TNPA NEWS

TASMANIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION INC

Newsletter No 13 Spring 2009 & Autumn 2010

Photo: B. Kurczok

Tasmania deserves a 'world class' parks agency to support its 'world-class' parks system

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN:

In the previous TNPA News I put the case that with around 37 percent of Tasmania (including the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and a world renowned national park system) having some form of conservation status, surely Tasmania, more than any other State, has a vested interest in properly managing and protecting its reserved estate. Furthermore, given the heightened importance of these reserves for environmental, social and economic benefits, Tasmanians deserve a Parks department that can deliver world's best practice in the ongoing management of such a vital resource.

However, instead of taking such an enlightened and strategic approach, in May 2009 the present Tasmanian Government announced the abolition of the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, moving the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) to the expanded Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment from 1 July, 2009. A few months later the government instigated a 16 percent cut in government funding to the PWS. This is despite an assurance received from the Minister in June informing us that the service provisions of the PWS and other agencies in the department would not be diminished[1].

These shifts in Government support for Tasmania's reserved estate and the PWS is the latest manifestation of the conclusions reached by Dr Louise Crossley in her report *Paradoxes of Protection*[2]. Released by Chistine Milne in May 2009 this report highlights the paradox that whilst Tasmania's national parks are being marketed

THANK YOU

The TNPA Committee would like to thank the following people and organisations who have over the last months volunteered their time to assist the TNPA, or who have helped us in other ways.

The Great Australian Bushwalk 2009
John Cannon, Heather Chauncy, Bec Johnston, Lesley Nicklason, Julieanne Richards, Bruce Wilson.

Assistance with Research & Advocacy on Parks' Issues
Bob Brown, Todd Dudley, Phill Pullinger.

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To identify, protect, conserve, present, and where appropriate, rehabilitate the area and to transmit that heritage to future generations in as good or better condition than at present.

Overall objectives of the World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999

aggressively as unforgettable natural experiences they are entirely forgettable when it comes to government support.

In reviewing the constant restructuring of the PWS over the past two decades, and the shift in the goals of the service from conservation to tourism, the Crossley report concludes that there has been a resultant "*dumbing down*" of the service as indicated by:

- A devaluation of the intrinsic natural and wilderness values of Tasmania's unique reserved lands,
- A commitment to conservation values replaced by monetary (tourism) values,
- A lack of expertise in core environmental management and a lack of support and sustainable career paths for field staff,
- The absence of in-house scientific expertise on conservation issues as a result of the separation of the Nature Conservation Branch, and
- A continued waning in morale across the PWS.

Perhaps the demise of the PWS is nowhere more evident than in the decline in the number of park rangers. Peaking at just under 100 in 1991, the number of rangers has steadily declined even through the reserve estate has grown by 25 percent, and with it the responsibilities of the PWS, since that time. As of June 2009 the number of rangers was 49, half the level of 1991 and the lowest since 1976. This equates to one ranger for every 51,000 hectares of reserved land, compared to one per every 5,000 hectares in Victoria.

The recent funding cut to the PWS is only worsening what is already a bad situation. As outlined in the recent report[3] to the World Heritage Area Consultative Committee the PWS is aiming to have 30 permanent positions removed over the next 18 months (despite the announcement that changes to the DEPHA would not see wholesale redundancies[4]) whilst also putting forward a recommendation to increase parks fees (despite a large increase in 2004 and another increase in 2007). The Queenstown and Strahan field centres have been combined with reduced staff levels, with the Liawenee and Mole Creek field centres to follow, while the Smithton PWS office is to be closed. Together with the closure of a number of assets (such as walking tracks, toilets and viewing platforms), staff have been requested to review their tasks and make suggestions as to what duties they can no longer afford to perform. Finally, the PWS is also negotiating with a number of Councils to have them take over the management of various urban reserves.

With a staff of around 270 full-time equivalent positions, the cuts to the PWS will see staff number reduced by over 10 percent, and higher if one only includes full-time positions. This will lead to a severe reduction in the long-term effectiveness of the PWS to undertake its duties, as the loss of skills and associated long-term knowledge of the systems under management cannot easily be replaced. This loss comes at a time when pressures on our parks are increasing, both due to increasing visitor numbers and the challenges associated with the need to understand the challenges faced by climate change and biodiversity loss.

What all this amounts to is a government service - which is charged with managing around 37% of the state – in crisis: a service which is understaffed to undertake their legislated duties and with diminishing staff morale.

The cuts to the PWS have been broadly condemned, with the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania warning that it will come back to bite the economy by damaging feature attractions[5]. Concerns have been expressed that visitor centre hours have been cut and fallen timber on walking tracks is not being removed because of the lack of staff. The TNPA has also highlighted the fact that while the Government's decision is resulting in the removal of people with land management expertise, the proposed $23 million to be spent on the Tarkine Road and the $20 million on the Three Capes Walk are each more than the annual Park's budget[6].

To help make up for the present shortfall in funding and professional personnel in the field, and in line with *Engaging the Tasmanian Community Framework and Procedures Program*, the PWS has become increasingly reliant on the assistance provided by organizations wishing to work cooperatively with the Service. Such organizations now contribute many hundreds of thousands of hours each year to support projects within Tasmania's parks and reserves[7,8] and the conservation and community benefits that flow from this Program are to be applauded and supported. The PWS is also being supported through the WILDCARE Gift Fund which has now allocated $138,000 to PWS projects, including a cat eradication project on Tasman Island and improvements to the Frenchmans Cap walking track[7].

With more than 50 organizations now registered on the above volunteer Program, and with a number of individuals having made substantial financial contributions, this demonstrates the high regard and support that Tasmania's parks and reserves have within the community. It is therefore sad that this broad community support is not reflected in greater Government support for the PWS and its staff. While a partnership between the community and the Government in support of the State's reserved estate is welcomed and to be encouraged, it nevertheless does not diminish the Government's responsibilities and duty of care to protect and manage these places according to the high standards that the community expects. In this regard, the lack of support for the PWS from the present Government is an abrogation of its mandated responsibilities.

As demonstrated by the above programs, Tasmanians are proud of the State's national parks and the unique natural wonders they enshrine and protect. However, it must be remembered that if past Governments had had their way much of this estate would have been ransacked for hydro-developments and logging and ultimately diminished in both its grandeur and conservation

1. "Tasmanian Budget 2009-10", Letter to the TNPA from Michelle O'Byrne (undated).
2. The report is available at http://www.christinemilne.org.au
3. WHACC General Manager PWS Report, dated 10 September 2009
4. "Demonstrating Real Leadership in Tough Times", Media release by David Bartlett and Michelle O'Byrne, dated 14 May 2009
5. "Parks Cuts to Hurt Industry", The Australian, dated 23 September 2009
6. "Anger over Parks Cuts", ABC Hobart, dated 22 September 2009
7. Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts Annual Report 2008-09 (p.37).
8. "New project to Conserve Islands' Natural Values", Media Release by Michelle O'Byrne, dated 4 September 2009
9. "Public weighs in with nearly 100.000 comments for Grand Canyon Protection", www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=55907

status. Whilst there is a need for a continued community focus on protecting these places (as recently witnessed in the United States where nearly 100,000 members of the public have called for protection of the Grand Canyon from mining on public lands around the park[9]) there is also a role for a well funded and politically supported parks agency. To date Tasmania has been well served by the staff of the PWS who despite a decline in political support have continued to undertake their jobs with professionalism and passion to ensure that Tasmania's parks remain the envy of the world.

