

Paradoxes of Protection

Evolution of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and National Parks and Reserved Lands System



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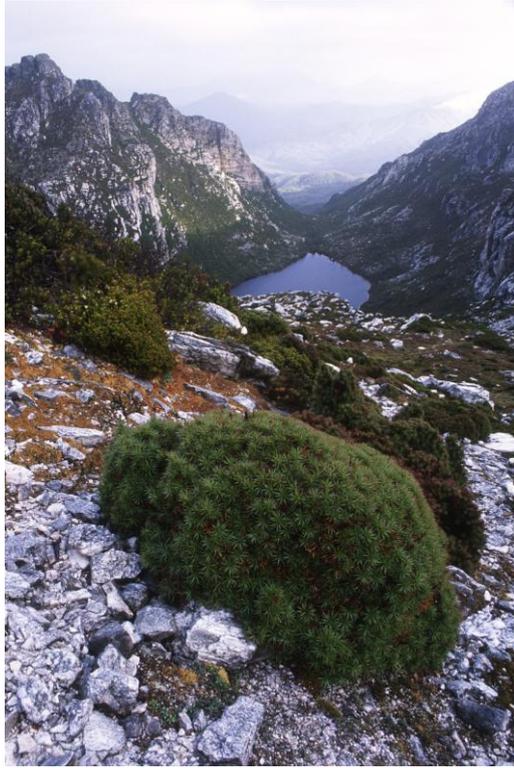
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A Report for Senator Christine Milne

www.christinemilne.org.au

Australian Greens



*Cover image: Lake Gwendolen from the track to the summit of Frenchmans Cap, Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
Photo: Matt Newton Photography*

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Acronyms

DLPW	Department of Lands Parks and Wildlife (1987)
DPWH	Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage (1989)
DELM	Department of Environment and Land Management (1993)
DEP	Department of Environment and Planning
DEPHA	Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (2008)
DPIWE	Department of Primary Industry Water and the Environment (1998)
DTAE	Department of Tourism, Arts and Environment (2005)
DPIW	Department of Primary Industries and Water (2005)
DTPHA	Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (2002)
HEC	Hydro Electric Commission
NCB	Nature Conservation Branch
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service (1971 - 92)
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service (1993 - 2009)
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
RMC	Resource Management and Conservation
SPB	Scenery Preservation Board
TCT	Tasmanian Conservation Trust
TNPA	Tasmanian National Parks Association
TWWHA	Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
WHA	World Heritage Area

Executive Summary

Tasmania is known internationally for its wilderness, its natural beauty and its wildlife. Around the world people are in awe of the Franklin River, the soaring wedge tailed eagle, the old growth forests and the Tasmanian devil. This reputation was enhanced with the Listing of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area as a place of outstanding universal value under the World Heritage Convention in 1982.

The paradox is that as the reputation for wilderness has grown the value that Tasmanian government puts on wilderness has not. Utilitarian exploitation not protection has become the dominant government attitude towards the natural environment and is reflected in the management of the Tasmanian national parks and reserved lands system.

This report traces the evolution of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Parks and Reserved Lands system from its origins in 1915, with the establishment of the Scenery Preservation Board, and the Mount Field and Freycinet National Parks; to 2009 when the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), as an operational division of the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DEPHA) is responsible for the management of over 2.5 million hectares of reserved lands (almost 40% of the state) under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. On 14 May 2009 DEPHA was abolished by the Bartlett government.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was created by the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*, nearly 40 years ago. Since that time, the management philosophy of the PWS has changed substantially, from one charged primarily with the development and management of an ecologically representative system of reserved lands and for conservation of flora and fauna, to one with a major emphasis on managing for public use and recreation.

Throughout this period, the dominant rationale of the reserved lands system has primarily been politically determined. The Tasmanian government and community-based interest groups have differed, often to the point of intense conflict, in their view of the most significant purpose of the reserved estate, and changes in the system's role within the state's political and social fabric reflect shifts in the relative power of the environment movement *vis a vis* the government of the day.

The role and effectiveness of the Service as the managing agency of Tasmania's reserved lands system has also been affected by this shifting power play. The Service has gone through many administrative changes, most of them motivated by political considerations, which have had the effect of systematically emasculating its ability to manage the reserved estate for conservation values.

Until 1986, the NPWS was an independent entity with its own Minister. From then on it has been amalgamated with a number of other agencies and departments in a constantly changing alphabet soup in a total of nine combinations over 20 years (losing its 'National' status in 1993), with a 'restructuring' on average every two years.

This chronic administrative instability has led in a constant direction – towards an increasing emphasis on the economic value of national parks and reserved lands for tourism, and a reduction in resources of both money and staff for biodiversity conservation and habitat protection. This shift in emphasis was entrenched by a major discontinuity which occurred in 2002 with the separation of the Resource Management and Nature Conservation Branch and the Land Management Branch of the PWS; the former remained in the Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment (DPIWE) when the latter joined the Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DTPHA).

As a result, national parks especially, and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in particular, are managed as a vital element of the tourism industry and its 'brand' of *'unforgettable natural experiences'*.

Visitor facilities absorb the majority of PWS resources and there is constant pressure for more private investment in, and profit from, public lands. **The number of ‘on ground’ rangers and land managers has steadily decreased from a peak in 1990 even as the reserved estate has grown, so that the ratio is now one to 30,000 hectares, compared to Parks Victoria for example with one land manager to 5,000 hectares.**

The essential conservation responsibility of the PWS is chronically under funded, and the emphasis on tourism is unlikely to be sustainable in the future.

In a carbon constrained economy, the 45% of the reserved lands (i.e. 45% of the 2.5 million hectares) which is forest, will have a far higher value as a carbon store, and the management of the whole estate for biodiversity conservation will be essential to help to mitigate the impact of climate change.

1. The Initial establishment of parks and reserves; utilitarians versus conservationists 1915-1970

1.1 *The Scenery Preservation Board as the first manager of reserved lands*

The first public reserves in Tasmania were set aside ‘for scenic purposes’ in 1863, under the *Waste Lands Act* and subsequently under the *Crown Lands Act*. By 1899, twelve such reserves had been gazetted — six scenery reserves, plus, more specifically, three for caves, two for waterfalls and one as a fernery reserve.¹ All these reserves were in areas regarded as being of no commercial potential, but with possible tourism value. For example when the largest of these reserves, at Mount Field, was proposed as a national park it was argued that it presented:

‘a combination of natural beauty and sublimity of a character not to be rivaled in the Commonwealth. The reservation would for all time be a region of delight for the people of Tasmania, which they could proudly invite visitors from other states to explore’.²

In addition the Railway Department ‘would derive a handsome revenue from the park if it were made a popular resort...and from an economic standpoint...more money could be made out of the area by making it into a national-park than by using it in any other way’.³

The Chairman of the Field Naturalists’ Club, an early conservation group, on the other hand, claimed it was set aside ‘in an endeavour to preserve some native fauna and a little of the romantic virgin bush from the depredations of a misguided civilisation’. He was not alone in his espousal of preservationist values, gaining support from an editorial in *The Mercury*, which rather rashly, and from subsequent experience, emptily threatened

‘The only creature to be driven out of the Park and kept out with flaming swords is the Utilitarian, who would indiscriminately chop trees, spoil waterfalls, dig up rare plants, kill live things, and spoil and ravage everything for money profit. If there ever come to exist legislators who cannot see the value of such a place we hope it will become a recognized custom to shoot them on sight whenever seen within three miles of the Park’.⁴

However, it was utilitarian arguments, focusing on the lack of any other commercial value for the area, and the promise of revenue for the state, which convinced the government to create Tasmania’s first national park in 1915. This was reflected in the remit of the Scenery Preservation Board (SPB) which was set up in 1915 by the *Scenery Preservation Act* under the jurisdiction of the Department of Lands and Survey, as the custodian of both Mount Field and Freycinet National Parks when they were established in 1916. The SPB had no responsibility for the preservation of native fauna; only for the protection of flora and tourism-value scenery. And although it was the first authority in Australia created specifically for the creation and management of parks and reserves, the SPB lacked both the resources and the power to administer and protect the land entrusted to its care.

1.2 *Extension of the reserved lands system*

In the campaign to establish Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, led by Gustav Weindorfer to ultimate success in 1922, the conflict between conservation of natural values and economic potential was much sharper. There was already considerable mineral prospecting in the area, and substantial potential timber resources, so that the arguments for a reserve included

¹ ‘A detailed history of the Parks and Wildlife Service’, <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/manage/about/detailedhistory.pdf>

² *The Mercury*, 21/10/1913, quoted in Mendel, Louise ‘*Scenes of Unsurpassed Grandeur*’: *Early National Park Creation In Tasmania – Motives, Themes, Outcomes And Consequences*, With Every Step – Proceedings of the NPWAC Public Seminar, Hobart, October 2002, p 20.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *The Mercury*, 15 October 1915, quoted in Quarmby, Debbie, *Foundations of National Park Management - From Utilitarian to Preservationist*, With Every Step – Proceedings of the NPWAC Public Seminar, Hobart, October 2002, p 16.

proposals for introducing red deer and chamois to attract hunters, stocking the lakes and streams with fish, and encouraging forestry using introduced European species, so that ‘properly managed, the reserve in a very short time could be made directly self-supporting, as well as being of immense indirect financial benefit to the state in general’.⁵ Even with these benefits to be derived from tourism and recreation, the government’s reluctance to forego access to more tangible resources resulted in the amendment of the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915* to allow any land reserved under the *Act* to be revoked in future.

This predominantly utilitarian approach, and the vision of national parks as primarily scenic reserves for tourism and recreation, with no ‘higher’ economic use, nor any coherent conservation ethos, meant that access was an important criterion for new parks - rather than remoteness or wilderness. While scenery was the prime value, there was no point if people couldn’t get there to enjoy it, so Hartz Mountains, Frenchman’s Cap, and Ben Lomond for example were only gazetted as national parks when roads or tracks allowed a degree of tourism development. In the early decades of reservation, the emphasis on scenery also created biases and gaps in the representation of biological diversity in the reserve system, which was overwhelmingly dominated by alpine and sub-alpine vegetation types and button grass moorland and scrub

These early biases have been retained. In 1970, for example, alpine and sub-alpine vegetation accounted for nearly 30% of all vegetation in national parks, and for nearly 60% of all reserves despite comprising only 4% of state-wide vegetation. By comparison, rainforest, dry eucalypt forest/woodland, and wet eucalypt forest together comprised over 65% of state-wide vegetation, but less than 40% of this vegetation was reserved in 1970. At this time the most poorly reserved vegetation types were coastal heath/scrub and swamp forest, and there were no significant areas of grasslands, wetlands or salt marshes in large reserves.⁶

1.3 The wilderness value of wasteland

Although there have been significant efforts to address these biases and gaps in recent decades, the drivers of early reservation policy - concentrating on land of high scenic quality which was also then considered wasteland - have shaped the reserve system we have inherited today.

Paradoxically, although wilderness conservation *per se* was not one of these drivers, the early national parks were predominantly in remote and largely undeveloped areas. One study has put the proportion of what we now define as ‘core wilderness’ in Tasmania’s first three national parks (Mount Field, Freycinet, and Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair) at 96% when first gazetted. However, because this was not a core value in the early paradigm of national parks in Tasmania, but access for tourism and recreation was, wilderness was gradually whittled away so that by 1970 none remained in Mount Field and in both Freycinet and Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Parks it had been significantly reduced.⁷

1.4 Inadequacies of the Scenery Protection Board

As the management agency for the reserve system until 1970, the SPB was completely inadequate. Its membership lacked leadership and coherence, comprising representatives of relevant government departments, stakeholder agencies such as the Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC), forestry, mining industries and local councils, with minority representation of community organisations such as bushwalking and naturalist clubs. Since the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915* did not specify any criteria for selecting reserves, and it was chaired by the Surveyor General who frequently lacked any interest in scenery preservation, the SPB was at the mercy of political

⁵ *The Mercury*, 30/7/1921, quoted in Mendel, op.cit. p 21

⁶ Mendel, L., 1999, *Scenery to Wilderness: National Park Development in Tasmania, 1916-1992*. PhD Thesis, School of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, p.228

⁷ Mendel, L., 2002, The consequences for wilderness in the development of the national park system of Tasmania, Australia. *Australian Geographical Studies*, 40(1), 71-83.

pressures from more powerful business and government interests acting through its stakeholder agencies.

Although it made a good start in its early years, and there was a period of expansion in the late 1930s and early 1940s when government-funded Depression-era road projects opened up access to new tourism opportunities, by the 1950s the SPB became increasingly resistant to proclaiming new reserves, especially those recommended by the bushwalking community, although the legendary bushwalker Jack Thwaites, who was also Secretary of the SPB, tried hard to buck this trend. The excuse was frequently a shortage of funding, coupled with the argument that resources were best spent on existing reserves; but this was the era of the growing dominance of the HEC, with Eric Reece as the Minister for Lands, and hydro-industrialisation rather than tourism was seen as Tasmania's economic future.⁸ This *realpolitik* was demonstrated by the one significant exception to the SPB's paralysis in this period; the declaration of Lake Pedder National Park in 1954 - though the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915* contained the proviso that its boundaries could be amended by Parliament to accommodate future HEC plans for the Serpentine River.⁹

There was also the added anomaly that the SPB had no jurisdiction over the protection of native fauna. In 1928 the *Animals and Birds Protection Act* was passed, which was administered by a separate board, and enforced by the police department.¹⁰ Unlike its larger associate, the Fauna Board (as it became known) developed a scientific basis for its work. In 1958 a review of its reserves concluded that these failed to represent the full range of habitats in the state, and were mostly too small. The search for a larger reserve in the east led to the acquisition of land on Maria Island in 1967, which was stocked with a range of endemic Tasmanian mammal and bird species, becoming a fauna sanctuary in 1970.¹¹

Thus, by the 1960s the Fauna Board had progressed much further towards being a research-based conservation management body than had the SPB, and its approach was far more in line with the aspirations of an increasingly sophisticated and well organised environmental movement, even though its reserves were open to mining, forestry and grazing. By contrast, the SPB lacked both a coherent policy base and professional expertise, leaving it out of touch with national and international trends in national park management. But the divided jurisdictions and divergent philosophies of the two boards resulted in a fragmented patchwork of differing status - some parks were also fauna sanctuaries, some were one or the other - which weakened the entire reserve system and made it vulnerable to external political and economic forces.

