas identified in the 2014 plan as *Permanent Timber Production* and *Future Potential Production Forest* is unresolved.

6. Confusion of Values & Benefits

The 2014 Draft Plan confuses the natural and cultural values for which the TWWHA was reserved, by misrepresenting the use, social and economic benefits as values.

7. Inappropriate New Uses

The 2014 Draft Plan allows for a range of new tourist uses in remote, undeveloped, high quality wilderness areas. A large number of these uses (eg, aircraft landings, jet skis, ziplines, via ferrata and lodges) are intrusive, carry a range of risks to the natural values, and do not help present the TWWHA (one of the management objectives) and are recreational activities that do not need to be located in the TWWHA in the remote natural and wilderness areas. They are therefore inappropriate in the TWWHA.

Although wilderness is not an Outstanding Universal Value, the integrity of any WHA is a condition that must be satisfied and maintained. Inappropriate use puts the integrity of the TWWHA at risk.