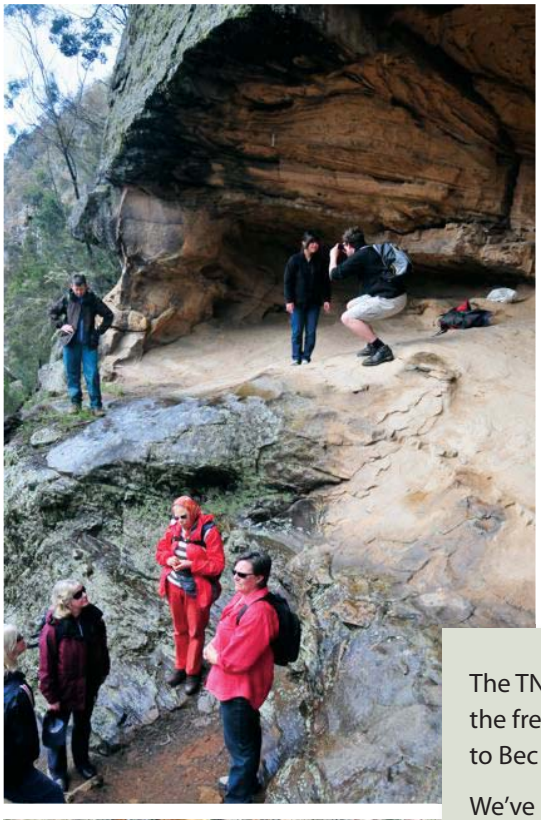
Whilst the TNPA continues to argue the case for a Parks and Wildlife Service that can deliver "world's best practice" in the ongoing management of Tasmania's reserved estate, unfortunately the political will to support this call has not been forthcoming. With a State election due in March 2010 the TNPA is therefore putting forward a raft of policy initiatives (see included article) for which it is seeking support. With the next election likely to be a closely fought contest let us hope all sides of the political debate see the wisdom in ensuring that Tasmania's world renowned reserve estate is managed and supported by a world class parks agency.

As I pen this article I am conscious that Christmas and the New Year are now just over the month away, though I am also aware that this edition of the TNPA News will not be printed and distributed until early 2010. Nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the TNPA Committee to extend our thanks to all our members and supporters for their continued engagement and support during the year and to wish you all the best for 2010. In the meantime, may you find the time to visit, discover and enjoy the enchanted wonders of Tasmania's parks and reserves. For while John Muir may have written *"In wilderness is the preservation of the world"*, surely in Tasmania's national parks is the preservation of Tasmania.

Robert Campbell , President

(Note: For more detail on funding to the Tasmanian PWS, see article on page 14)

Report – **TNPA's Great Tasmanian Bushwalk 2009**



The GTB 2009 at the Chauncy Vale caves (Photos: B. Johnston)

The Great Tasmanian Bushwalk (GTB) 2009 went well.

It started out with only three walks, but isn't it true that "small is beautiful"! And with help from John Cannon's *Sunday Tasmanian* column, which attracts a wide audience, including people who may not have heard of TNPA before, a total of 74 people participated in the GTB. This was a good turnout considering it was Grand Final day! It also compares well to the seven walks last year which had a total of 112 people.

The GTB ended up as a five walk program, with three walks being at **Chauncy Vale** and led by Heather Chauncy. The Chauncy Vale walks have been amazingly popular, with 20 people on the first walk, 23 on the second walk and around 16 people on the third walk. John Cannon's article in the *Sunday Tasmanian* attracted such a flood of bookings for the Chauncy Vale walk that it was over-subscribed within 2 days.

There were four people plus intrepid leader Bruce Wilson on the **Collins Bonnet Walk**. Despite the weather, nobody was lost on this high altitude walk. The only 'lowlight' was a sprained ankle which meant the group had to come out the same way, instead of making a circuit.

Untiring walk leader Lesley Nicklason led a party of eleven on the **Tall Trees of Mt Barrow** walk. Lesley tells me the big White Gum they visited at Mt Barrow features in a new book called *Australia's Most Beautiful Trees*, and is only one of four Tasmanian trees featured in the book.

Thanks to John Cannon for his support for the TNPA free guided walks. Thanks also to Anne and Janet for putting up flyers, getting the flyer digitised, and helping with the media release.

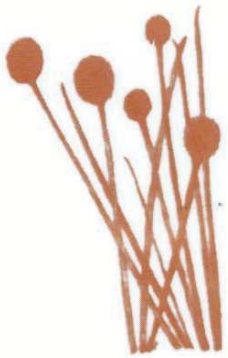
Now that the Great Australian Bushwalk seems to have died out without the support from the NPA NSW, the TNPA is free to look at other formats for its walks. I feel having a 'Great Tasmanian Bushwalk' is a bit grand for only a few day walks, and I will be looking at whether the TNPA might run program of similar walks over a longer period, and possibly at a more suitable time of year.

Bec Johnson

The TNPA has changed its approach to the free guided walk program thanks to Bec Johnston's interest.

We've done away with the GTB, and in its place, from 2010, we will have a series of "TNPA Autumn Walks" running from mid-April to mid-May each year.

Check out the TNPA website closer to the time for the walks program, and if you would like to lead a walk please contact Bec via the TNPA - admin@tnpa.asn.au.



MARCH 2010 ELECTIONS
VOTE FOR YOUR PARKS

Tasmanian National Parks Association Inc
www.tnpa.asn.au

Authorised by L. Thomas, 75 Brushy Creek Road, Lenah Valley, Tas, 7008.

THE MARCH 2010 ELECTION & TNPA'S POLICY ASKS

In the lead up to the March 2010 election the TNPA has developed a list of 14 core policies (see below) that we believe are critical to implement if Tasmania is to ensure that its reserved land system is arrested from its increasingly rapid decline.

We have been talking to the three main political parties in Tasmania to try and gain their support. We now need other Tasmanian's to support better management of our reserved land system.

You can do your bit by -

1. Reading the TNPA policy for the Tasmanian reserved land system (see below).
2. Looking at the policies of all candidates for your electorate, and see how they align or do not align with the TNPA policy.
3. Identifying three or four goals in the TNPA's policy that are really important to you and your electorate.
4. Discussing these with any of the candidates you can contact-in person, by letter, or electronically.

The Tasmanian election is only days away – vote for your parks,

they need your support.

2010 TASMANIAN ELECTION
TNPA POLICY FOR THE TASMANIAN RESERVED LAND SYSTEM

Tasmanian National Parks Association, 2/2/10

Note - the following is a summary which sets out the core policies only. For the full summary refer to the TNPA website – www.tnpa.asn.au

Policy Aim

Responsible long-term management of Tasmania's natural and cultural resources, including for the preservation of significant natural and cultural values, which will place Tasmania in the forefront of environmental conservation and sustainable management.

Introduction

Almost 40% of Tasmania is land which has been reserved primarily for its conservation value. Much of this is very high conservation quality land. This conservation estate is a critical resource for present day and future Tasmanians in a variety of ways; and these extensive conservation reserves, rare at a global level, are of untold value for our planet.

Tasmania has a trust to manage this conservation estate responsibly, to ensure it can be handed on in the same or better condition to future generations. Doing nothing will not achieve this – doing nothing is neglect which leads to deterioration and loss. Inappropriate use and overuse will also cause irreparable damage of the conservation estate, and destroy the very values for which the reserves were created. Active conservation management is therefore essential to maintain the health of Tasmania's conservation estate.