Overall, the reserve system had a utilitarian focus, with tourism and recreation as its prime concerns, but showing elements of a conservation ethos in its fringe components.

⁸ Quarmby, Debbie, op.cit.4.

⁹ Quarmby, Debbie, *The Politics of Parks; a history of Tasmania's National Parks 1885-2005*, PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, 2006, p166. Of course, all park boundaries could be amended by Parliament; interestingly in this particular case, the government got the process wrong and required a *Doubts Removal Bill* to clarify the situation.

¹⁰ Op.cit.1

¹¹ Quarmby p160-62.

2. The establishment and ‘glory days’ of the National Parks and Wildlife Service 1971-81

2.1 *The demise of the Scenery Preservation Board and the Lake Pedder controversy*

By the end of the 1960s the fragmentation of the reserve system was mirrored in the impotence of its management structure. When faced with a major conflict between the forces of conservation and of utilitarian development over the flooding of Lake Pedder, the SPB’s inadequacies were starkly revealed, leading to its rapid demise. This was mainly because both of these forces had become more powerful in the previous decades, and the SPB, caught like a nut between them, was inexorably crushed.

On the one hand, a much more knowledgeable and politically aware environmental movement had grown up, influenced both by the pollution crises of the 1950s and 60s that inspired Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), and the development of the scientific concept of ecology which emphasised the inter-relationships between plants and animals and their environment.¹² As a result environmentalists and national park activists grew aware of the importance of preserving habitats in order to preserve species. This in turn led to a push for larger and more diverse reserves, and an emphasis on nature conservation as the primary role of national parks. The SPB, with a legislative mandate to protect scenic and historic sites but not environmental values *per se*, could not function effectively within this changed paradigm. There was pressure for change also from interstate and overseas. Victoria was the first mainland state to pass a new *National Parks Act*, in 1957, while in the USA the *Wilderness Act 1964*, achieved through intense and prolonged lobbying by the Sierra Club and other conservation groups, provided a powerful source of inspiration.¹³

On the other hand, the power of the HEC was increasing rapidly, especially under the premiership of ‘Electric Eric’ Reece. When its explorations in the south west from the early 1950s finally settled on the Gordon and Serpentine rivers as favoured dam sites - thus bracketing the remote but spectacular Lake Pedder - the battle was joined.

The conservationist campaign to save the lake was spearheaded by the South West Committee and subsequently by the more determined Lake Pedder Action Committee, while the government set up an Inter-departmental Committee comprising representatives of the HEC, Forestry Commission, Mines Department and the SPB to ‘handle arrangements and recommend reserves to protect the region against undue damage’. The Committee’s report, released in early 1967, endorsed the HEC’s plans to flood Lake Pedder, but also recommended the establishment of a large national park in the south west, with boundaries to be determined after the HEC had completed its work. This outraged the conservationists who demanded an inquiry, which took the form of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council. Its report also endorsed the HEC proposal, and recommended the new Southwest National Park of approximately 900,000 acres (364,400 hectares) together with the creation of a new authority under the direction of a government minister to integrate control of all national parks. The Inter-departmental Committee subsequently halved the area recommended by the Select Committee, resulting in a Southwest National Park of less than 475,000 acres (192,000 hectares). Incorporating the parts of the original Lake Pedder National Park not required by the HEC, this was proclaimed in October 1968.¹⁴

2.2 *The creation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service*

The role of the SPB in this outcome, as the designated government agency with a mandate to protect reserve lands, was ignominious in the extreme. Not only did it fail to save Lake Pedder, but it even lacked the clout to prevail over other members of the Inter-departmental Committee and retain the Select Committee’s larger Southwest National Park. As a result, when conservationists

¹² Hutton D. and Connors L, *A history of the Australian Environmental Movement*, Cambridge University Press 1999, p 91.

¹³ Quarmby, p 155-7.

¹⁴ Quarmby, p 172-5.

insisted that the Select Committee's recommendation for the creation of a new parks authority was carried out, the SPB was not consulted about the proposed legislation or restructuring. This had to wait until after the 1969 election, and it is worth noting that there was an element of political serendipity in the outcome. With the Labor and Liberal parties each holding 17 seats, the crucial issue of the character of the new national park agency hung on the alliance of Kevin Lyons, from the Centre Party, with the Liberal Party. Had the Labor Party won power, it intended to place national parks under the tourism portfolio. However, the Liberals under Angus Bethune had pledged to create a bureaucratically independent agency with a strong conservation orientation, which was embodied in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* passed in 1970. The Service itself began operations in November 1971 with a staff of 59, under the directorship of Peter Murrell.¹⁵

Murrell combined scientific qualifications with years of land management experience in Kenya and five years' practical experience as Chief Operations Officer with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. His skills were well matched to his duties under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* which included research, public education and enforcement coupled with management, planning and development of an ecologically representative system of reserved lands for conservation of flora and fauna. He headed a full-time, fully-staffed professional organisation operating under new legislation with more funds - the era of *ad hoc* and fragmented responsibility for reserved lands by part-time committees was finally over.¹⁶ By 1973 staff numbers had nearly doubled to 95, mainly from interstate recruitment, and by the end of the decade had doubled again to 199, including 22 in the Wildlife Division which had taken over the work of the Fauna Board.¹⁷

2.3 *Extension of the reserved lands system*

At the same time the area of reserved lands in the state increased by nearly 60% (or over 400,000 hectares) from 722,000 hectares in 1969 to over 1.1 million hectares in 1979.¹⁸ Most of this came from a major extension of the Southwest National Park and Conservation Area in 1976, which included a swap of part of the Hartz Mountains National Park in exchange for the inclusion of the Precipitous Bluff area. Despite many submissions from conservationists opposed to this compromise, the Cartland Committee, which had been set up to examine the natural and economic values of the south west, endorsed the exchange.¹⁹ There were similar battles over establishment of Mount William National Park (1973) and Asbestos Range National Park (1976) over private commercial interests, in which the NPWS had strong support within the government from Neil Batt as Treasurer. In the case of Mount William, the NPWS succeeded in achieving the revocation of agricultural and forestry leases to create a large habitat reserve for Tasmania's only endemic kangaroo, the Forester kangaroo. In the case of Asbestos Range, it had to buy the land by compulsory acquisition, and this was only made possible by the belated concern of the federal government for natural and cultural heritage, through the Hope Inquiry established by Whitlam. This also resulted in the creation of the Australian Heritage Commission in 1975 and the funding of the National Estate Grants program. Despite the opposition of landowners, the initial 3,300 hectares of the park, now called Narawntapu, was proclaimed in July 1976, and extended two years later.

Both these parks were established primarily for their conservation value rather than their scenic value: Mount William for the Forester kangaroo, and Asbestos Range to preserve one of the few undeveloped coastal habitats on the Bass Strait shore. A number of smaller reserves were also established in the 1970s, for example at Cape Pillar and Partridge Island in the south east and on King Island. These were facilitated both by the National Estate Grants program, and the appointment of an investigations officer by NPWS whose job was to seek out and document suitable new reserves.²⁰ One of his major achievements was the 1978 gazetting of the Central

¹⁵ Op.cit.1

¹⁶ Quarmby, p.179-80.

¹⁷ National Parks and Wildlife Service, Report for the Year ended 30 June 1979, quoted in Quarmby, op.cit.10 p.200.

¹⁸ See table 1.

¹⁹ Mendel, op.cit 6 p.150-3.

²⁰ Quarmby, p.192-3.

Plateau Conservation Area, including the area that later became the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, guided by a management plan that excluded traditional uses such as grazing, hunting and horse riding.

By the early 1980s, the NPWS had achieved greater status and its work enhanced credibility due to both increased staff and increased resources, especially from Federal grants. The energy and ability of the Director, the support of sympathetic ministers and the lack of any overt conflicts with the broader interests of the government, made this first decade the 'glory days' of the NPWS when conservation based on ecological principles was its guiding ethos.²¹ But they were short-lived. In 1979 the Lowe government introduced a 'zero growth' staffing policy for the entire public service, and a 'user pays' policy that saw the introduction of national park visitor fees in 1981.

At the same time, the very success of the NPWS in extending the area under reservation, created increased opposition. To counter this, in the mid 1980s research was commissioned to demonstrate the contribution of the reserve system to the state's economy and the value of conservation, alongside mining, logging and farming

'Many of the reserves created in the past because of their conservation significance are now tourist attractions, and it is true to say that the reserve system established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* provides the main attraction on which the Tasmanian tourist industry is based. This was reflected in a report by the Centre for Regional Economic Analysis which showed that 35 per cent of all visitors to the State primarily come to visit National Parks and Historic Sites and that the income generated in the Tasmanian economy as a result of National Parks and Historic Sites was between \$60 million and \$120 million annually.'²²

Much more radical change occurred in the 1980s, however, as the conflict over the Franklin dam poisoned relations between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and a succession of governments and premiers. This resulted in the loss of its independence and began the slide to dismemberment, disillusion and disempowerment of its biodiversity protection and habitat conservation role.

²¹ Personal communications; some interviewees used this phrase to describe this era, others regard it simply as the basis for proper reserve management.

Throughout the course of the research for this report, I conducted interviews with many experienced and respected members of the conservation community, most of who have been or are currently employed in the State's management agencies for parks and reserved areas. Their views and experiences have added valuable perspectives and insights which cannot be gained from printed or other written sources. I thank them all for their willingness to share their knowledge, and I respect their request for anonymity; therefore these sources are referred to as 'Personal communication' in the footnotes.

²² National Parks and Wildlife Service, Report for the Year ended 30 June 1987, p.3; quoted in Quarmby, p.201.

3. The Franklin River conflict and its consequences for the National Parks and Wildlife Service 1981-86

3.1 Conservation versus hydro-industrialisation

Although there was continuing conflict for more than a decade between the forces of conservation and hydro-industrialisation for control of south west Tasmania, the 'battle for the Franklin' itself began in earnest in 1977. In that year the HEC released its plans for flooding the Gordon and Franklin rivers - an 'integrated development' involving the construction of a dam on the Gordon River just downstream from its junction with the Franklin - with subsidiary proposals for another six dams on other tributaries and river systems. This was followed two years later by the HEC's multi-volume *Report on the Gordon River Power Development Stage Two*, complete with its own environmental impact statement.

At this time Andrew Lohrey was Minister for Resources and Energy in the Lowe Labor government, a portfolio that included forestry, the HEC and the NPWS. Under his direction, the NPWS reviewed the HEC report and concluded that it failed to provide an adequate statement of environmental impacts, that its consideration of other practical options was inadequate and that, amongst other short-comings, it gave no consideration to alternative land uses including the long-standing proposal for a national park in the area.²³ The HEC was outraged by this attack on its previously unchallenged authority and threatened to sue the NPWS for alleged defamation by some of its staff. The HEC Commissioner complained directly to the Premier about Lohrey's attitude. As a result Lohrey was sacked from the industry portion of his portfolio and his responsibility was restricted to the environment elements only. This actually meant that he had more time and energy to devote to supporting the NPWS, and specifically, encouraged it to develop a formal proposal for a national park encompassing the Franklin and Lower Gordon rivers. The Service even went so far as to promote this proposal in the media, prompting a fresh outbreak of apoplectic rage in the HEC, which had of course already used public funds to advocate its own cause. Lohrey supported this move by arguing that 'if it's good enough for the HEC, it's good enough for the National Parks and Wildlife Service'.²⁴ Ironically it was this proposal, transformed into a successful World Heritage nomination, which ultimately defeated the HEC, but also led to the decline of the NPWS itself.

The Lowe government accepted the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park proposal, and rejected the HEC's Gordon-below-Franklin dam in favour of a less environmentally destructive option, the Gordon-above-Olga scheme. However, the Legislative Council, which was not controlled by the government, opposed this legislation, supporting instead the HEC's Franklin scheme. So Lowe withdrew the Olga legislation but proceeded with the proclamation of the Wild Rivers National Park in May 1981. Even more boldly, he nominated the new park together with the Southwest and Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Parks for World Heritage listing in July 1981, which would together create a continuous national park that extended from the south coast to Cradle Mountain. Lowe was forced to resign in November 1981, defeated by Harry Holgate in a leadership challenge focussed on his resistance to the HEC and its Franklin scheme. Nonetheless, the World Heritage listing was carried forward by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, and was accepted by the World Heritage Committee at its meeting in Paris in December 1982.

By then, Holgate's Labor government had been ousted by the Liberals led by Robin Gray, who famously described the Franklin as 'a leech ridden ditch', and pushed ahead with the Gordon-below-Franklin scheme in order to rid the state of such an unsavoury disgrace. However, he underestimated the strength of the environment movement, which opposed any dam on the Franklin. In the referendum held in December 1981 by Premier Holgate to try and break the deadlock, the environment movement led by the Wilderness Society had achieved a 'No Dams'

²³ DPIWE Archives: Summary of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Review of the 'Report on the Lower Gordon River Power Development Stage Two', quoted in Quarmby, p.225.

