

The *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan* and the Role of Management Plans

An Evolving Plan

The first *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan* was prepared in 1992. This was replaced by the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999*.

The 1999 Management Plan was a comprehensive plan based on extensive values data and broad-based consultation. It was generally regarded as a good management plan¹ which, in a highly contested environment, provided a reasonable balance in providing protection for the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA while recognising the various, often conflicting, interests in the use and management of the TWWHA.

As information, boundaries and management needs and interests change over time, management plans need to be updated. The 1999 Plan proposed a major review after 10 years (a standard time period), as well as a minor 5-year review. This time frame was not met however - a minor review was undertaken in 2007 (but never implemented) and the major '10-year' review has been delayed until the present review.

It is understood that the delay in the major, 10-year review was due to a lack of funding by government, and that the present review has only occurred due to the necessity to include the areas that were added to the TWWHA in 2013 (and used Federal government funding). This indicates a lack of recent government commitment to sound management planning for the TWWHA.

Since the announcement of the present plan review, the TNPA has expressed its concern to the State government about the proposed short time frame and the risk of focussing too heavily on tourism development. TNPA has advocated a longer time frame and the same consultative process that was used in the preparation of the 1999 Plan. It seems that the Draft Plan also fails to pick up a number of issues deferred from the 2007 minor review, including making decisions around the requirement for LUPAA² approvals.

Purpose & Role of the Management Plan

The purpose of the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan* is to provide a framework for management of the values of the TWWHA and its use.

The Plan must be consistent, not only with the requirements for World Heritage Area management set out in the *World Heritage Convention* and *World Heritage Operational Guidelines*, but also with relevant legislation, in this case the Federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and the *Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002* and the *National Parks & Reserves Management Act 2002*, and relevant policy, including the *Tasmanian State Coastal Policy*.

The primary obligation for management of the TWWHA is “*to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage*” (World Heritage Convention, Article 4).

The government is also obliged under the World Heritage Convention “*to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage*” (Article 5). The Management Plan is the main way in which these measures are set out.

Because the TWWHA covers a large area of public land with different reserve status and has a range of conservation values (not just World Heritage values), the Plan must also have regard to these aspects.

The Plan is the primary document that guides the management of the TWWHA.

¹ See Reference 1: The *1999 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan* – An Award Winning Plan

² Land Use and Planning Approvals Act 1993.

The role of the Plan is to provide direction for all areas of management including –

- setting the objectives for management
- setting the overarching framework and the objectives for management
- describing the natural and cultural values which are to be managed
- setting out the prescriptions for management (to allow the management objectives to be met).

The prescriptions for management may come in different forms, but for protected area management plans they usually include management policy, proposed management actions (e.g., further research, infrastructure maintenance, monitoring of management effectiveness), prohibitions, statements of acceptable uses, and a process for approving new uses and works. Management zoning is traditionally used to clarify the geographic extent of prescriptions.

Approving the 2014 Draft Plan

There is an established statutory process for approving the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan*. In relation to the 2014 Draft Plan the process is as follows:

- **Public consultation on the draft** (*open until 22 March 2015*).
- **Director of National Parks and Wildlife to review the representations and prepare a report to the Tasmanian Planning Commission.**
The report is to be prepared within 30 days of the plan release (22 March 2015), unless the Minister allows a longer period. A longer period is likely for the 2014 Draft Plan given its complexity.
- **Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) reviews the representations and report, and may hold a hearing.**
The TPC must decide whether to hold a hearing within 21 days of receiving the Director's report, unless the Minister agrees to a longer period (there are no criteria for deciding to hold a hearing).³
- **Planning Commission makes recommendations to the Minister**
No set time frame.
- **Minister prepares final management plan for approval**
(Note - The final management plan does not need to be consistent with submissions or the TPC's recommendations).
- **Parliamentary approval**
The management plan may not require any 'approval' by Parliament. The only section that does is the statutory powers provisions and the plan foreshadows an amendment to the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 which will remove this requirement.
- **Governor of Tasmania approval**
This is in practice a formality. The governor does not review the Plan, but acts on the advice of the Minister.
- **Federal level approval**
There is no explicit requirement for the Federal Minister to 'sign off' on the plan. The Minister however does have an obligation to make sure that the Plan is adequate to ensure Australia meets its international obligations. (It is unclear however how he will do this).

³ The TPC has rarely held public hearings in relation to protected area management plans. The only time it has was in relation to previous amendments to the TWWHA Management Plan.