In recent years the ability to actively manage Tasmania's conservation estate has been significantly compromised by decreased resources for management, by political decisions that have failed to acknowledge the importance and sensitivity of the conservation estate, and by poor governance.

The following policy goals, while acknowledging current State resourcing issues and other pressures, are aimed at redressing the currently disastrous state of reserved land management in Tasmania, and at putting it back on track!

Core Election Policy Goals for the Tasmanian Reserved Land System

1. Reaffirm that the primary objective of reserved land in Tasmania is the conservation and protection of significant natural and cultural values.
2. Restore the legislated position of Director of the PWS to an expertise and merit based position as head of the agency, which does not have conflicting extra-agency responsibilities.
3. Ensure that the PWS is the responsibility of a single Minister, and one that has no conflicting portfolio responsibilities (eg, natural resource utilisation or tourism).
4. Create a stand-alone Department of Environment that encompasses all environment protection related portfolio areas (where scientific support is available to the PWS), and which does not include resource exploitative functions.
5. Commit to providing adequate, secure and ongoing recurrent funding to the PWS, to a minimum of $30 million per annum in the short term recognising current government financial constraints, to allow the PWS to maintain its core land management responsibilities and existing infrastructure and to allow a workable field staff level.
6. Prepare and implement a state level Policy on Environmentally Sustainable Tourism.
7. Commit to values protection and sustainable tourism by not proceeding with the proposed Three Capes Track development.
8. Ensure the PWS, prepare an overarching plan of conservation management for the Tarkine as a priority and prior to any developments and new uses; and commit to values protection by not proceeding with the proposed Tarkine Road.
9. Add new areas to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area as per the 2008 recommendations of the ENGOs (refer Law (2009) *Western Tasmania – A Place of Outstanding Universal Value*).
10. Adopt at least the national and international targets for marine reserve areas and functions, including the adoption of no take areas for ecological and species protection.
11. Respect reserve management plans and objectives, in particular with respect to existing zoning and the policy to locate tourist accommodation outside protected areas.
12. Commit to regular auditing of reserve management by an independent body/agency (for example a scientific advisory body set up under the Planning Commission).
13. Establish a new and environment-focused evaluation approach for proposed developments and/or concessions within protected areas that includes –
    - articulation and genuine consideration of options (including no development)
    - a triple bottom line evaluation with primary consideration given to the natural and cultural values of the relevant reserve/s, and
    - environmental impact assessment as a separate and prior stage to development planning and leasing/permitting (see also *Planning and Evaluation).*
14. Introduce a system for the management of commercial developments and leases in protected areas that includes –
    - cost recovery from leases and other commercial agreements that reflects the loss of natural and cultural values and amenity to the general public, and additional costs to the PWS for management;
    - fixed term leases, with on-selling to be subject to review and merit based assessment.
    - a bond to be paid by commercial operators to cover costs of potential rehabilitation in the case of non-compliance or business failure.

Why Planning is ***not Boring***

Reserved Land Management & Recent Changes to the Tasmanian Planning System

By Anne McConnell

Please don't go to sleep yet —planning is important for conservation

When the government announced the results of its review of the Tasmanian planning system in early 2009, the public response was so loud you could have heard a pin drop. In particular circles there was outrage and dismay, but from the media, our parliamentarians and other public entities and figures who might have spoken out – there was nothing – a stony silence, or was it perhaps 'ennui'.

This later possibility has been strongly suggested by the response to my puzzled enquiries as to why the champions of transparency, due process and sound planning were so quiet on the issue – which was unanimously, that 'planning is boring'!

I am not a planner, but planning is not boring! Planning is critical to every day life and business in Tasmania. It underpins the thousands of decisions that are made about land and how it is managed throughout the state, whether it be private or public land, wood-production forest or conservation estate. It enables both protection and destruction, conservation and new development.

If we do not get the planning right, we cannot mange the land effectively and we run the risk of loss of our democratic rights.

The review of the Tasmanian planning system by the government in mid-late 2008 had at its heart these very issues. This was recognised in an insightful *Mercury* editorial of the 10th September 2008 titled '*Beware the Trojan Horse*'.

Although a bit unfair on the 1993 Resource Management and Planning System, the following views expressed in the editorial provide a good summary of the main issues at stake – "The present system is a confusion of different schemes tacked together much like a Tasmanian holiday shack, with renovations and extensions representing decades of different building techniques, standards and technologies. The system is cumbersome, confusing and outdated. It needs reform. But this reform must not be used to restrict the public's right to appeal against development applications, have their say or have submissions given due and proper consideration. … We need enthusiastic, bold and intelligent developers … who are prepared to invest in their dreams. We also need to protect our rare natural beauty, unique culture and history, and warm, friendly sense of community."

There is no time to sleep – it is important to understand that the 2009 planning changes are not reforms – they are retrograde - particularly for conservation and environment

Sadly, when the government announced its planning reforms very little notice was taken of the *Mercury* Editorial or the many of the sixty nine submissions, including the TNPA submission, which called for recognition of pro-development biases and reform to eliminate these, and to give greater scrutiny and professionalism to planning and development matters in Tasmania, and to public rights.

Instead, the planning reforms will help development happen and to diminish, not improve, scrutiny and the checks and balances that existed.

Some of the key changes which are of concern are –

- the demotion of the RPDC and compromising of its independence by relocating it within a new Tasmanian planning agency, grandly termed the *Tasmanian Planning Commission*;
- the creation of *Projects of Regional Significance* (PORS) that bypass local government and would appear intended to facilitate government fast tracking of regional developments (as well as maintaining *Projects of State Significance* (POSS)); and
- greater call-in powers for the Minister.

The so-called reforms failed to include any changes that limit political interference, improve transparency, improve the ability for public concerns to be heard, or recognise the special planning needs in relation to Crown land, including in relation to conservation.

It is instructive to consider the views and recommendations expressed in the February 2009 *Steering Committee Report on the Review of the Tasmanian Planning System* which reviewed the public submissions to the review and made the final recommendations to government. A review of the document indicates very narrow terms of reference (essentially 'streamlining' the planning processes) and not surprisingly a preoccupation with 'simplifying' the government planning resources, speeding up the processing of developments seemingly with little regard for the cost, and facilitating government control. The make up of the Steering Committee, which comprised the Deputy Secretary Department Justice, Deputy Secretary Department of Premier and Cabinet, the State Planning Advisor, the Executive Commissioner of the RPDC and the General Manager of Clarence Council, is in itself a source of concern, with its very limited planning expertise, lack of reserved land planning expertise, and what might be considered as an over abundance of politically appointed bureaucrats.

In my view the major flaw of the review is that was so narrowly focussed it made producing a sound and effective planning and management framework for Tasmania an impossibility. This would seem to be in part the fault of the very narrow terms of reference of the review, but also a failure to see how the planning system fits into the broader context of land management and planning in Tasmania. In effect the review failed to recognise that planning is only one element of a **resource management and planning system**, which as well as having regulatory planning mechanisms, which is what the review limited itself to, also has policy, strategic planning (for a range of purposes and at a range of levels), monitoring and environmental regulatory components, which were ignored.

If considered in tandem with other proposed changes, such as the model planning schemes and rigid template approaches being developed by government, the proposals to change the Objectives (Schedules 1 and 2) of the *Land Use and Planning Approvals Act 1993*, which are what support natural and cultural values protection at the local government level, proposed changes to Tasmania's two cultural heritage Acts, and the current system whereby park and other reserve management plans can be changed by a government agency at the Minister's discretion without any external constraining intervention, then we should all be very worried about the future of Tasmania's natural environment and cultural heritage, and the integrity of Tasmania's reserved land system.