²⁴ *The Mercury*, 1 July 1980, quoted in Quarmby, p.227.

vote of 32%, compared with 47% for Gordon-below-Franklin and 8% for Gordon-above-Olga.²⁵ This inconclusive outcome made Holgate's position untenable, and brought the Wilderness Society into direct confrontation with the Gray government which, immediately after its election, revoked the Wild Rivers National Park and started work on a road to the Franklin dam site.

3.2 *The environment movement achieves a great victory*

Environmentalists knew that to stop the dam they had to challenge the HEC's supporting ideology of hydro-industrialisation, illustrated by the fact that at that time, with only 3% of the nation's population, Tasmania consumed 10% of its electricity, due to the massive consumption of a few energy intensive metal refining industries. This model of economic development was unquestioned by most Tasmanians, and obsessively pursued by the HEC and most governments for many decades. To break this stranglehold required a high profile public campaign. For the environment movement to match the institutional opposition it faced, the campaign went nationwide for full political effect and adopted more confrontational tactics. The Franklin blockade epitomised this new approach, and its broader reach; of the 2,600 people who took part, only 900 or 35% were Tasmanians, the rest were from interstate and overseas.²⁶

The force of this national campaign was manifested in the result of the 1983 Federal election in which Labor won power on the back of environmental preferences, and in return Bob Hawke undertook to save the Franklin by passing legislation in April 1983 to ratify the World Heritage listing, which also prohibited a range of activities including dam building. This was challenged by the Gray government in the High Court, but in July the full bench ruled 4-3 that the legislation was valid. The ruling rested on the Commonwealth's external powers under the World Heritage Act, a point of law rather than a judgement on the wilderness value of the Franklin itself. But the initial decision of the NPWS to create the Wild Rivers National Park, followed by Lowe's decision to press for World Heritage listing and Fraser's endorsement of this action, were critical steps which led to the possibility of this legal protection.

3.3 *The National Parks and Wildlife Service pays the price*

However, the environment movement's success in saving the Franklin from flooding by the HEC came at a high price for the NPWS. Part of the Liberal platform at the 1982 state election was a proposal to remove the autonomy of the Service, and to muzzle its ability to act with such destructive independence in the future. In addition, one of the arguments used by the anti-dam campaign was that wild rivers and wilderness offered a much more sustainable and jobs-rich direction for economic development, compared to hydro-industrialisation. Inadvertently, this reinforced the Gray government's own determination to force the NPWS to focus on the role of national parks and reserves in promoting tourism, as opposed to environmental conservation. While the Gray government did not implement this policy immediately, in 1986 it announced that the NPWS would become part of the Lands Department, the first of many bureaucratic changes that have had the effect - and in most cases the intention - of reducing its capacity to practice effective biodiversity conservation and habitat management.

It is ironic that the NPWS was created as a consequence of a major loss by the environment movement - the flooding of Lake Pedder, and its demise was one result of a major triumph of the environment movement - the saving of the Franklin River. Indeed many commentators believe that the NPWS was 'punished' for its part in the Franklin conflict by powerful interests in government that lost out, notably the HEC.²⁷ Whether this was in fact the case, there is no doubt that the Franklin controversy 'resulted in an administrative re-structure that changed the form and status of the National Parks and Wildlife Service'.²⁸

²⁵ Quarmby p.229.

²⁶ D. Hutton and L. Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Melbourne, 1999, p.90.

²⁷ This view was expressed to me by many of the present and past employees of the NPWS I interviewed.

²⁸ Quarmby p. 208.

4. Death by a thousand cuts: from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts 1987-2009

Between 1979 and 1986 the National Parks and Wildlife Service was a single entity with a fairly simple structure. This comprised a dual emphasis on land management for conservation, and ecological research to inform the management of existing reserves and direct the acquisition of new ones to fill gaps in habitat protection. Director Peter Murrell, though ‘not a good strategist’²⁹, nonetheless worked well with his ministers, and between 1979 and 1986 managed to achieve an increase in staff from 199 to 258. This included 93 temporary staff, 41 of whom were employed on World Heritage Area projects and 22 on the Port Arthur Conservation Project, both funded from federal sources. This increasing dependence on outside funding was explicitly acknowledged by the NPWS in the last year of its autonomous existence:

‘most of the year’s achievements were in projects funded from World Heritage Area grants or from compensation paid to Tasmania by the Australian Government in consequence of the cessation of work on the Franklin-Lower Gordon Power Scheme’.³⁰

From the time Robin Gray put his 1982 election promise into action, the resources allocated by the Tasmanian government itself to the staffing and funding of the management of reserved lands becomes more and more difficult to untangle, using the increasingly meagre and infuriatingly inconsistent information readily available in the public domain. This information is primarily in the form of departmental annual reports; additional archival material exists but it was not possible to access this within the resources of this project. However, interviews with a range of past and present members of the Service has added some informal data, which helps to fill out the picture somewhat. There are still many gaps. Much of this confusion is due to the constant restructuring of the NPWS since 1987, which can at least be traced fairly accurately; its impact on staffing and resources is less easy to decipher.

4.1 *Restructuring the National Parks and Wildlife Service: a complex merry-go-round*

The first stage in the bureaucratic destruction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service was its absorption into the much larger Lands Department as a division of the new **Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife (DLPW) created in 1987**. Without its own Minister, the NPWS lost direct access to major cabinet policy decisions, and fell back to a more subservient role in a vast bureaucratic department, similar to the position of the SPB in the 1950s and 1960s. Several of the NPWS responsibilities for historic sites were removed, and a new Port Arthur Management Authority was created in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

In 1989, the incoming Field Labor government decided on a second restructure. Carving off the Land Management and NPWS elements from DLPW, and re-incorporating the responsibility for cultural heritage including Port Arthur and the Royal Botanic Gardens, this formed the **Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage (DPWH)** with Judy Jackson as Minister and Tony Pedder as Secretary.³¹ This department was responsible for administering land reserved under both the *Crown Lands Act 1976* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1971*, and was the last time the NPWS was represented by its own minister. This independence was short-lived, surviving barely longer than the Field government. Meanwhile, instability continued, for in 1990 there were major changes to the organisation of the department, into a Land Management Division comprising five instead of three districts responsible for all field operations, and a separate Division of Wildlife, Resources and Heritage. Even more significant was the retirement of Peter Murrell, the architect of the NPWS ethos emphasising environmental conservation as the primary goal of reserved lands management, and his replacement as director by Max Laughlin, a long standing officer of the Lands Department.

²⁹ Personal communication.

³⁰ National Parks and Wildlife Service, Report for the Year ended 30 June 1986.

³¹ The remainder of the Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife became the Department of Environment and Planning.

This structure was initially retained when the Groom Liberal government won office in 1992 and John Cleary became minister, but the following year, in **February 1993**, the 1989 Field government restructure was reversed and the Department of Parks Wildlife and Heritage (DPWH) was reunited with the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) to form another alphabet soup, this time called the **Department of Environment and Land Management (DELM)**, almost identical in structure to DLPW.³² John Cleary remained Minister, while John Ramsay came with DEP to become secretary of the new mega-department, and Max Laughlin continued a director of the Parks and Wildlife Service. It was now no longer 'National' and had been downgraded to 'Branch' status (still retaining its internal segmentation). This restructure coincided with the adoption across the public service of 'Outcomes Based Reporting' of 'Core Business Groups'. *Public Lands Management* was one of DELM's five core business groups, responsible for two outcomes; *Parks and Reserves* delivered by the Land Management Division of PWS, and *Natural and Cultural Heritage* delivered by the Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Division. This process formalised the separation of these two arms of the Parks and Wildlife Service; a separation which ended in divorce a decade later.

Following current trends, DELM adopted the vision of:

- 'Sustainable development of Tasmania, its resources and natural and cultural heritage through leadership in environmental quality, land information and land management.'

This translated into the mission of the PWS to:

- 'conserve and manage Tasmania's natural, historical and Aboriginal heritage for its own value and for the benefit of people now and in the future'

with the even more specific goal of

- 'the conservation and management of Tasmania's natural, historical and Aboriginal heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the community.'

This was the first time that the purpose of the PWS was explicitly stated as being to 'benefit people', and the goal of nature conservation as the 'enjoyment of the community'; marking the start of a strengthening trend towards anthropocentric and away from ecological values *per se*.

Furthermore, the commercialisation of reserved lands is explicit in the objectives of the Land Management Division, including

- 'to identify and promote opportunities for suitable commercial activities within and adjacent to reserved lands.'³³

In January 1996 Max Kitchell was appointed Director of the Parks and Wildlife Service and immediately initiated a review of its operations and structure, which coincided with a **review of the whole agency (DELM)**. This resulted in ten separate branches, previously each headed by a director, being grouped into three composite divisions, each headed by a general manager. Kitchell became general manager of the Conservation and Land Management Division which, as well as Parks and Wildlife (still containing its own two branches of Land Management, and Resources, Wildlife and Heritage), also encompassed Crown Land Services and Property Tasmania. This new division was responsible for two 'Outputs'; Parks and Wildlife being responsible for Output 3³⁴, comprising:

- National Parks and Public Land Management Services,
- Conservation of Tasmania's Flora, Fauna and Geo-heritage, and

³² The only difference was that the NPWS brought cultural heritage back into the fold on its return.

³³ DELM Annual Report 1993-94.

³⁴ Output 4: Crown Property Development and Disposal, was the responsibility of Crown Land Services and Property Tasmania.

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- Cultural Heritage.

In the 1996-97 Annual Report on the first full year's operation of this new departmental structure, the PWS is cited as having responsibility for the:

- 'quality management of Tasmania's internationally renowned tourist icons'
and for contributing to the Land Management Division's main objective of
- 'managing reserved lands for their own values and for the benefit of the community'
to which is added the phrase
- 'and as a basis for the state's tourism industry'.

The 1996 restructure coincided with the replacement of John Cleary by Peter Hodgman, who had previously been Minister for Tourism, as Minister for Environment and Land Management. Some interviewees have suggested that the change in Minister was either the cause, or the consequence, of the inclusion of tourism as one of the key 'performance indicators' of the PWS for the first time. Certainly, Hodgman evinced little interest in, or understanding of, environmental issues³⁵, and for example, when the Peter Murrell Reserve at Tinderbox was created, honouring the man who had done most to ensure habitat protection and a comprehensive conservation ethos in the PWS, Hodgman insisted on retaining access to part of it for the Huntingfield Pony Club of which he was President.³⁶

The consequences of a decade of restructure and reorganisation on the PWS can be summarised as 'mission creep': from a focus on environmental values and habitat conservation, to embracing more anthropocentric values, to promoting commercial opportunities, to being the basis of the tourism industry. It also resulted in an increasing isolation from policy and decision making, through incorporation in larger departments under generic directors, putting the PWS further down the ladder of political influence.

But worse was in store. In **1998** the Rundle Liberal government was replaced by Labor under Jim Bacon, and the PWS suffered yet another wholesale upheaval, this time becoming even more deeply buried within the new **Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE)** which was formed by the amalgamation of the Department of Environment and Land Management (including the Parks and Wildlife Service) with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Government Analytical and Forensic Laboratories. At the top was a new Minister, David Llewellyn and a new Secretary, Kim Evans, originally an agricultural scientist who came with the larger Primary Industries department, displacing John Ramsay as Secretary of DELM. Ramsay, while lacking professional qualifications in environmental management, nonetheless was a critical thinker who brought a broader intelligence and experience to bear on PWS issues, and was regarded as a good people manager. By comparison, Evans was perceived as having a much narrower perspective focussed on achieving outcomes to satisfy his minister³⁷, and the PWS was a very minor consideration in this regard. DPIWE was initially structured into five divisions, including the Resource Management and Conservation Division, in which PWS was one of six branches, along with Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage, the other parts of the original NPWS. Max Kitchell remained as General Manager of this new division for a year, but he resigned in 1999, and after another restructure, Peter Williams became General Manager of the Parks and Wildlife Service in 2000.

This marked a major change in the direct leadership of the service. All the previous directors or general managers had come from a land management background, and both Murrell and Kitchell had specific qualifications in nature conservation and habitat protection as well. Williams, on the

³⁵ Personal communications from several people, one of whom described Hodgman as an 'airhead'.

³⁶ Personal communication.

³⁷ Personal communication.

other hand, was an agricultural scientist, like Kim Evans, originally a plant pathologist before moving into corporate management for the past two decades. He held a masters degree in business administration and was a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Equally significant, the 2000 restructure that gave him control of the PWS also saw the severance of its management links to Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage. These remained branches in the Resource Management and Conservation Division, now under Alan Harradine, while the PWS under Williams became a separate division, one of seven in total in DPIWE.

The other five divisions remained identical to the initial DPIWE structure; only the PWS was singled out to become a separate division, to which Williams moved from heading the much larger Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Division. This was a step down in terms of personnel and prestige, which indicates the importance attached to bringing the PWS 'to heel'.³⁸ His aim was 'to destroy the conservation ethos of the Parks and Wildlife Service' and he did so by filling many staff positions from outside Tasmania.³⁹ Also as a result of this restructure, Resource Management and Conservation (RMC) became a separate output group from PWS, and developed a much greater emphasis on conservation on private land in parallel with the rest of the Department's Primary Industries remit. While this was not, in itself, a retrograde step, it had the result of reducing the quantity and quality of RMC expertise available to PWS.⁴⁰

The PWS Output Group's objectives were to:

- 'create and maintain a representative and world-renowned park system that achieves the principal goal of conserving the state's natural and cultural heritage while providing sustainable use and economic opportunities for the Tasmanian community'.

This was in line with DPIWE's overall mission to:

- 'advance Tasmania's prosperity through the sustainable development of our natural resources and conservation of our natural and cultural heritage for the future'.

This demonstrates that the main purpose of the state's reserved lands was to contribute to economic objectives.

