

Tasmanian National Parks Association

PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR 2013-2014

I would like to thank you all for coming to tonight's AGM as it is the members that give strength to the TNPA and its commitment to stand up for Tasmania's protected areas.

We are now only two years away from celebrating the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of Tasmania's first national parks – both Mount Field NP and Freycinet NP were declared on 29 August 1916.

Fortunately, the foresights that lead to the establishment of these early parks have continued to be supported and augmented over the years.

Currently the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service manages **nearly 800 terrestrial reserves** covering **over 2.7 million hectares**, or nearly **40% of the land area** of the State.

Furthermore, in total the Tasmanian Reserve Estate as at 30th June 2014 indicates a total terrestrial reserved area of 3,414,000 hectares, or 50.1% of the area of Tasmania, including both PWS and Forestry Tasmania-managed reserved land, formal and informal reserves on public land, reserves on private land, and Wellington Park.

The total reserved area, including Marine Protected Areas, is 3,603,200 hectares.

The history of achieving this wonderful (world first) outcome has not away been without it turbulent times. Indeed, there have been a number of revocations from the reserved estate over the years as well as better known issues such as the Save Lake Pedder campaign.

The TNPA, although a relatively new kid on the block, has since its launch in September 2001 positioned itself as the primary public voice on issues impacting on Tasmania's protected areas and I again thank all our members and supporters who have joined us on our journey over this period.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OVER PAST YEAR

And so what has the TNPA be up to since the last AGM. A quick scan through my email InBox indicates a usual raft of activities and some not-so-usual and the following list covers some of the main issues that have we have concerned with:

Public engagement & education:

- Answering and following up issues brought to our attention by members and the public;
- Publication of the *TNPA News #17 & 18*, use of the TNPA website, the organisation of public events, and the manning of a stall at Salamanca market to raise the public awareness on issues concerning the ongoing management of reserved lands in Tasmania;
- Organisation of the 'TNPA Autumn Walks' during which the TNPA hosts a month of free, guided bushwalks on weekends.

Collaborative management:

- Convening a workshop of Environmental NGOs to discuss the ongoing review of the 1999 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan;
- Regular discussions with other NPAs via membership of the National Parks Australia Council.

Environmental review & advocacy:

- Written submissions on the Draft Mt Wellington Park Management Plan, the draft Tasmanian Coastal Policy Framework, the draft Melaleuca–Cox Bight Management Statement 2013 and draft Melaleuca–Site and Rehabilitation Plan 2013;
- Input into the development of the Parks & Reserves Authority Bill (now abandoned by the new Tasmanian Liberal government);
- A continued focus on the Three Capes Track development within the Tasman National Park including letters to and meetings with the Minister and other government officials;
- A written submission and follow-up discussions with government officials and other ENGOs and stakeholder groups in relation to the review of the 1999 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan;
- A written submission and presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications concerning the proposal to revoke parts of Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

There was also the usual stream of letters to the Mercury and the inevitable administrative issues to keep us all on our toes!

Well done to all!!!

THANKS TO COMMITTEE

As President, and unfortunately a bit of an absentee President again this year due to ongoing, and at times busy, work commitments, I would like to again express my great appreciation to all the Committee for their work over the past year without whose help the TNPA would cease to exist.

Thanks to Anne and Nick, who have tirelessly written submissions and attended countless meetings with PWS, politicians and advisors.

And thanks to Catharine and Chris for all their contributions to the Committee's work, and to Amy who has filled the Secretariat position during the year.

Thanks also to Patsy for another great year as Treasurer and for dealing so promptly with all the myriad (and no-doubt mundane) issues and demands that this task raises during the year!

And thanks to members who regularly attend Committee meeting and take on various tasks during to year. In particular to Paul for continuing liaison with ET.

Many thanks to each and all of you.

LOOKING AHEAD

What does the future hold for Tasmania's protected areas?

In reviewing my President's Report from last year's AGM I noted that I had invoked that familiar Chinese proverb – "May you live in interesting times"!

With the then recent change of government at the Federal level and a possible change at the State level (which did indeed come to be), together with the policies of these newly installed governments, it seemed that the future suddenly seemed far less certain and in some ways more scary.

While we can look back on the past year with pride at what we have achieved, dark clouds do indeed appear to be massing on the horizon. While exactly what the future will bring remains uncertain, some portents of a rocky road ahead have already appeared.

Central to these threats is the Government's policy to 'unlock' our reserves by inviting Expressions of Interest for tourism related ventures and developments within our parks. The closing date for EOIs was last Friday and we are waiting to hear what is to come out of the tender box.

While the TNPA supports appropriate tourism initiatives and the regional benefits that they bring, we also support a world-class system of protected areas. We believe that it is possible to achieve both together.

There is also the ongoing review of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA Management Plan. With this plan covering around two-thirds of Tasmania's conservation reserves it will be important for the TNPA to defend the strengths of the existing plan and hold off likely proposals to "open-up" this area to greater tourist developments, no doubt linked to the EOI process.

As I said earlier, these are indeed "Interesting Times".

However, Tasmania's magnificent conservation reserves are precious and worthy of protection and a world-class management system and it is for these outcomes that the TNPA will continue to be a strong advocate.

Our protected areas are an ongoing 100 year legacy handed on to us by Tasmanians who came before us but who had the foresight to preserve what they held to be precious. These areas are not the Government's to give away or auction off to the highest bidder – they are held in trust for all Tasmanians, Australians and indeed the world, now and in the future.