The warning of the *Mercury* Editorial has proven prophetic – the new planning changes are in fact a Trojan horse, and it bears the means of destruction of the conservation values of our reserved land system.

Let's hope this planning piece now has the adrenalin pumping – there is work to be done!

We as Tasmanian's should therefore be speaking out loudly against the recent planning system changes in Tasmania. We should be convincing the government and members of parliament that Tasmania needs to go back to the drawing board and start again. This time with sensible and balanced objectives that will deliver a good planning outcome for Tasmania as a whole and its range of values, and not simply facilitate development with no thought for the cost.

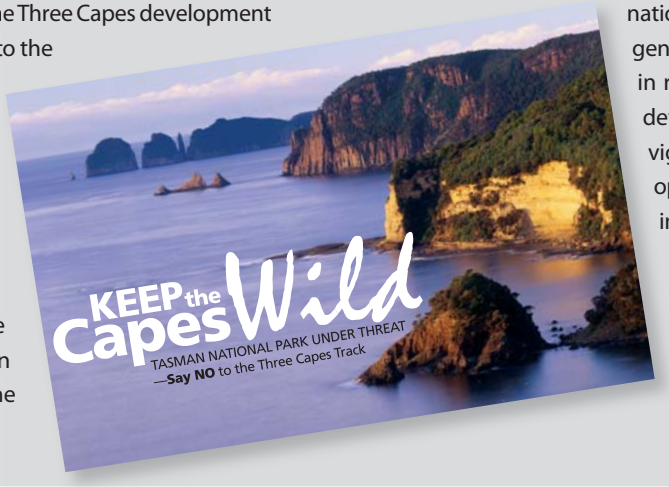
In the words of a planning friend of mine, if all the proposed changes to the planning system get up and we don't fight back, "we can kiss goodbye to the Tasmania we know".

Postscript: The TNPA made a detailed submission to the 2008 Review of the Tasmanian Planning System. The submission welcomed the review as an opportunity to strengthen existing processes that work well, as for example the role of the RPDC and the Land Use Planning and Approvals system, and to put these on a firmer basis by ensuring that they are less open to political interference, and to put planning and resource decision making more generally on a firm, fair and ethical footing. A number of recommendations were made to this end. The submission is available on the TNPA website at www.tnpa.asn.au.

Stop Press—The Tasman Peninsula Under Pressure in the March 2010 Election

Although there is not yet a firm proposal for the Labor government's proposed Three Capes Walk development which will comprise c.74 km of walking track (much of it in Phytophthora sensitive country) and 5 village-like accommodation nodes which will have to be entirely serviced by helicopter, the State government has managed to obtain $12.5 million funding support from the Federal government for this $30 million development.

The Mercury article announcing this funding (5/3/2010) also reported Cassy O'Connor as saying the Tasmanian Greens gave in principle support for the Three Capes development. On querying this position with the Tasmanian Greens office, the TNPA was advised that this report was correct. The Tasmanian Greens advised that the support was on the basis that 1. the Three Capes development proposal increases public access to the Park, and 2. will grow jobs in the region. The TNPA believes the development will do neither. Cassy O'Connor is well aware of the TNPA position on the Three Capes, and the TNPA were shocked by the Tasmanian Greens support for the Three Capes proposal, particularly given that they were fully aware of the TNPA's Two Capes alternative.



The TNPA believes that it is the Two Capes option, not the government's Three Capes development that will bring greater economic return to the region, result in significantly less environmental impact, cost considerably less to get up and running, and result in greater equity and access to the Tasman National Park. The TNPA has consistently advocated for the last two years in favour of the 'Two Capes Walk'. It would seem however that a large number of Tasmanian politicians cannot see beyond the 'large and iconic', and have scant regard for the triple bottom line – which is what the Two Capes option achieves.

In line with our objectives, the TNPA will continue to promote and work for the Two Capes option for the Tasman National Park; for major tourism and other infrastructure to be located outside national parks; and for sustainable tourism generally. Given the recent happenings in relation to the Three Capes proposed development, the TNPA will also more vigorously promote the need for openness, transparency and integrity in environmental decision making.

Recherche Bay—*The Current Position*

By Greg Hogg

Since the landmark deal that was made in 2006 to save an area of private land from logging in Recherche Bay in the Far South of Tasmania, there have been few advances in the conservation of the Bay.

Many will be aware of the deal brokered by Bob Brown in February of that year for the purchase of the area by Dick Smith for the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. While this was of great significance, at the time overly optimistic banner headlines proclaimed that Recherche Bay had been "saved". In fact only an area of private land on the north east peninsula of the Bay was affected.

As Lady Jane Franklin indicated when she visited in 1838, Recherche Bay is naturally divided into three areas: Rocky Bay in the south, a central area between Gagens Point and Moss Glen and the northern bay which was called Port Du Nord by the French when they visited it in 1792.

The area of land saved from logging is only a part of the eastern peninsula of Port du Nord. Between this and the Southwest National Park, south of Cockle Creek in Rocky Bay, is a mish mash of private and forestry land and small conservation and nature recreation areas. The Bay and its hinterland are largely unprotected, and logging and other inappropriate development continues.

Even in the Southwest National Park, a major private development that threatened the heritage values of the Bay had been approved by the Government. This East Cockle Creek Development involved the construction of up to forty chalets and a large restaurant between Adams and Snake Point in Rocky Bay. While earlier this year it was announced that the private developer, Goldworthy Developments Pty Ltd, had withdrawn due to the economic downturn, the Government said at the time that it was actively seeking a new participant.

I have been working with the Far South Historical Society and the Recherche Bay Protection Group to identify and conserve heritage sites in the Bay since 2000. In 2003 we nominated sites on the North East Peninsula associated with the d'Entrecasteaux expedition of 1792 for conservation under the Tasmanian *Historical Cultural Heritage Act* (1995). In 2004 I nominated further sites associated with that expedition's 1793 visit.

In January 2006 the garden and observatory on the North East Peninsula which were established by the 1792 expedition were permanently listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, but the Cockle Creek East area, the subject of the 1793 expedition, was not listed until December 2006. These listings however only conserve narrow areas of foreshore land. They are insufficient to encompass all the archaeological features, let alone the heritage values of the Bay.

More importantly, the Management Guidelines (for the Cockle Creek East area only) are too weak to ensure the preservation of known sites. These Guidelines are little better than recommendations, and are not expressed as mandatory requirements. Inclusion of phrases such as "Changes to topography are discouraged" imposes no legal obligation. Even where a works application is required for development it is couched in such terms as would indicate that it is a fait accompli. Nor is there is an express requirement for an impact statement before development.

In 2004 Professor Mulvaney and others nominated the North East Peninsula of the Bay for National Heritage listing under the then relatively new Federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999). After a major campaign in support of this nomination, the Federal Heritage Minister was persuaded in October 2005 to include the peninsula on the National Heritage list.

In order to conserve the entire cultural landscape, in 2005 I nominated the full area of Recherche Bay and its surrounds (see map) for National Heritage listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999). I amended my nomination in March 2006 as a consequence of discussion at the February 2006 National Academies *A celebration of the history,*

culture, science and technology of Recherche Bay forum.

The amended area extended westward to the WHA boundary and to the north of Southport Lagoon. Considerable material was provided in support of the application, but it was rejected in 2008 without any detailed reasons being given.