While the 'quality management of Tasmania's internationally renowned tourist icons' cited in Hodgman's day is not explicit, in fact the three primary objectives for the PWS in 1999-2000 were to:

- undertake more than \$10 million worth [over 5 years] of capital works in the provision of new and enhanced visitor infrastructure in parks.
- complete a strategic asset assessment of visitor infrastructure in parks and reserves.
- prepare a statewide Recreation and Tourism Strategy focused on optimising nature-based visitor experiences in parks and reserves, and linking with state tourism strategies.

Tourism was indeed the main game for the PWS. In addition, DPIWE started to identify 'Users of the Output Group'. For the PWS it was claimed that a large percentage of the Tasmanian population benefited from the activities of this Output Group. Specific users included the tourism industry, interstate and overseas visitors, educational organisations, a wide range of special interest groups including conservation and environmental groups, and other government authorities, thus re-emphasising the utilitarian philosophy of the original SPB.

³⁸ All interviewees who had been employed by the PWS at this time emphasised the radical change under Williams' management.

³⁹ Personal communication.

⁴⁰ Personal communication.

In 2002, following the re-election of the Bacon Labor government, the Premier created a new **Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts** — all his ‘favorite things’.⁴¹ The official reason for its creation was:

- ‘to bring together the assets and values that Tasmania is famous for: our natural wilderness, our cultural heritage and our creativity...this reflects the increasing emphasis that the Government places on tourism as a key driver of future economic success... it has created the right structure to most effectively promote Tasmania to the rest of the world’.

Its mission was:

- ‘to utilise Tasmania’s competitive advantages, such as its world class natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage and cultural activities, to provide the basis for vibrant and sustainable attractions for both Tasmanians and visitors’.⁴²

The PWS, still headed by Peter Williams, abandoned DPIWE after four years’ uneasy residence. As a result, its formal links to nature conservation were severed. The Nature Conservation Branch remained in the Resource Management and Conservation Division of DPIWE, and the PWS became the spearhead of Tasmania’s competitive advantage in the tourism industry. Parks and reserves were viewed as a showcase of our natural environment and a major drawcard for visitors. The centrepiece of the year’s achievements was the launching of the Cradle Mountain Tourism Development Plan by the Premier, while the Nature Based Tourism Program resourced infrastructure improvements in parks and reserves across the state.⁴³

In a further move designed to underline the divorce of nature conservation from parks management once and for all, the Bacon government introduced new legislation to replace the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* which had defined the PWS’s combined responsibilities for 30 years. It was replaced by two separate Acts, with park management regulated under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002*, and nature conservation functions under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.

In January 2004 Peter Williams resigned as General Manager of the PWS, returning to more familiar territory in DPIWE and his previous job as CEO of the Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and his place was taken by Peter Mooney, who had risen through the ranks of the Service. This was acknowledged by most insiders to be a great improvement, to have one of their own in charge again. But at the same time, it was also apparent that that Mooney’s extensive experience as a park ranger, on the Fox Taskforce, and in ecological research were not core competencies for his new post; indeed he is seen as often out of his depth in the ambience of ‘competitive advantage’, and even though he may ‘know what he wants to achieve he doesn’t have sufficient resources’.⁴⁴ The balancing act required is demonstrated by an address Mooney gave to the 2005 Ecotourism Conference arguing that ‘Good conservation is good tourism and conversely, good tourism is good conservation...[so that they] co-exist in balance, and ...one delivers benefits to the other and vice versa’.⁴⁵ Clearly, good conservation is not a goal in its own right, but only as an adjunct to tourism.

Ill health soon forced the Premier to resign as minister of his ‘favourite things’ and they were divided up between his namesake Ken Bacon as Minister for Tourism, Parks and Heritage, and Lara Giddings who took over the smaller Arts portfolio. Scott Gadd, previously the Premier’s Chief of Staff, became Secretary of the joint department. He was welcomed to the post by Tourism Tasmania Board chairman John King as uniquely equipped ‘to further the vision of Jim Bacon to

⁴¹ Several interviewees used this expression.

⁴² DPTHA Annual Report 2002-03, p.8.

⁴³ op.cit.42, p.18-20.

⁴⁴ Personal communication.

⁴⁵ Ecotourism Australia Conference, Hobart November 2005, http://www.ecotourism.org.au/conference/s_mooney.asp

bring together our core values of tourism, parks, heritage and the arts under one banner, with a united way forward.⁴⁶

In April 2005 Ken Bacon also resigned due to ill health, and his portfolio was divided between Paula Wriedt as Minister for Tourism, and Judy Jackson as Minister for Parks and Heritage. This added to the latter's existing portfolios of Environment and Planning, Justice and Industrial Relations and Attorney General. Jackson had also held the Parks portfolio in the Field Government. Scott Gadd as Secretary continued to carry Jim Bacon's uniting banner by serving three ministers in one department. This arrangement too was short-lived, surviving only until the **April 2006** election when Jackson retired and Giddings moved on to become Minister for Health and Human Services, leaving Wriedt holding the entire portfolio. In the post election reshuffle, she got an extra responsibility when the Environment Division of DPIWE was added to DPTHA, for yet another new spinout of the alphabet soup – this time into the **Department of Tourism, Arts and Environment (DTAE)** and the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW).

DTAE consisted of eight operational divisions, with Scott Gadd as Secretary and Peter Mooney as General Manager of PWS. The department's rhetoric softened from the stridency of 'competitive advantage' of the Bacon vision. Its mission, as stated in the 2006-07 Annual Report, was:

- 'to enhance Tasmania's economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing, both now and in the future, through the best possible use of our natural and cultural assets.
- as the custodian of the many assets that make Tasmania such a unique state in which to live, work, and visit, it is responsible for the sustainable management and protection, along with the development and promotion, of the state's natural, built and cultural assets'.

The Parks and Wildlife Service was responsible for:

- 'Tasmania's national parks and reserves [which] are fundamental to the social, environmental and economic future of the state. They are also the source of much of the precious water that sustains Tasmania's population, they support regional communities and provide a range of recreational opportunities that inspire and invigorate people, and promote a sense of place and connection with nature'.

with the key objective:

- 'to create and maintain a representative and world renowned reserve system that achieves the goal of conserving the state's natural and cultural heritage while providing for sustainable use and economic opportunities for the Tasmanian community'.

The strategic plan identified six key program areas:

- natural resource conservation
- cultural resource conservation
- sustainable use
- communications and partnerships
- reserve system management
- continuous organisational improvement.

Of its key achievements in 2006-07, the PWS boasts of three major tourism oriented projects:

⁴⁶ Press release, 8 April 2004, 'Tourism Board welcomes Gadd appointment', <http://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/media/pr/2004/pr20040408.html>

-
- the Draft Pirates Bay Visitor Services Plan which proposed a number of visitor facility improvements.
 - the feasibility study into a new iconic bushwalk which confirmed that the proposed Three Capes Track in the Tasman National Park had great potential.
 - improvements to the car park at the Lake St Clair visitor centre, at a cost of \$780,000.

The remainder of its contribution to DTAE's Annual Report is much curtailed (only five pages, two of which are a story about firefighting) mentioning:

- the success of five Aboriginal trainees in a TAFE course in Conservation and Land Management.
- completion of several management plans.
- volunteer assistance in whale strandings on the west coast.
- the most destructive bushfire season since 1967, and PWS efforts to combat it through increased numbers of well-trained staff.
- the success of the Discovery Ranger, Volunteer Hut Warden and Wildcare volunteer programs.
- the Macquarie Island Rodent Eradication program.⁴⁷

In **March 2008**, Tourism Tasmania became part of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, leaving the PWS in the new **Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DEPHA)**. However in his Foreword to the DEPHA Annual Report 2007-08, Secretary Scott Gadd stated that 'this Department will continue to play a vital role in Tasmania's tourism economy as it manages many of the iconic places and experiences that draw visitors to Tasmania. Many of our divisions have strong partnerships with Tourism Tasmania that will continue to thrive.'⁴⁸ This ongoing relationship was further demonstrated by the fact that Michelle O'Byrne continued to be Minister for both new portfolios of DEDT and DEPHA, as she had been previously for the joint DTAE portfolio

The PWS section of the DEPHA 2007-08 Annual report (again, a very general five pages) states its objective is now merely

- 'to conserve the State's natural and cultural heritage while providing for sustainable use and economic opportunities for the Tasmanian community.'

and abandons its aspiration of the previous year

- 'to create and maintain a representative and world renowned reserve system...'

(see above, page 16) as the means of achieving this goal.

The bulk of the Report is devoted to the upgrading of visitor infrastructure through the \$3million Priority Asset Maintenance Program. However the totally inadequate resources of the PWS are becoming more widely apparent. For example, the role of volunteers is becoming increasingly crucial - in the north of the state alone, 600 volunteers belonging to 63 separate groups clocked up the prodigious total of 20,000 hours per month (equivalent to over 140 full time staff working a 35 hour week)! The state of many iconic walking tracks is 'a dirty secret' according to one report,⁴⁹

⁴⁷ DTAE Annual Report 2006-07.

⁴⁸ DEPHA Annual Report 2007-08, p.7.

⁴⁹ Matthew Denholm 'Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service hides a dirty secret beneath the green image', *The Australian*, 7 February 2009, p.7.

while entrepreneur Dick Smith was motivated to contribute \$1million for the maintenance of the Frenchman's Cap walking track, so badly degraded has it become.

The only conservation programs mentioned in the PWS Annual Report 2007/2008 are the Macquarie Island rabbit and rodent eradication program which is mainly financed by the Federal government at present, and the restoration of Richmond Gaol and the Darlington complex on Maria Island. However, PWS must be doing something right as 'the "satisfaction" rating of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service among the community increased from 80 to 85 percent'.⁵⁰

While all this certainly suggests a less aggressive pursuit of economic growth though 'nature-based' tourism than in previous incarnations of the PWS, as manifested in annual reports, it does not indicate a return to an active concern for biodiversity conservation and habitat protection. More probably, this is simply the flaccid language of 'value-free managerialism'⁵¹ which has become the dominant mode of the public service nation-wide, and indeed, world-wide. This managerial style is essentially risk averse, ensuring plausible deniability, and seeking to second guess ministers' political aims to avoid censure. Several observers have remarked that this is a style into which Mooney, as General Manager of PWS, has fallen, citing examples of weakness in the face of criticism instead of standing up for his staff, or inability to fight for adequate pay scales and career structures for rangers; while others believe that Mooney is doing a good job in very difficult circumstances.⁵²

In summary, the constant restructuring of the Parks and Wildlife Service over the past two decades has resulted in what all interviewees refer to as the 'dumbing down' of the service. This phrase incorporates a number of elements, as they have been expressed to me by various people, including:

- the devaluation of the intrinsic wildness of Tasmania's unique reserved lands, and a lack of concern for the need to conserve this as a resource for nature and spirit.
- the concomitant inability to measure anything except in terms of monetary value, or contribution to economic development.
- the lack of expertise in core environmental management skills and experience of senior managers, and the substitution of generic 'MBA managers' who do not understand the complex challenges of decision making on ecological issues.
- the lack of sustainable career paths for field staff who do have these skills and understandings, and whose decision making role is being constantly eroded by bureaucratic buck-passing to higher levels in the organization. As a result, field staff are often either not supported when they do exercise initiative, or forced into inaction by the prevarication of superiors.
- the absence of in-house scientific expertise on conservation issues, as a result of the physical, bureaucratic and legislative separation of RMC into a different Department. This is seen as particularly damaging to the professional capacity of parks managers, and weakens many conservation-based arguments against tourism and commercial pressures. Where this separation has been attempted elsewhere, it has had disastrous results for the conservation values of reserves.⁵³
- the overall destruction of morale across the PWS, turning what was once a vibrant, committed, skilled professional community who prided themselves on 'getting things done' under supportive and enthusiastic leadership, into a disillusioned and disheartened group who feel

⁵⁰ Op.cit.48, p.22-26.

⁵¹ P. Figgis, *Australia's National Parks and Protected Areas: Future Directions*, 1999, p.73.

⁵² Personal communications.

⁵³ J.B.Kirkpatrick, 'Science and the conservation reserve system in Tasmania', *With Every Step*, Proceedings of the NPWAC Public Seminar, Hobart, 2002, p.43.

misunderstood and undervalued by most of their bosses, but who still struggle against the odds because they love the job and believe in its intrinsic value.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Parks and Wildlife Service

Throughout this whole period of bureaucratic upheaval and restructuring, the responsibilities of the PWS increased greatly, and changed substantially.

4.2.1 Responsibility for increased area of reserved lands

In quantitative terms, the area of reserved lands under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* and its successor, the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* increased exponentially in the period since the establishment of the NPWS in 1971.