This is difficult to understand as the exact same heritage values apply to the sites associated with the 1793 visit of the expedition to Rocky Bay as they do to the North East Peninsula in relation to the visit of 1792.

Tom Baxter, Lecturer in Commercial Law at the University of Tasmania discussed this nomination when he presented a paper to the National Academies Forum on Recherche Bay: Tom pointed to the need to avoid inappropriate tourism development in the Bay of the kind that had occurred in other parts of Australia. He gave as an example 1770 in North Queensland where tacky tourist traps devalue the heritage of Cooks landing place. He particularly discussed inadequacies in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (*1999) in protecting the National Estate[1].

Tom reiterated his concerns last year in a paper presented to the Australian Law Teachers Association 2008 Conference. In this paper he said "The example of Recherche Bay, in Far South Tasmania, demonstrates how a National Heritage-listed cultural landscape, of arguably World Heritage significance, could have been logged after its National Heritage listing - due to the EPBC Act's exemption for RFA forestry operations. It is submitted that Recherche Bay should now be added as an extension to the World Heritage Area."

In September 2009 Geoff Law published a report calling for extensions to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area which included Recherche Bay[2].

Although it was rejected by the Tasmanian Government, this important report would go a long way to resolving the piecemeal approach to conservation in the Bay. Geoff Law states that an expanded World Heritage Area would become Tasmania's tourism backbone. The report goes on to say that "This is Tasmania's globally-celebrated asset, it is what sets us especially apart and it offers us huge future economic and employment rewards. Our existing World Heritage Area already generates over $200 million of annual income for Tasmania and more than 5000 jobs. An enlarged World Heritage Area would extend those benefits to towns such as Waratah, Poatina, Deloraine, Dover, Maydena, Westerway, Judbury and Tarraleah. About 85% of these spectacular areas are already reserved. World Heritage status will enable Tasmania to get more federal funding for better management of their outstanding values."

The potential downside as foreshadowed by Tom Baxter is that in the push for the tourist dollar, the lowest common denominator of cheap accommodation and presentation will downgrade the heritage values. We do not want a repeat of the kind of development proposed in the East Cockle Creek Development.

My experience on the working group for the management plan for the North East Peninsula set up by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy in 2005 convinced me that these plans must be closely examined. In that case the major contention was whether a boat landing should be permitted for tourist boats on the peninsula. While I was outvoted in my opposition to the landing I was nevertheless able to insist that an impact statement be carried out before any such impact was permitted.

Image left page: Aerial view of the Recherche Bay area (view west) (courtesy G. Hogg). Above top: Recherche Bay and surrounds showing the National Heritage List Recherche Bay nomination boundary proposed by Greg Hogg in 2005 to ensure full protection of the cultural landscape and other heritage values of the Bay. Above: Greg Hogg and Dr Nigel Erskine, Curator of Exploration at the National Maritime Museum examining the chart of Rocky Bay prepared by Beautemps-Beaupre in 1793 (courtesy G. Hogg).

If the 2009 Law report is ultimately accepted, the detail of management plans for the expanded WHA and adjacent buffer zones and forest rehabilitation areas will be all important.

If properly managed however, the extension of the WHA to include Recherche Bay would replace the existing piecemeal conservation regime and thereby provide a uniform foundation for sustainable and appropriate tourism operations in the far south.

[1] In, Academy of Social Sciences 2007 *Rediscovering Recherche Bay*. Canberra, Australia.

[2] Law, G. 2009 *Western Tasmania, A Place of Outstanding Universal Value – Proposed extensions to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.* Report commissioned by Senator Bob Brown, The Greens.

THE TNPA GETS OUT AND ABOUT

And for those of you who haven't managed to get out in the national parks lately, here are some glimpses into some recent experiences by TNPA members.

Experiencing the Overland Track (Spring 2009)

by Liz Thomas

"Actually that's not a kangaroo, it's a wallaby." Quizzical looks; I repeat and point in my best tourist English, "W A L L A B Y". "Oh, wallaby" the spokesperson for the group of Germans explains, and I hear this apparently new word bouncing around amongst them.

"No trouble, least I can do", I mumble wondering if one word might change the course of their wilderness experience. "And now", I add to myself "if I could just have a quiet moment in the hubbub that is the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre ....".

All I wanted was a cup of tea. No, not that stuff offered up in some sort of throw away cup and attitude in the Transit Cafe between the national park and the car park. I was hankering for tea as it should be out here; in a Trangia and in the bush. And so I had at last found a little bit of bush away from the traffic and dusty road and the helipad and helicopter, that didn't seem to belong to the campground, the cafe, or the tourist resort. I had duly set up the Trangia as you do, as I had done several times each day for the last seven before this tenuous tranquillity was broken.

I know that it might seem peculiar that someone of my age (with knees of even greater age) and with all the bushwalking that I have enjoyed, had gone on an overnight walk by myself. I had always enjoyed the company of others in the bush, and it was easier to share the weight of tent and stove, etc. Nevertheless the notion had been niggling for some time, and as our recent overcast winter wore on I decided I needed a plan at the end of the gloomy tunnel.

And so a lot of planning (not to mention some home spun R &D as well) went into the bid for light weight. I discovered that I'm not the only baby boomer on this quest. There are numerous websites chatting about solo tents, great debates about how much comfort and safety to forgo, lots of lightweight gear now available, and heaps of handy hints like making your own lightweight fuel stove out of a Red Bull can, photo included, design and manufacture possibly aided by first imbibing contents of said can.

I dehydrated everything I could lay my hands on and, incidentally, still can't seem to kick the habit; the dehydrator is humming with the aroma of broad beans from the garden as I type. (Well actually I prefer to call them Favo beans, as they are called in Italy and other Mediterranean countries where I was very thankful to discover there are fantastic traditional recipes such as for dips and falafel).

I met a woman on the walk who was a dedicated dehydrator, with each meal in one zip lock bag ready to be popped into the one pot. "Ready in minutes," she said, "whilst all those other people are still fussing about what to cook, I've already eaten mine!" Now there was a woman in a hurry, whereas I find the "pottering" around the stove quite relaxing at the end of the day.

The Overland Track is unique in many ways, and not least for the people it attracts, a good portion of whom are inexperienced bushwalkers. Many of these are overseas travellers and I did wonder - as I heard a tale about one Frenchman on the track who started out with a 3kg bag of oranges, pasta sauce in a large glass jar, and a barbecue roasted chicken which was ripe enough to walk itself - whether the huts evoke some European notion of strolling on a Spring day between chalets fully stocked with clean linen and schnapps.

I tented most nights as it was nice and cosy and well, that's what I always do. I did walk into Windy Ridge hut because I heard it was a "must see", but I quickly walked out and found myself a tent platform with my very own miniature celery top pine, a stunning view of a snow-capped Acropolis, and as I later discovered my very own pair of possums.

Once I got over experiencing life as a wet/dry dichotomy (it began to rain as soon as I started walking and persisted for several days), I enjoyed a relaxed rhythm of exercise and fresh air, the staggering beauty of the diverse landscapes about me, and with no other concerns than where I would camp and what I would eat that night. A dose of semi-solitude with the house on my back, without the phone, and just with immediate concerns certainly seemed to strip off layers of complexity (or perhaps sheer nonsense), leaving room for clear thinking about what really matters. The afore-mentioned woman in a hurry was frustrated and restless and not sure what to do when she had raced from one hut to the next with time on her hands, and was upset for a couple she had met who for transport reasons had to return to Cradle Mountain, "Poor things, fancy having to go back the same way!" I did think "Mmm, see that tree out there (have you even noticed it)? I don't think it cares. It will just keep on being a tree regardless of people dashing about."

There is however something to be said for a through trip rather than walking in and out, or a circuit; I really felt as if I were going somewhere, a little bit like travelling, passing through and being immersed in exotic places and wondering if I would ever be there again.

Experiencing the new Wineglass Bay Lookout Walk, Freycinet National Park (Autumn 2009)

by Anne McConnell

It seems 2009 was to be the year of report writing and minimal bushwalking. So it was with some excitement that I headed off to Freycinet in May for a weekend bushwalk. I was also quite keen to walk the new track from the car park up to the Wineglass Bay lookout – the track that had taken a few years and a few hundred thousand dollars to build.

Don't get me wrong. I thought a new track to create a loop track was a great idea; and a track that made it easier for those who do not normally walk out of view of their car to get to the Wineglass Bay saddle and enjoy the superb views was highly worthwhile.

Having walked the track, I still think it was a great idea. It appears to have been well planned with a very even grade that gets you to the saddle with very little pain and which, with its excellent surface, is easy to walk. Call me a purist if you like, but I have to say I did find the track style somewhat over the top for a walking track in a natural area of a national park.

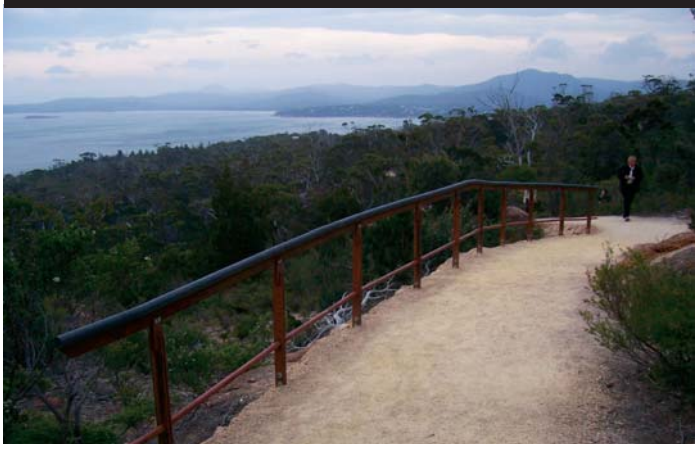
Obviously the track presents some challenges given the high erodability of this dry granite terrain, particularly if one is trying to use local natural materials; so the extensive drystone walling on the lower side of the track makes sense. But there did seem to be rather a lot of drystone walling on the upper side of the track, a lot of which was in a rather dubious (for a natural area) crazy paving style. There were some delightful areas of largely natural rock seating. Sadly I felt this was spoiled by yet more crazy paving, in at least one case spreading around the seats and out onto the track (see photos 1 and 2). Was this crazy paving or paving gone crazy!

The track is clearly designed to carry a large amount of traffic, but to achieve this it is very wide. This wide pale track is highly visible from various vantage points along the track. There seems to have been some effort made however to make the handrails blend into the landscape (see photo 3).

Overall, with the width of the track and the crazy paving, I felt more like I was walking in an urban park, or hotel or private garden. The artificiality of it felt very foreign to a national park, and for me did nothing to enhance the experience of being in a stunning area of granite and coastal scenery. It was rather a relief to reach the saddle and start the descent down to Wineglass Bay, on a well made but much more 'national park' style track.

Oh, and I hope the PWS have a budget for repair and maintenance of the track because we also noted a number of places where stones have already fallen out of the drystone walling (see photo 4).

1. The new track - a section with handrails (Photo: A. McConnell)



2. The new track - section with rock seats and crazy paving (Photo: A. McConnell)

3. The new track – detail of crazy paving (Photo: A. McConnell)

4. The new track – already in need of repairs (Photo: A. McConnell)

Implications of Climate Change for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

"On the balance of probabilities, the failure of our generation on climate change mitigation would lead to consequences that would haunt humanity until the end of time".

The Garnaut Climate Change Report

By Robert Campbell

On an extended walk across the Central Plateau several years ago I was struck by the large number of dead and dying trees within certain localities. Whether these deaths were associated with an ecosystem under stress, or the result of some past event such as fire, I had no way of knowing. Later I heard an opinion that these deaths may have been a response to changes in climatic conditions, but again whether or not this opinion was based on facts I did not know.

With the release of the 2009 report *"Implications of Climate Change for Australia's World Heritage Properties: A Preliminary Assessment"* we now have some understanding of likely changes to natural ecosystems related to a changing climate. Prepared by the Australian National University for the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, the report provides a preliminary assessment of the vulnerability of Australia's World Heritage properties to the impacts of climate change.

The report notes that, with continued global warming, Australian rainfall patterns are expected to change, with northern Australia likely to receive more rainfall while southern and south-eastern Australia will likely receive less. Water availability and quality, and runoff into streams, are likely to be affected by higher temperatures, increased evaporation rates and lower soil moisture content, and changes in the amount and patterns of rainfall. Increased evaporative demand associated with higher temperatures is likely to lead to an increase in severe droughts for the majority of Australia's World Heritage properties. However, there is an increased likelihood of more severe storm events and cyclones.

Associated with these changes it is likely there will be substantial reductions in the area of rainforests, declines in the abundances of native fauna and flora, expansion of woody vegetation into arid and semi-arid rangelands, and continued coral bleaching. Changes in the abundance and distribution of many species, including the extinction of indigenous plants and animals with limited dispersal capabilities and/or narrow climatic tolerance ranges, are also expected. These impacts are likely because rates of climate change are highly likely to occur faster than the rates of evolutionary adaptation of many plant and animal species.

Together with providing a general overview of climatic impacts across Australia, the report also provides details of the likely impacts on Australia's 17 World Heritage Properties. With regard the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which covers an area of 1.38 million ha, or 20% of Tasmania, the report notes the following climate change scenarios relative to 1990, based on a 'high' greenhouse gas emissions scenario (which, unfortunately, the world is currently tracking towards):

- The average annual temperature for this World Heritage property is expected to increase by 1.1 °C ± 0.4 °C by 2030.
- Annual average rainfall is likely to increase by 3.5% ± 11% by 2030, although this is likely to be seasonally variable, with summer rainfall likely to fall by around 7.5% (±15%).
- Sea level is expected to rise by as much as 17 cm.
- The severity and frequency of drought is expected to increase.
- There is likely to be a 10–40% reduction in snow cover by 2030.
- Although evaporation rates will increase (4.4% ± 1.9%), stream flow response is likely to be unpredictable (±10% change).

The coastal regions of the Tasmanian Wilderness are considered likely to experience the most dramatic climate change impacts associated with sea level rise. Coastal regions contain important geomorphic values, most of which are non-renewable even if climate change drivers are reduced or reversed. As well as their intrinsic geomorphic values, sandy coasts also support significant biotic communities and Aboriginal cultural values. Many Aboriginal sites, such as middens, sea cave deposits, rock art and cave art sites, rely on preservation of underlying landforms. While the potential exists for some biotic communities to 'migrate' landwards, management of non-renewable cultural

and geomorphic features and systems will require significant consideration.