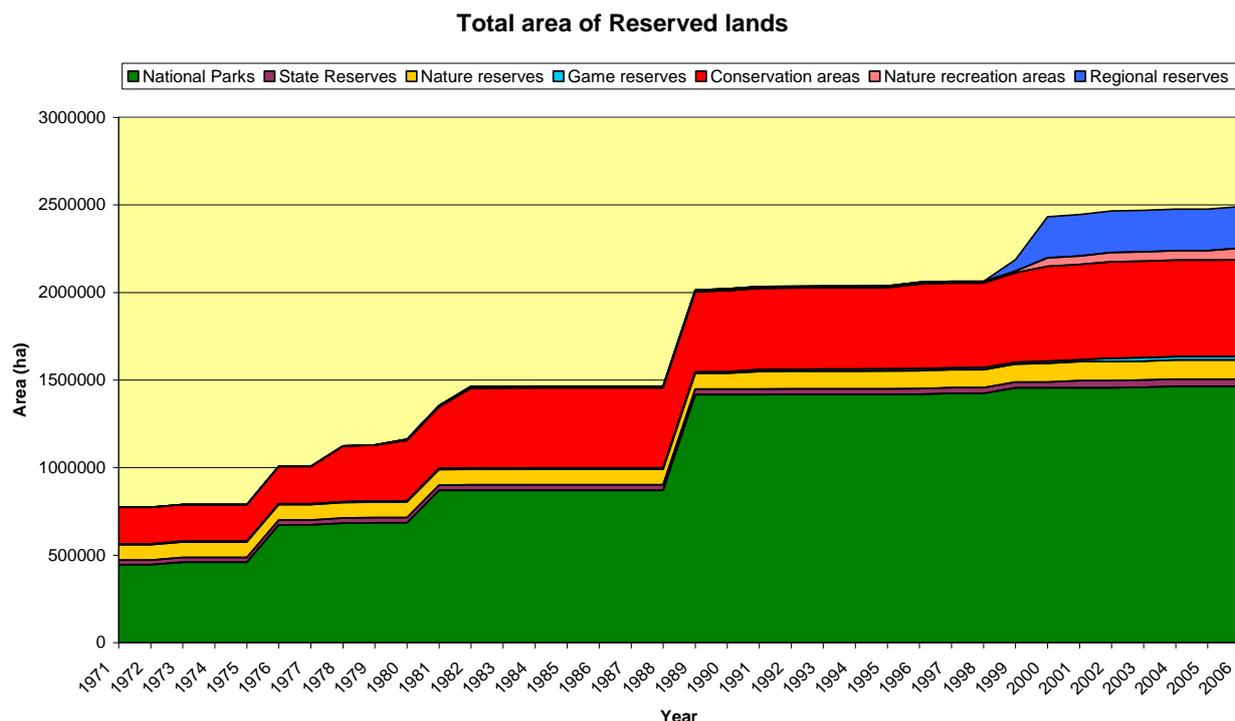


Figure 1

In 1971, the total area of reserved lands was 772,755 ha⁵⁴ or about 11% of the total area of the state, most of which was added in the 1960s, shown in Figure 2 below, as a result of the creation first of the Southwest Conservation Area in 1966, and then its extension and the addition of a large area of national park, as the outcome of the conflict over the flooding of Lake Pedder in 1968.

In addition, since 1991, seven Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have been established with a total area of 122,655 ha. By far the largest are at Macquarie Island (75,000ha), Port Davey (17,000 ha) and the Kent Group of Islands (29,000 ha). MPAs are managed under the Tasmanian Marine Protected Areas strategy, administered by DPIW in conjunction with the Marine and Marine Industries Council, and therefore are not formally included in the reserve lands system administered by PWS.

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all the data for areas of reserved lands are taken from the *Complete National Parks and Reserves Listings, May 2007 managed under the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002*, <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/manage/parksres/reserves.html>. Data have been manipulated to give figures for each reserve classification by year and by decade (the smallest categories: Historic Sites, Private Nature Reserves, Private Sanctuaries and Public Reserves, which together make up 1.03% of all reserved lands, have been omitted). Peter Bosworth, 'Tasmanian parks and reserves – a timeline history', *With Every Step*, Proceedings of the NPWAC Public Seminar, Hobart, 2002, p.8 presents similar data.

Reserved lands added by decade 1910-2007

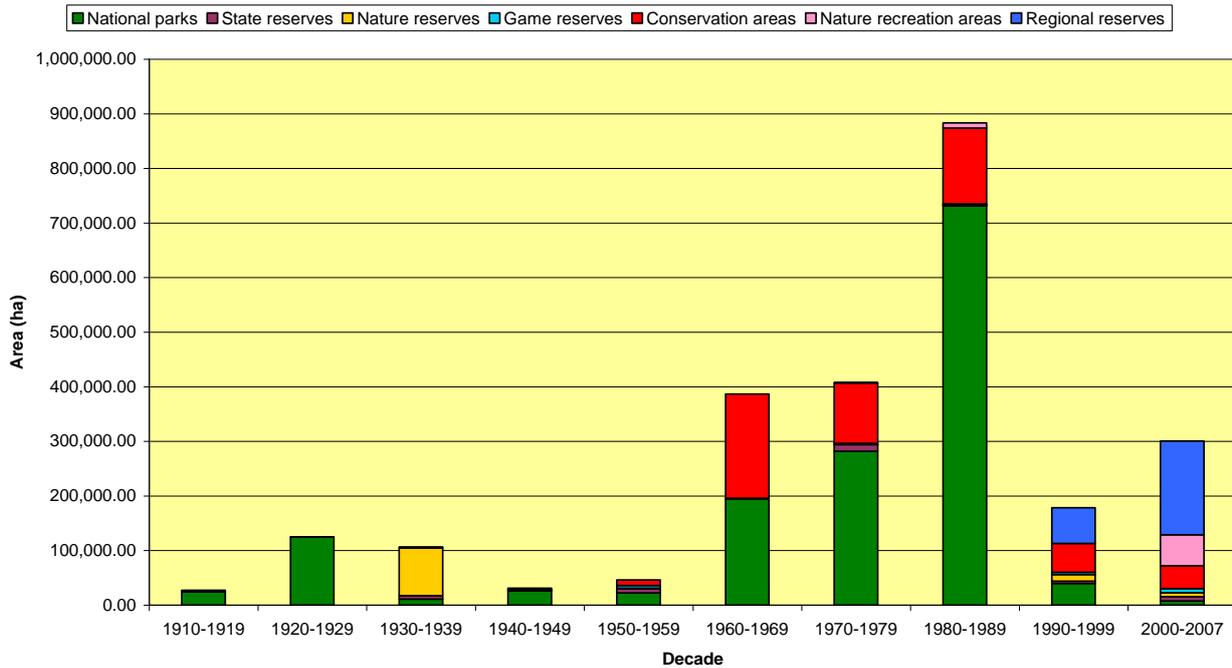


Figure 2

By 1987 when the PWS lost its autonomy under the Gray government's restructure, the reserved lands area had grown to 1,464,975 ha, an increase of 90% on the 1971 figure, and amounting to 21.5% of the total area of the state. This was achieved through the addition in the early 1970s of Maria Island and Mount William National Parks in the east, and extensions to the Southwest National Park and Conservation Area in 1976 following the report of the Southwest Advisory Committee. The early 1980s saw the proclamation of the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park in 1981 and the establishment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1983 covering 770,000 hectares⁵⁵ (encompassing the Southwest, Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers, and Cradle-Mountain Lake St Clair National Parks), the final triumphant outcome of the battle to save the Franklin.

The defeat of the Liberal government in 1989 and its replacement with the Labor-Green Accord produced another huge surge in reservations, with the creation of the Douglas-Apsley National Park in the east, and the addition of over half a million hectares in the south west, bringing the World Heritage Area to 1.38 million hectares. However, the brief interlude of autonomy of the NPWS under the Accord marked the end of the major expansion of the reserved estate. By the time Peter Murrell retired as director of the NPWS in 1991, it had grown to over 2 million hectares, and comprised 30% of the total area of the state; an increase of 1.26 million hectares or 163% over the two decades he had been at the helm. Surely a remarkable record!

Equally remarkable is the fact that over the next two decades, to 2007, the reserved estate increased by only 456,000 hectares or 22% on the 1991 figure. Over 50% of this increase (Figure 2) has been in the new classification of Regional Reserve under the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), which is the lowest level of protection, applied to 'land with high mineral potential or prospectivity and providing for mineral exploration activities and utilisation of mineral resources and of other natural resources on a small scale'.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Mendel, op.cit.6, p.169.

⁵⁶ Definition taken from op.cit 53.

Under the Regional Forest Agreement the Commonwealth government defined criteria for a ‘comprehensive, adequate and representative’ system of conservation reserves. At least 60% of existing old growth forest was to be protected for each forest ecosystem, and at least 90% of high quality wilderness areas. This would have required protection of an additional 1.2 million hectares in Tasmania, but only about a third of this was gazetted under the RFA, including two new national parks, the Savage River and Tasman National Parks which together reserved an additional 28,730 hectares.⁵⁷ Scientists and environmental groups both argued this was inadequate, especially because so little high conservation value forest was included. Equally, there was a shortfall in the reservation of high conservation value forest on private land. The distribution of reserves between habitat types and bioregions is very uneven. For example 85% of the west bioregion (mostly button grass plains and alpine woodlands) is protected, while a third of the 50 forest species the RFA was supposed to protect still have less than 15% of their original distribution reserved.⁵⁸

4.2.2 Changing demands of reserved lands management

This dramatic change in the quantity and quality of protected lands is perhaps the best illustration of the reorientation in both the internal direction of the PWS, and its external environment in the broader economic and political sphere. While certainly there is less high value natural land worthy of protection now than three decades ago – though the Weld and the Tarkine, for example, undoubtedly qualify – the resentment in many quarters that so much of the state is ‘locked up’, the power of the logging and mining industries, the dominance of an ideology of profit over protection, and the demand to squeeze maximum economic return from the existing reserve estate, has meant that adding to it has been off the mainstream agenda and the environment movement has struggled to gain any traction.⁵⁹

In fact the struggle, both inside and outside the PWS, has been to care for the existing estate adequately. Because of the demands of the tourism industry, many parks staff spend most of their time providing visitor services rather than spending time actively protecting the environment; experienced field rangers have become ‘people managers’.⁶⁰ Visitor pressure has led to expensive hardening of walking tracks and the introduction of a number of restrictions and fees in some areas, for example on the Overland Track. This may erode the ‘wilderness experience’ but is considered by some as essential to prevent rapid degradation. Track monitoring and the development and enforcement of appropriate standards is time consuming, and forces rangers to ‘monitor the infrastructure rather than the environment’; and because of the priority put on managing the ‘front’ country for tourism, there are no resources and no time available for managing biodiversity conservation and habitat protection in the ‘back’ country.⁶¹ There are ongoing threats from poaching of wildlife and valuable timber, from arson, which causes devastating wildfires, and from intentional or accidental introduction of feral species such as weeds, cats, goats, trout and foxes, and plant diseases such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

4.2.3 Responsibility for management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA), which includes 90% of the area of Tasmania’s national parks, has very demanding requirements under the World Heritage Convention. The objectives of the 1992 Management Plan are to:

⁵⁷ Tasmanian PLUC, Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Tasmania, November 1997, p.69, quoted in Quarmby p.251.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.257.

⁵⁹ Personal communication.

⁶⁰ Personal communication.

⁶¹ Personal communications.

-
- 'Identify, protect, conserve, present and where appropriate, rehabilitate the world heritage and other natural and cultural values of the TWWHA, and to transmit that heritage to future generations in as good or better condition than at present'.⁶²

The evaluation of the effectiveness of this management plan, undertaken twelve years later in 2004 found that *none* of the individual objectives merited a five-star rating defined as 'objective achieved or on track to delivery; most if not all desired outcomes delivered or on track for delivery'. Nine out of the 14 objectives got three stars; 'objective moderately progressed; at least one desired outcome delivered or on track to delivery'. Only five managed four stars; 'objective well progressed; several desired outcomes on track for delivery'.⁶³ At best, this indicated an average level of performance.

The report identified a number of actions to improve this, including:

- Securing adequate funding to allow full implementation of the management plan.
- Amending Tasmanian legislation for parks and reserves to reflect the international obligations imposed by the World Heritage Convention.
- Endorsing as the highest principle of management the commitment to protect the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA from degradation.
- Allocating significant effort and resources to a coordinated research strategy to better identify and understand these values.
- Designing research and conservation programs to incorporate processes to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Giving higher priority and more resources to identifying, assessing and ameliorating threats to the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA.
- Improving management and interpretation of Aboriginal heritage.
- Proactively managing noise to maintain the peace and tranquillity of the WHA.⁶⁴

In effect, this is a list (and it is only a summary) of the deficiencies in the PWS's ability to manage the TWWHA to the standard required by its statutory responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention. These responsibilities have clearly outrun the resources, possibly the expertise, and most worryingly the political will of the PWS and its masters to act as trustworthy custodians of this unique natural environment which is the birthright of all Tasmanians, Australians and world citizens, of this and future generations. Each of these issues is addressed below.

4.3 Staffing of the Parks and Wildlife Service

One of the critical resources for management of the TWWHA, and all parks and reserves, is the quantity and quality of the people available for the job. While the tortuous restructuring of the PWS, and its increasing responsibilities, can be traced fairly easily, it is far harder to gain an accurate picture of how staffing levels have changed over the past decades. Effective management of parks and reserves is a labour intensive task. It requires trained and active people on the ground, to monitor and remedy impacts from fire, weeds, feral animals, diseases, poachers, climate, visitors and many other causes; to provide interpretation and safety services for visitors, and to develop and maintain a wide range of specialized infrastructure, from walking tracks to composting toilets. Management must also be guided by comprehensive ecological research and long-term environmental monitoring of physical conditions, habitats and individual species by well trained and committed scientists. All this data has to be interpreted and incorporated into Management

⁶² *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Management Plan 1999*, Parks and Wildlife Service, p.31.

⁶³ *State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, Summary Report No.1*, 2004, Parks and Wildlife Service, p.19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p 20-30.

Plans and other proposals within a complicated legislative framework, which need to be carried into the political arena to compete for adequate resources for their implementation, and into the arena of public consultation to gain broader popular support.