Anthropogenic climate change is also likely to affect rates and magnitudes of change in other landscape provinces, including fluvial systems, karst and in the extensive blanket bogs supporting buttongrass ecosystems that characterise much of south-western Tasmania. The report stated that it will be important to investigate and monitor landscape-scale linkages between biotic and geomorphic systems, particularly in the buttongrass moorlands where fire plays a key role in controlling hydrological responses to changes in rainfall, evapotranspiration and temperature. This in turn controls shallow groundwater and streamflows, which influence vegetation distributions—habitat for buttongrass moorland biota, such as the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

Tasmania has the largest population of primitive taxa and Gondwanan relicts of alpine flora in Australia, with a majority of the diversity located within the WHA. Cool-adapted alpine species may have difficulty in adapting to a temperature increase due to their restricted range, whereas a warming trend may benefit temperate and rainforest plant species. Warmer seasonal temperatures and higher atmospheric CO2 concentrations are also likely to change the composition of alpine vegetation with an expected increase in woody plant communities. In buttongrass moorland regions, a change in vegetation density of heath and shrub species could lead to the formation of a 'closed canopy system' and result in the demise of some buttongrass species from increased shading. However, a tendency for increased shading may be offset by increased burning frequency.

Climate change is likely to result in increased elevation of the climatic treeline. If there is a temperature rise of 1.5–1.9 °C, it is possible that the elevation of the treeline would move some 250–300 m above the present treeline. This would eliminate the true alpine zone in Tasmania and result in cool temperature-sensitive species potentially facing population extinction in Tasmania. The impact that this temperature-associated vegetation change will have on fire regimes is not clear but it appears likely that the frequency of fire reaching mountain tops will increase, further degrading the condition of alpine communities

There are about 80 endemic species and another 14 sub-specific endemic taxa that, although not specifically restricted to areas above the climatic treeline, are nonetheless fairly limited in their habitat preferences and are found largely in the alpine zone. Competition and changes in the dynamics of alpine communities may lead to serious declines in populations of many of these species.

Fire is seen as the greatest threat to the conservation of alpine vegetation. Rainforest and subalpine forests are sensitive to fire and could be under threat from an increase in fire frequency and intensity. In particular, a change in fire regime (more intense and frequent) would have a much greater impact on conifers because they are often killed by fire and have extremely poor or limited dispersion range. Over the past 100 years, extensive pencil pine and King Billy pine populations have been destroyed as a result of wildfire. Some tree species, such as the deciduous beech, have been listed as having an extreme sensitivity to fire. Changed fire regimes have also resulted in landscape changes from extensive erosion. In this regard, the increase in the occurrence of dry lightening strikes in recent years and resultant fires in the southwest Tasmania, with two large fires affecting the lower, and in parts upper, slopes of the Western Arthurs and Frankland ranges, are portents of possible future impacts.

A climate-induced change in fire characteristics (more frequent, widespread and intense) could also threaten the survival of many of the World Heritage Area's bird species through a loss of core habitats. However, fire is also essential for the maintenance of buttongrass moorland communities and hence the habitat of the orange-bellied parrot.

Current estimates also predict a 10-40% reduction in snow cover by 2030 and, while few studies have been undertaken in Australia, research conducted overseas has shown that snow can play an important role in the ecology of many alpine organisms.

The report concludes by noting a range of gaps in our present knowledge and the need for future research and the identification of management practices that will help reduce the risks that climate change poses to ecosystems in the Tasmanian Wilderness.

For readers interested to learn more about this important topic, the above report and other related publications are available from the following web-site:
http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/climatechange/

Funding for Tasmanian Parks & Reserves –A Big Issue

By Anne McConnell

Funding for Parks, while a miniscule percentage of the Tasmanian budget, was a big issue for the 2009 State budget.

In the lead up to the 2009 budget, the Tasmanian Labor government, crying poor because of the loss of GST revenue due to the 'Global Financial Crisis', announced they would have to make substantial cuts in funding. Included in this were significant cuts to the PWS recurrent budget – in the order of 18% over two years to a budget already seriously emaciated to around a scant $20-21 million by years of cuts.[1]

PWS Funding in Tasmania – What is the Money Needed For?

Tasmania's national parks and other reserves managed by the PWS cover 38-40% of Tasmania. This is more than one third of Tasmania. It is a big job.

These protected areas are mainly conservation reserves, which means that they should be managed firstly for their natural and cultural values, and only once these values are understood and securely managed, should other uses be allowed. All uses should be sustainable and consistent with the conservation of the important values.

Some people may question why Tasmania has such a large amount of protected area, but in fact Tasmania is unbelievable lucky to have such a large reserved land estate when so many parts of the world have such diminished, if any, natural areas remaining.

Tasmania's reserve system is a unique asset for present day and future Tasmanians. Because of its incredible bio- and geo-diversity and rich cultural heritage, as well as its carbon sink value, scenic beauty, and wilderness areas, Tasmania's reserve system is extraordinarily valuable, not just to Tasmania, but at the national and international level. This is recognised in a significant part of Tasmania's reserved land system being World Heritage, a status that also carries responsibilities for management.

We cannot protect this unique and valuable asset into the future by doing nothing. Given the various environmental pressures, this land needs to be actively managed. Management of this asset, like other assets, means we need to understand it; carry out maintenance and repair; to establish policies, processes and plans for management; and to monitor how well the asset is being managed.

Sadly this requires real resourcing.

Tasmanian Reserved Land – Some Funding & Economic Facts

Although government funding of the PWS increased by about $11 million between 1990 and 2008, it has become harder for the PWS to function on this funding. The reasons for this are that:

- *This money has to stretch much further than it did with the large increases in land area of the reserved land estate in this time, including through the RFA process (see Table 1).*
- *The money is not going into on-ground management, but has been mainly given for, hence has had to be spent on, improvements to visitor infrastructure.*
- *The funding has also been going to increasing the number of highly paid senior management staff. The TNPA understands that since the early 2000s, the PWS has gone from a structure with 7 senior managers, to one with 22 senior managers – while field staff numbers diminish.*

An interesting comparison:

- *The government is proposing to spend $30 million – 1.5 times the total PWS recurrent funding - on the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery redevelopment alone.*

Government funding is not money that just keeps being fed into an insatiable and bottomless pit: Tasmania's reserved land system, in particular its national parks, make a significant contribution to Tasmania's annual income at the regional and state level:

- *Total spending in Tasmania by overnight walkers in a year is around $36 million, with each overnight walker spending around $1,752 on their trip to Tasmania (Tasmania Visitor Survey 2007 figures reported in Syneca Consulting 2008).*
- *According to a 2009 Federal Government study on the economic activity of Australia's World Heritage Properties, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area currently generates almost $190 million income a year for Tasmania.*

Tasmanian government funding to the PWS clearly does not recognise the economic contribution the reserved land system already makes to Tasmania's economy.

What person in their right mind would consider that spending less than around 1.5% of the State's budget to manage almost 40% of Tasmania's land area was anything but irresponsible and a ridiculous ask?

Because of the widespread concern for the future of Tasmania's reserved land system with the government's proposal to significantly further cut funding to the PWS, Environment Tasmania hosted a Public Forum in Hobart in June 2009 at which speakers from backgrounds as diverse as Environment Tasmania, the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, the TNPA, the Liberal Party, the Community & Public Sector Union, and the Tasmanian Greens all expressed their concerns about the effects of the funding cuts.

The government however was unrepentant about its cuts, saying defiantly in June 2009 at the Budget Estimates hearings that if there was not enough money to manage Tasmania's reserved land system, then the PWS would have to close facilities, including tracks, and even parks! But strangely, in December 2009, with an election less than six months away, the government did a back flip, finding $2.5 million[2], close to the amount they had just taken away, to put back into the PWS.

Unfortunately this funding was too little too late. The damage done by the earlier funding cuts, in particular the loss of experienced and committed PWS staff, cannot be undone. Being treated as a political football will also not raise the currently very low morale of PWS staff.