The reserve estate has grown in the past three decades, more than doubling from around 17% of the total area of the state in 1979 to over 36% in 2007 (Figure 1), but it is hard to determine whether the human resources to manage it have kept pace even in quantitative terms, let alone in terms of the breadth and depth of expertise needed for an increasingly complex task. The employment data available in published form, primarily from annual reports, is both sporadic and incommensurate. When studying the period of the early autonomous NPWS, one can be fairly certain of comparing like with like, though even so there are probable discrepancies due to the employment of temporary and project staff.⁶⁵ Once the PWS began to wend its tortuous way through the web of government departments, not only do their annual reports pay scant attention to recording the number and level of their employees; but when figures for those disembodied ‘full time equivalents’ (FTEs) can be glimpsed in the fine print, they are often aggregated beyond usefulness. For example depending on whether PWS and the Nature Conservation Branch (NCB) were part of the same Output Group, or were each amalgamated with other or separate Output Groups in a broader reporting structure, the figures may or may not allow valid comparisons. Once PWS and NCB parted company into separate departments in 2002, the task becomes impossible. Furthermore, FTEs do not discriminate between field, management and clerical staff.

4.3.1 Overall staffing levels of the PWS

With the above qualifications, the available data set produces the reasonably coherent time series in Figure 3, which correlates approximately with the increase in reserved lands over the same period.

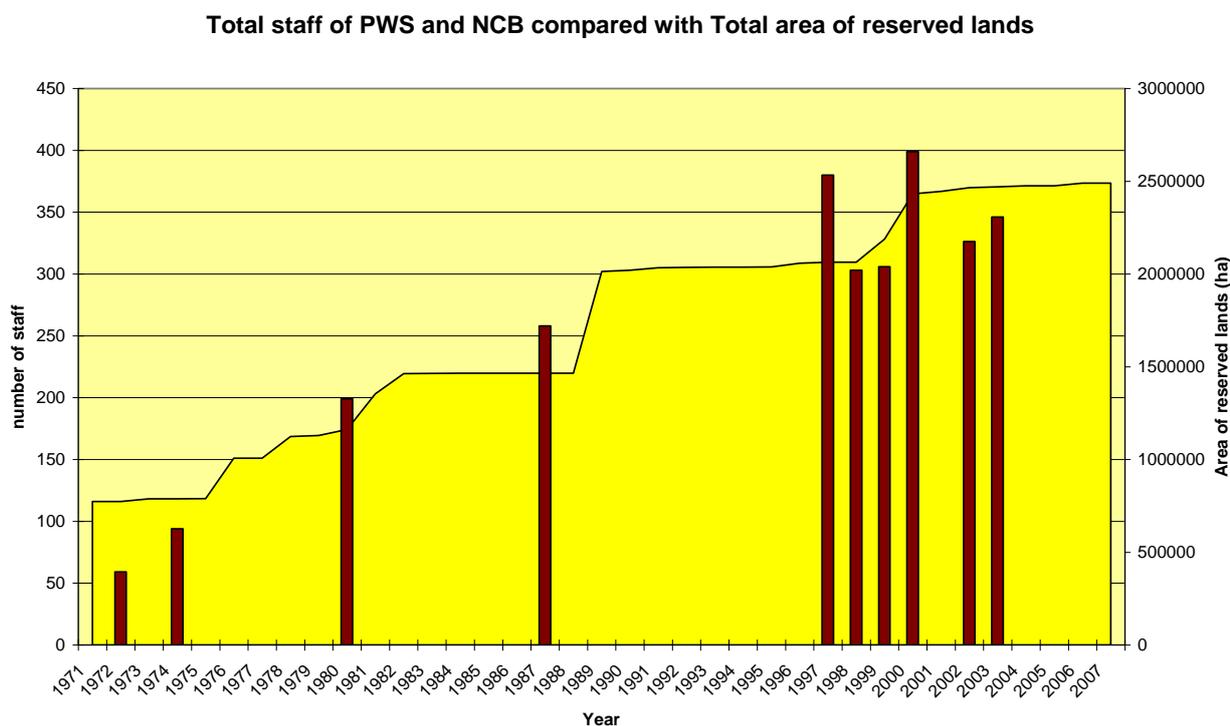


Figure 3

⁶⁵ For example, of the 258 staff employed in 1987, 30 were casual/ part-time and 93 were temporary. Annual Report of the NPWS for the year ended 30 June 1987.

4.3.2 Ranger staffing levels

However, a comparison of ranger staff numbers, the on-the-ground managers, with the area of the reserved estate, tells a rather different story.⁶⁶

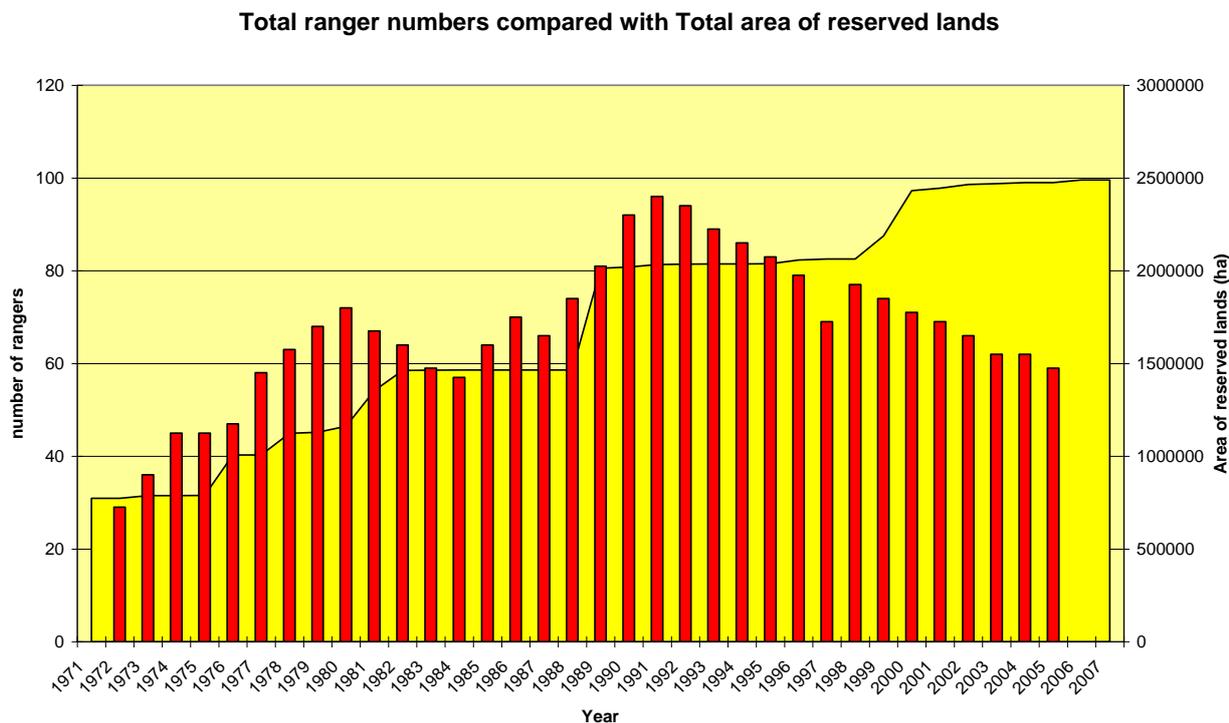


Figure 4

Figure 4 shows the number of rangers peaked at just under 100 in 1991, coinciding with Peter Murrell's retirement as Director of the NPWS, and thereafter has steadily declined even though the reserve estate has grown, and with it the responsibilities of the PWS, especially for the TWWHA. Figure 4 shows that in 2005 there were 59 rangers for a reserve estate of 2.5 million hectares in Tasmania; by comparison, Victoria with a reserve estate of about 4 million hectares, there were 415 rangers⁶⁷, or 103.8 rangers per million hectares compared to Tasmania's 23.6, or 4.4 times as many rangers per million hectares.

4.3.3 Changes in rangers' duties

A comparison of Figures 3 and 4 suggests, and interviewees confirm, that there has been an increase in the upper levels of management in the PWS, and a decrease in field staff over the past 20 years. Recent restructuring within the PWS has reduced the number of levels from Field Assistant to Senior Ranger from six to four, with three new levels of management introduced above them. This has led to significant erosion of the career paths of field staff, with permanent appointments transformed into contract positions (common throughout the public service) to which the same people are appointed but on a lower level than their previous grade. Career rangers who want to continue work in the field, 'protecting nature and educating visitors, have nowhere to go except an office job', according to one ranger who is resisting this, after a 29 year career in the PWS. Over that time, his tasks have changed markedly. Whereas before, the only time he spent in the office was to keep up his field work diary, now he is so burdened by reception, planning, and administrative duties that he has no time for patrolling, enforcement, wildlife protection or environmental assessment. Furthermore, the changed employment conditions have resulted in fewer

⁶⁶ This information was provided in a personal communication. The ranger estimates were culled from the internal PWS staff directory for each year.

⁶⁷ Personal communication.

rangers in the parks when most visitors are there, at weekends.⁶⁸ Most interpretation is now done by summer rangers or commercial operators, while habitat and species research is done by graduate students or volunteers. This leads to a lack of consistency of monitoring and methodology over time and space, making the results far less useful for long-term management. Enforcement is a thing of the past, and the lack of staff resources has led to a two-tier reserve system. The first tier is the ‘front country’ of the iconic national parks and TWWHA which are accepted as protected, and where education programs reach most visitors and their behaviour can be broadly monitored. The second comprises other reserves, especially under the RFA which ‘exist on paper only’ and are rarely visited by rangers as they are widely separated and have a high edge-to-area ratio, with no money to protect or promote them. Wood-hooking (illegal acquisition of firewood), poaching and hooning are commonplace in these reserves as there is no visible landowner or authority.⁶⁹

4.3.4 Use of TWWHA resources for other staffing needs

Another complicating factor in assessing staff numbers which none of the tabulated data address consistently, is the role of outside funding such as the National Estate Grants Program, the National Heritage Trust and particularly, federal funding for the TWWHA, in staffing levels. Most of this funding is short-term, and for specific projects, but many staff are employed for long periods on these shifting resources on a series of short term and hence precarious contracts that undermine career development and satisfaction, although this has declined in recent years.⁷⁰ The Report on the State of the TWWHA in 2004 tried to find some data on how many PWS staff were involved in the TWWHA, and in what capacity. In 1999 there were 112 permanent PWS staff ‘with responsibility for the TWWHA’; but the report noted ‘the agency’s personnel record system does not allow for the cost-efficient analysis of more detailed data about the nature and level of employment of staff with World Heritage responsibilities’.⁷¹

4.3.5 Volunteers

To make up for the shortfall in professional personnel in the field, and also as part of its ‘stakeholder engagement’ strategy, the PWS relies increasingly on volunteer support. For example, volunteers contributed over 50,000 hours to 90 Community Partnership programmes in 2005-06, including those who spent three months on Deal and Maatsuyker Islands, or jointly clocked up 164 days, 131 as hut wardens, on the Overland Track, as well as contributing to a host of ‘Care’ programs, for example Wildcare, Coastcare, Bushcare. In 2007-08 volunteers contributed over 20,000 hours a month in the north of the state alone.⁷²

4.3.6 Staff morale

At a broader level, the Hewitt Report on employee attitudes and morale, commissioned by DPIW and released on the *Tasmanian Times* website in May 2007, revealed very low levels of satisfaction on a range of parameters such as ‘being treated like a valued member of the organisation, being inspired to do (my) best work, being able to fulfil career aspirations, and experiencing strong, exciting and effective leadership from senior management’. The Hewitt Study compared responses from DPIW staff with employees of other previously sampled organisations classified as ‘The Best’ and ‘The Rest’. Questions were couched in such a way that positive responses scored highest; the first three columns in the table represent the aggregate percentage of employees in the three types of organisation replying ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ while the fourth column is the percentage of DPIW staff replying ‘strongly agree’ only.⁷³

⁶⁸ A fortnightly roster of 10 days on/4 days off used to be standard for all rangers; now senior rangers work a deskbound weekly 5/2 roster so they are rarely in the field at weekends.

⁶⁹ This paragraph is based on information provided by several interviewees.

⁷⁰ Personal communication

⁷¹ State of TWWHA, 2004, p. 246.

⁷² DTAE Annual Report 2005-06, p. 33; DEPHA Annual Report 2007-08, p.40

⁷³ DPIW in crisis, *Tasmanian Times*, 16 May 2007. <http://tasmaniantimes.com/index.php?weblog/comments/the-dpiwe-crisis>

SUMMARY TABLE: Comparing the average % scores in the main sections of the report.

Question	The Best	The Rest	DPIW	DPIW (sa)
1-60 (general)	75%	58%	42%	9%
61-66 (Sen mgt)	72%	46%	19%	2%
76-79 (HR)	65%	42%	25%	3%
80-89 (Mid mgt)	78%	54%	34%	4%

Source: The Hewitt Study

The online comments on the report demonstrated that such attitudes were common across the public service, including the PWS. The (then) Tasmanian Greens Deputy Leader Nick McKim attributed ‘DPIW’s very poor showing to factors including Labor’s deliberate restructuring of the public service to disempower conservation and environmental managers, its long-term failure to allocate adequate funding to environmental management, and a command and control mentality throughout much of Tasmania’s public service’.⁷⁴

The other aspect of poor morale which the Hewitt Report did not mention, is a climate of fear which has led some staff of the PWS to leave the agency for interstate positions, or even to resort to appeals to the Anti-discrimination Tribunal.⁷⁵

4.4 Funding for the Parks and Wildlife Service

4.4.1 Consolidated Revenue and other Tasmanian government funds

While a satisfactory level of funding is clearly related to the provision of adequate staff resources to fulfil the growing responsibilities of the PWS over the past three decades, it is even more difficult to obtain consistent, comparable data for revenue and expenditure than for employment. As well as the periodic restructuring and separation into different Departments described above, those Departments changed their own reporting practices from year to year, and their accounting standards in response to new methods introduced periodically across the public service.

Figure 5 shows that ‘discontinuities’ occurred when the PWS moved to another department, and also, particularly while it was in DELM, there were changes in aggregating different elements of PWS, Crown Land Management, and Nature and Cultural Conservation into Output Groups. As far as can be ascertained, the Output Groups and accounting practices in the same coloured years in Figure 5, are consistent. In some cases, a year is repeated, because the following year’s annual report applied the changed reporting practices to the previous year’s activities as well. 2002 is anomalous, as the first reporting year for PWS as a separate DPIWE Output Group from RMC, under Peter Williams. In 2003, PWS moved into Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DTPHA) which used a different reporting standard, which was however maintained across its subsequent transitions into the Department of Tourism, Arts and Environment (DTAE) in 2006 and the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DEPHA) in 2008.

⁷⁴ McKim, N. Press release 17 May 2007.

⁷⁵ Personal communications.

PWS expenditure

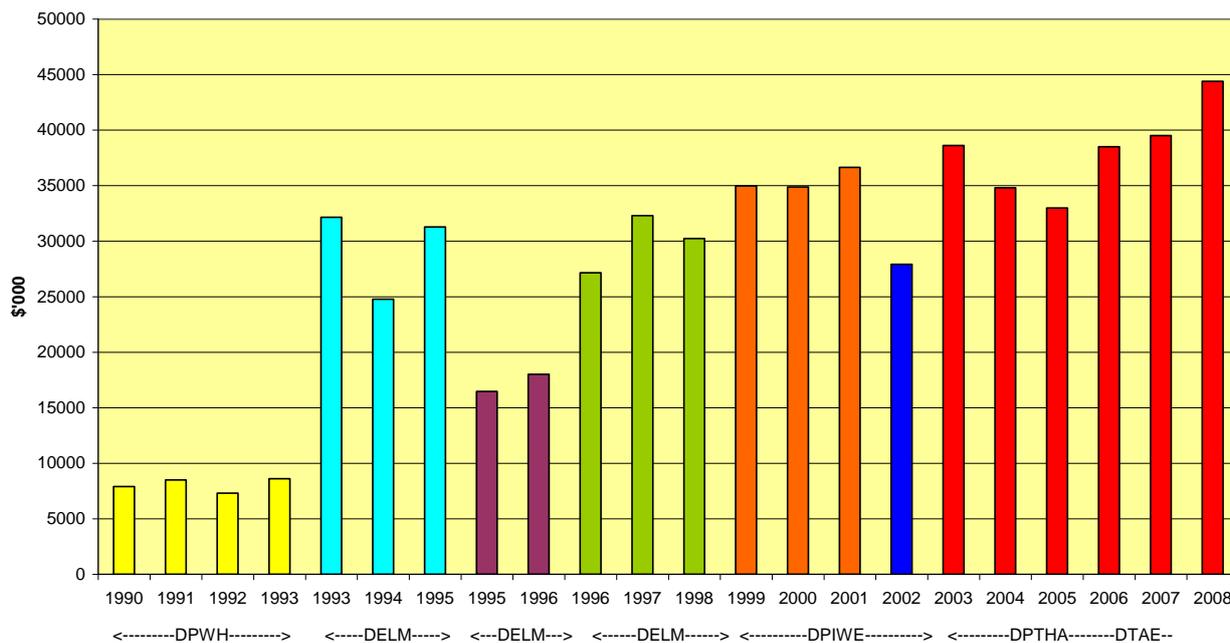


Figure 5

Overall, while expenditure appears to have increased substantially since 1990, it should be borne in mind that these amounts are not adjusted for inflation, which amounts to 50% over the period 1990 to the present,⁷⁶ so 2008 expenditure of \$44.4 million is worth \$28.8 million in 1990 dollars, which is approximately 3.5 times the expenditure in 1990.

However, in terms of expenditure compared to the area of reserved land, shown in Figure 6, there has been a huge increase — from approximately \$3.9 per hectare in 1990, to over \$18 per hectare in 2008, or about \$11 per hectare in real terms. However, as discussed in Section 4.3, this does not appear to have increased the number of rangers employed; but has been spent mainly on improvements to visitor infrastructure in support of tourism objectives, and also on increased numbers of higher paid management positions.

⁷⁶ This information is derived from <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/result.php> which produced the calculation “\$1.54 in the year 2006 has the same “purchase power” as \$1 in the year 1990.” This is for the US economy.

PWS expenditure and reserved lands area

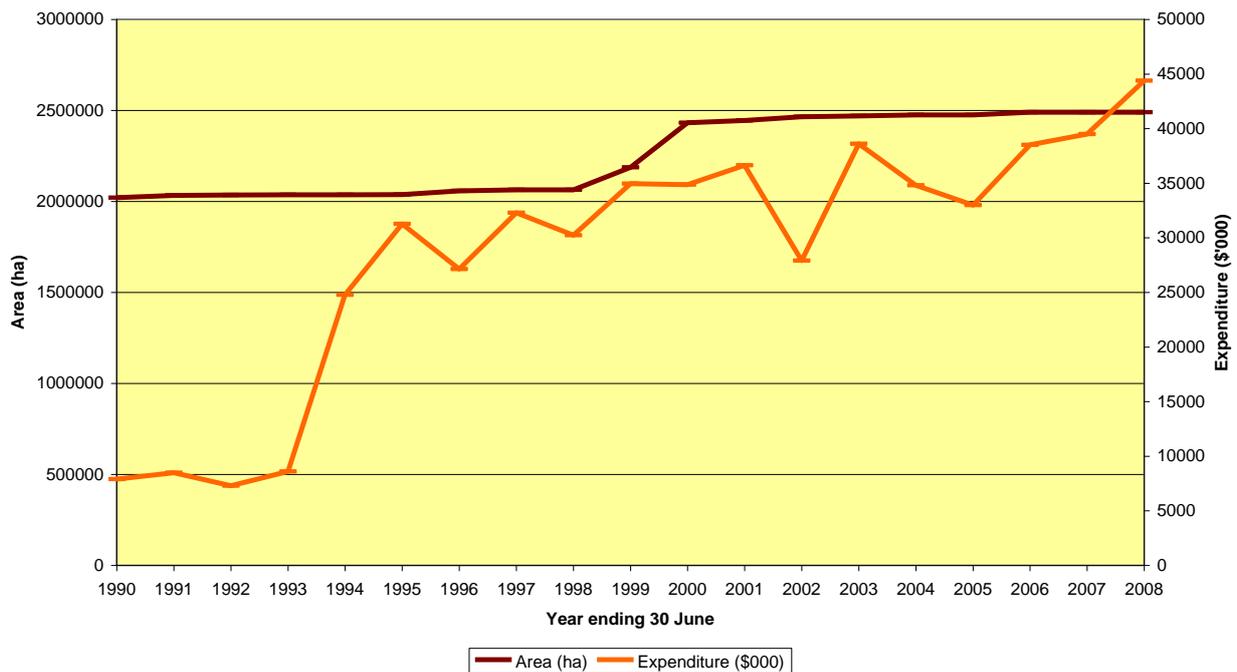


Figure 6

4.4.2 Federal funding for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

The other major source of funding for the PWS is funding from the Commonwealth government for the TWWHA. As noted above, other funds have come from other federal programs such as the National Estate and Natural Heritage Trust. These have been smaller and more tightly targeted project funds. WHA funding has been more generous in the long-term, and consistent, and has covered a wider range of activities. As a consequence, there is a widespread perception that TWWHA funds are used to subsidise non-TWWHA activities.⁷⁷

Funding for the TWWHA has been negotiated between the state and federal governments in a series of multi-year agreements, since the inscription of those areas on the World Heritage list in 1982. The first four-year agreement began in 1983-84, and was renegotiated in 1986-87 as a rolling five year program up to 1991-92. With the expansion of the TWWHA in 1989, the rolling program was renegotiated to 1993-94, and on its expiry a further four year program was agreed, which was renewed in 1998. Initially these agreements contained provisions for inflation to maintain both state and federal funding in real terms, but the most recent one did not. The amount of federal funding has decreased with each four year agreement. In 2002, the Commonwealth decreased its contribution by \$1 million a year and decreased the length of its commitment from four years to one, but made additional funding available through the Natural Resource Management mechanism. In response, Tasmania increased its contribution by \$1 million in 2002-03. However, no information on the state contribution can be found in later annual reports or other public documents. In the period 1992-99, federal funding contributed 58% of the total, the state 32% with the remainder coming from the Natural Heritage Trust (6%) and user fees (4%).⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Personal communications.

⁷⁸ Appendix 2 and Figure A2-1, *State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, Report No.1*, 2004, p.245-6.

Comparison of State and Federal Funding for the WHA

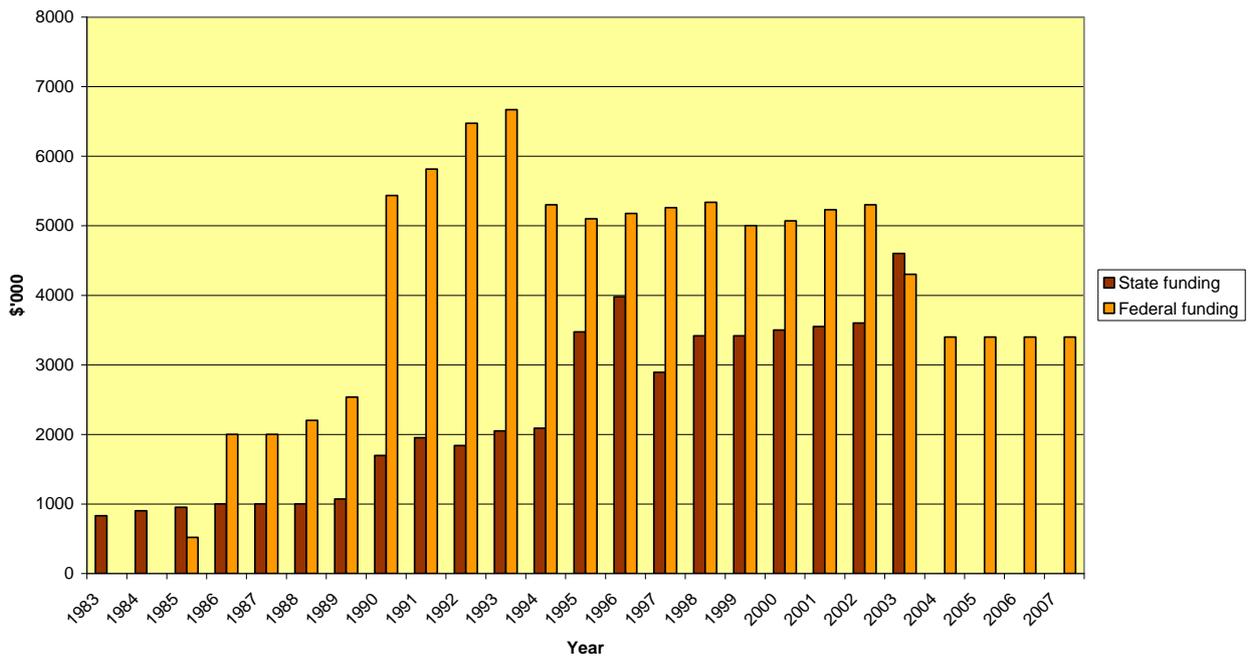


Figure 7

Funding of WHAs is certainly a bone of contention between the state and federal governments, and was a major issue in the dispute over the financing of the rabbit and rodent eradication plan in the other Tasmanian WHA, Macquarie Island. Arguing that the federal government was primarily responsible for the \$24.5 million program, Premier Paul Lennon claimed ‘The Federal Government has a clear responsibility, it is a World Heritage Area. It is simply not good enough for the national Government to be requiring the State Government to list areas of land on the World Heritage register so that we can fulfill their international obligations and then they expect us to fund the management of these areas’.⁷⁹ His comments demonstrated a willful misunderstanding of the obligations of both state and federal governments for the joint management of World Heritage Areas.