What the PWS needs is an adequate recurrent budget that is guaranteed in the medium-long term so that the Service has the confidence to employ and train on-ground staff, maintain their vast amount of infrastructure, and can get on with developing an essentially stalled natural and cultural values information base that is essential to the sustainable use of Tasmania's reserved land system. This doesn't need an unlimited budget – but it needs a reliable and reasonable budget.

[1] It should be noted that the PWS is not entirely dependent on handouts from the government as the Service itself earns in the order of $9 million annually, mainly from Park fees and its small business enterprises.

[2] Plus an additional $1.4 million for fuel reduction burns.

PWS Funding in Tasmania – Funding & Jobs

Did you know:

- *Around 74% of the annual PWS budget is required for salaries. This makes it difficult for the PWS to make cuts without affecting jobs.*
- *In June 2009, prior to the 2009 State budget, the PWS already had 29 frozen positions, with another 30 lost or frozen positions to result from the 2009 budget cuts. The combined total of these lost or frozen positions is almost 22% of PWS staff (full time equivalents)!*
- *During 2009, a senior manager had to drive to the northwest on a regular basis to act as manager for the region due to lack of staff in this region.*
- *According to Crossley (2009) the number of on-ground (ranger) staff has decreased from a peak in 1990 to about half the 1990 number (see table 1).*
- *It is estimated that in 2009 Parks Victoria had 3 times the staff to manage 1.5 time the area of Tasmania's reserved land estate; with Tasmanian on-ground PWS staff managing around 6 times the land area managed by Parks Victoria on-ground staff (ie, 1 on-ground Parks Victoria staff was responsible for managing c.5,000 ha of land, while 1 on-ground PWS staff was responsible for managing c.30,000 ha of land).*
- *In Tasmania, if the PWS situation is compared with that of the next largest land manager, Forestry Tasmania, we find that Forestry Tasmania have something like twice as many staff to manage half the land area.*

Which ever way you cut it – the Tasmanian PWS and the land it manages are not doing well, and have real funding issues trying to meet their land management responsibilities. Low staff morale is not surprising under these circumstances.

The 2009 budget cuts, made knowing the impact on jobs, only made an already untenable situation worse. And this from the Bartlett government whose 2009 budget slogan was About Jobs - Both Now and for the Future!

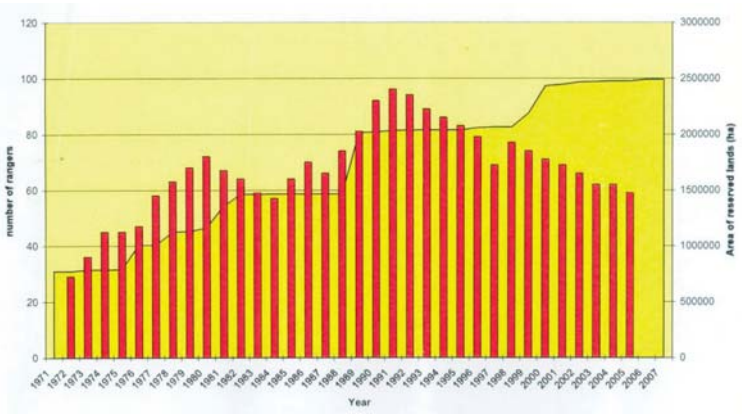


Table 1 – Total ranger (on-ground) staff in Tasmania (red bars) compared to total reserved land area (from Crossley 2009).

Want more information on how Tasmanian national parks have been and are being managed?

Check out Louise Crossley's 2009 'Paradoxes of Protection – Evolution of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and National Park and Reserved Land System', prepared for the Australian Greens.

This can be obtained from the Australian Greens website – www.greensmps.org.au

TNPA UPDATE

The Bay of Fires

—Creating a National Park or a Tourism Icon

In late 2009, the Labor government asked for public comment on its proposal for a new Bay of Fires National Park. On the basis of the only information made available - a map showing the new proposed national park area and a description of the area - the proposal was nothing more than a reclassification of the north section of the Bay of Fires Conservation Area and the Mount Pearson State Reserve to 'national park' under one name.

No information was provided on how the 'park' boundary had been selected or why this land should be reclassified while other areas were not. Aware that there was an internal discussion paper, the TNPA rang the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment to ask for a copy so it could make an informed response. Access to the document or any more detailed information was denied, the officer's response being that 'the government does not want to make its decision making public'. Not quite the approach to public consultation that one might hope for from a democratic, elected government!

The TNPA was also advised that there would be no further public consultation on the creation of the new park. This was confirmed by the Bartlett government's announcement of the new 'Bay of Fires National Park' in early 2010. In spite of considerable comment in the public consultation process (none of which has been publicly released) in support of a much larger national park, the government's announcement was limited to the two areas they originally put up – and still no explanation of why. So much for public consultation.

Although national park status is foremost about nature conservation, the TNPA can only conclude that the two separated areas that are to become Tasmania's newest national park are safe, do not offend Forestry Tasmania, and have nothing to do with nature conservation, but everything to do with tourism promotion.

Given the legislated function and purpose of a 'national park' and the issues with the current proposed national park, the TNPA believes that as a foundation to finalising the park proposal, the government must –

1. re-assess its current proposal on a professional and scientific basis in line with the requirements for creating new National Parks under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*, taking into account not only the conservation values, but also matters such as connectivity and ease of management (which are lacking in the current proposal);
2. consider the boundaries put forward by the North East Bioregional Network (May 2009) in their well researched proposal;
3. have the revised detailed proposal assessed by an independent appropriately qualified body, for example the Tasmanian Planning Commission, given the potential conflict of interest of a Minister for Primary Industry and Parks; and
4. undertake further public consultation which is informed by the above, including consultation with the Aboriginal community regarding the management of the significant Aboriginal heritage values in the area.

This is not an outrageous ask. It is in fact the standard process that should be undertaken by government in proposing a new national park.

A Public Meeting to discuss the Bay of Fires National Park, organised by the North East Bioregional Network (NEBN), was held in St Helens on the 26th February 2010. This was well attended with over 50 participants. The meeting generally supported the NEBN's Bay of Fires National Park proposal (for a much larger area than that proposed by the Labor government) and their call for the boundaries to be established on the basis of sound science and independent review (by the RPDC). It is understood that the Liberal party also indicated their support for this approach and a larger, single area national park.

It's a good thing that the proclamation of the Park must wait until after the election.

Tasmanian National Parks Association Inc

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Meetings

Management Committee meetings are held one Monday each month at 6:30 pm at Sustainable Living Tasmania, 1st Floor 71 Murray Street (above Ecohaven), Hobart. Members and supporters are welcome. Meeting dates will be advertised in each TNPA Communique or please check with the Secretariat.

Have your say...

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TNPA News

TNPA News is published twice a year. It aims to provide informative articles on issues related to national parks and other reserves, as well as updates on TNPA activities and campaigns. The views expressed in TNPA News are not necessarily those of the TNPA Inc. For this issue, many thanks to Greg Hogg, Bec Johnston, Robert Campbell, Anne McConnell, Liz Thomas & Ben Kurczok. Original articles in TNPA News may be reproduced, but please acknowledge the author and the source. Contributions for TNPA News No. 13 are welcomed (deadline mid-Sept 2010). Please send contributions to admin@tnpa.asn.au (attention: TNPA News editor).

This newsletter was correct as at 1 March 2010.

Editor TNPA News 13 - Anne McConnell

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