4.4.3 Park fees

Park entry fees were introduced in the most popular national parks in 1981. They were re-structured and extended to more parks in 1994, then raised in 2004 and again in 2007. The fees introduced in 2004 were approximately 100% higher than the previous fee levels and have increased another 7% by 2007, based on the All Parks Annual Pass, which increased to \$46 in 1994, \$83 in 2004 and at \$90 per vehicle in 2007. This is now 14 times what it cost in 1981, way above the level of inflation. The fee charged for walking the Overland Track between November and April is now \$150 per adult, an increase of 50% since it was introduced only two years earlier.⁸⁰

Park fees have been strongly resisted especially by Tasmanian bushwalkers, who argue that they are discriminatory since parks are already funded out of taxes, like many other recreational amenities such as sports grounds, for which no additional fees are charged.⁸¹ However, several surveys have shown that most walkers come from interstate and overseas, many of whom are prepared to pay

⁷⁹ ‘Macquarie mauling’, *The Mercury*, 12 May 2007 <http://www.news.com.au/mercury/story/0,22884,21715812-3462,00.html>

⁸⁰ http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/natparks/current_fees.html

⁸¹ Hobart Walking Club, *Annual Report*, September 1996, p.4, quoted in Quarmby p.277.

more for the privilege.⁸² In general, Tasmanians accepted the major fee increases in 1994, some arguing that higher fees might even discourage over-use.⁸³ There is little evidence of this however; between 1991 and 2006, visitor numbers increased from 833,220 to 1,350,000, or 62%.⁸⁴ More accurate recent statistics from eight reference sites indicate that visitor numbers may have reached a peak.⁸⁵

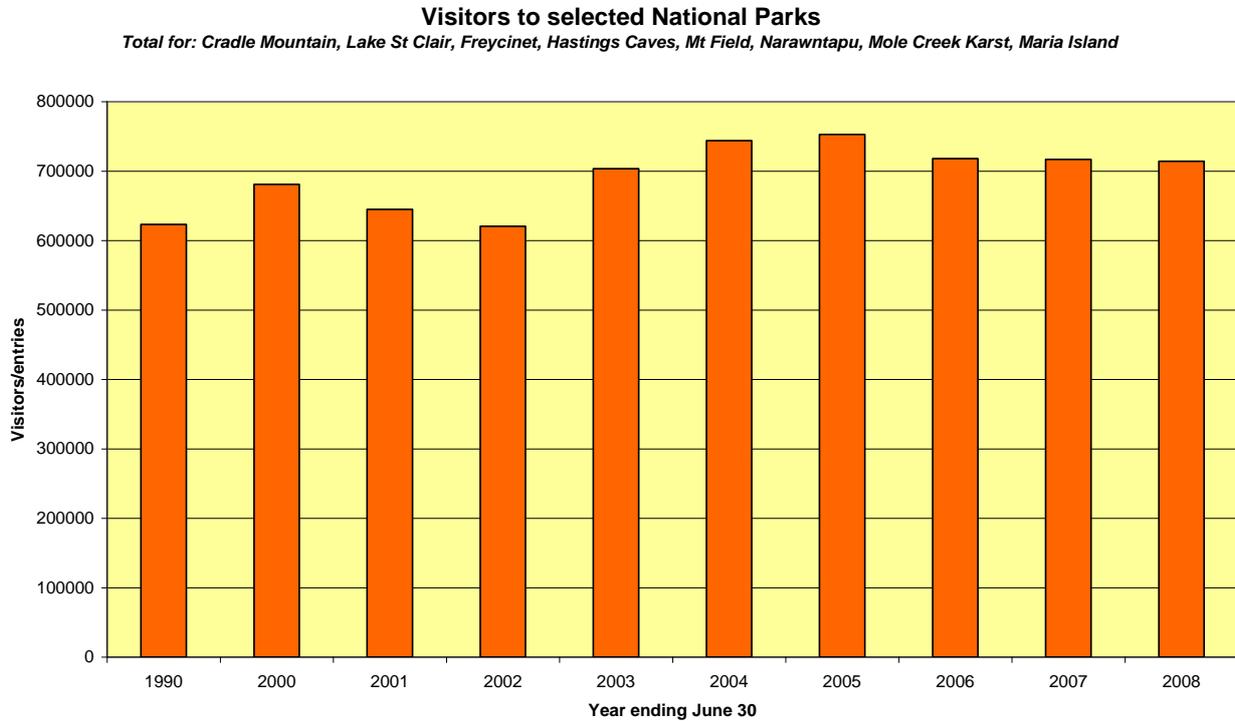


Figure 8

Far more striking however, is the increase in revenue from park fees over the same period. Figure 9 below clearly shows the jump in revenue from fee increases in 1994 and from 2004, and also that revenue has increased far more than visitor numbers – over four times between 1991 and 2006.⁸⁶

⁸² J. Hepper, J. de Gryse and D. Reed, 'Draft Walking Track Strategy', 1997, p.40.

⁸³ Quarmby p.281.

⁸⁴ These figures are taken from annual reports; they are not given for all years.

⁸⁵ Knowles, Brian, PWS visitor statistics, 2006.

⁸⁶ Park fees are taken from special account 'T750 Parks Development & Maintenance' in annual reports from 1990 to 2003; thereafter from 'Projects funded by National Parks entry fees' on the PWS website at <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=8622> . Visitor statistics can be found at <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/manage/statistics/>

Revenue from Park Fees

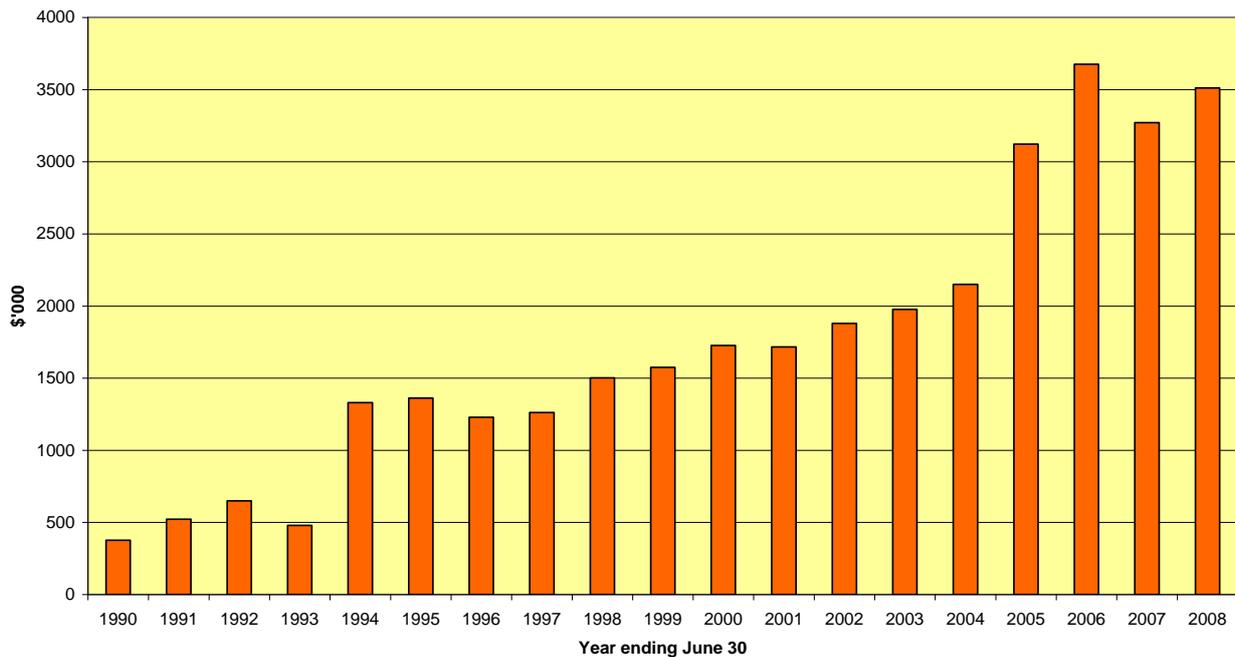


Figure 9

This demonstrates how deeply parks management has become embedded in the tourist industry; it now gains substantial revenue from tourism, and tourism is heavily dependent on natural areas. A survey on 'nature-based tourism' by Tourism Tasmania shows that 69% of all visitors and 86% of overseas visitors engage in this activity, which appeals most to those 'at the upper end of the income spectrum' who spend substantially above the average per visitor and per night.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ *Nature based Tourism in Tasmania, 1998-99*, Tourism Tasmania,
http://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/pdf/res_naturebased.pdf

5. Serving many masters: current conflicts in reserved lands management in Tasmania

5.1 Conflicts of community

5.1.1 Traditional users

National parks and other reserved lands are the public property of the Tasmanian community, but community opinion is never homogeneous, and never less so than over matters of environmental protection in Tasmania. The conservation movement has always had a strong focus on protecting wilderness values and minimising human incursions into protected areas, whether terrestrial or marine. This is seen as exclusivist and arrogant by other sectors of the community, who have challenged this by demanding much greater access for a wider range of human activities such as horse-riding, hunting, fishing and recreational vehicle driving. The Tasmanian Traditional and Recreational Land Users Federation is one lobby group for this community sector which claims the right to continue its connections with public land and preserve aspects of cultural heritage which conflict with the ecological basis of park management. The damage to the Southport Lagoon Conservation Area by 4WD vehicles,⁸⁸ the earlier battles over horse riding on the Central Plateau, and more recently the controversy over no-take fishing zones in Marine Protected Areas in the Bruny Bioregion,⁸⁹ are all examples of the conflict between traditional use and conservation. This has been particularly recognised as an issue within the WHA, and a special report was commissioned in 1997 which concluded that some activities, especially those which contributed to ‘building community identity and solidarity...should be seen as significant by land managers’ and that ‘traditional practices zones’ should be recognised and jointly managed by PWS and local communities.⁹⁰

5.1.2 Bushwalkers

Bushwalkers too, represent a group of traditional users of parks and reserved lands whose objectives can sometimes conflict with habitat conservation. As noted above, the PWS spends most resources on the ‘front country’ — the popular tracks which have been hardened and upgraded — but there is increasing pressure on remoter areas, as better equipment and access make them less challenging and more frequently visited. The South Coast Track and the Western Arthur Ranges are areas where a permit system would be much more effective than track fees, but Tasmanian bushwalkers in particular, regard this as an infringement of their ‘right to roam’ and have strongly resisted the proposal.⁹¹ The PWS has tried to involve bushwalkers in developing a mutually acceptable solution to the problems of degradation over the almost 3000 km of recognised tracks in protected areas, especially those in the TWWHA. The Bushwalking and Track Review Panel convened in 2002, which included members from bushwalking clubs, developed a workable approach to track management based on what is known as the Limits of Acceptable Change, however ‘it would appear that a lack of funding and commitment from the state government has stymied its implementation’.⁹²

5.1.3 Community expectations as measured by Tasmania Together

On a broader scale, the *Tasmania Together* project provides an opportunity for assessing the performance of the PWS in fulfilling community expectations for the management of the public reserve system. It provides a process for assessing progress towards 24 goals for Tasmania’s

⁸⁸ *Newsletter #6*, Autumn 2006, Tasmanian National Parks Association, p.2.

⁸⁹ Inquiry into the establishment of marine protected areas within the Bruny Bioregion, Draft Recommendations Report, October 2007, http://www.rpd.tas.gov.au/plu/inquiries/bruny_bioregion_inquiry/mpa_bruny_bioregion_inquiry_-_reportspublications “Showdown over marine parks” 13 November 2007, ABC News, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/11/13/2088958.htm>

⁹⁰ State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Report No 1, 2004, p.52.

⁹¹ Personal communication.

⁹² Robert Campbell, ‘Tasmania’s walking tracks; the good, the bad and the ugly’, *TNPA Newsletter #8*, Autumn 2007.

community, culture, democracy, economy and environment, measured against 212 benchmarks, with targets and indicators for each goal. In the 2001 benchmarking exercise, sufficient data to set quantitative targets was available for only 113 of the 212 benchmarks. For the other 99 benchmarks, the data required to report against them was either incomplete or non-existent, so that targets could not be set. However, for each of these, a date was set by which targets would be established.

In the 2001 benchmarking exercise, there were four goals in the environment category, of varying relevance to the performance of the PWS:

- Goal 21: Value, protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage.
- Goal 22: Value, protect and maintain our natural diversity.
- Goal 23: Ensure there is a balance between environmental protection and economic and social development.
- Goal 24: Ensure our natural resources are managed in a sustainable way now and for future generations.

Of the 50 benchmarks, by which these goals were to be measured, only half (25) had sufficient data available to set targets.

Of the 15 benchmarks relating to conservation of natural and protected areas, broadly considered, two thirds (nine) had sufficient data available to set targets; the remaining ones were to have targets set by 2003.

In the 2006 *Tasmania Together* Progress Report, an assessment of performance on these 15 benchmarks shows:

- four benchmarks were still without targets and were not reported on.
- three other benchmarks were not reported on.
- four had failed to achieve their 2005 targets.
- one had achieved the 2005 target but was unable to maintain it.
- only three had achieved their 2005 targets.

The benchmarks which achieved their targets were:

- 22.1.2—no shortfall in reservation of targeted communities against RFA targets.
- 22.1.4—establishment of Marine Protected Areas; 2 new MPAs in 2005.
- 23.4.1—percentage of land independently certified for land management against international, national and state standards; maintained 25% target since 2001.

These hardly represent an epic achievement, especially when set against the four benchmarks that failed:

- 22.1.1—Number of threatened species showing decline in/improved status on schedules of the *Threatened Species Protection Act*: two declined, none improved.
- 23.1.1—Percentage of land protected by legislation or conservation covenants: 41% against 2005 target of 45%.
- 23.1.2—Percentage of protected land covered by management plans: DPTHFA, 69% against 2005 target of 100%; Forestry Tasmania achieved 100% target.
- 24.1.1—Reduction of area of clear felling in old growth forests: 2003 target to end clear felling in high conservation value forest, not met; 2010 target of complete phase out, no data.

The most significant gap in the 2006 Progress Report was in relation to:

- 21.2.1- Proportion of commonwealth and state resources allocated to conserve natural heritage compared to OECD countries: target not established by 2003, therefore not reported on.⁹³

Overall, it is clear that *Tasmania Together* does not provide any indication of how well community expectations are being fulfilled when only half the benchmarks relevant to environmental protection of public reserves are reported on. The difficulty of managing such a complex benchmarking system, as revealed in the 2006 Progress Report as a whole, has led to a subsequent revision focusing on 12 goals instead of the original 24, each with a headline indicator. The original four goals of ‘Environment’ have been replaced by one – ‘Built and natural heritage that is valued and protected’ with ‘Land protection’ as its headline indicator.

As a result of this simplification, there are now only ten instead of 15 benchmarks for environmental protection. Three relate to clear felling in old growth forests, one to threatened species, and four to protection of reserved lands, only two of which have increasing targets. The benchmark on allocation of state and commonwealth resources (see Section 21.2.1) has been eliminated.⁹⁴

In the *Snapshot of Progress for 2007*, the headline indicator of ‘land protection’ is shown to have improved (Figure 10). The Progress Board comments ‘Since 2001 this benchmark has shown a steady positive trend. The 2010 target of protecting 46% of Tasmania appears to be achievable’ as the data shows that land ‘protected under legislation and conservation regimes’ has increased from 40% of the state in 2001 to 45% in 2007.⁹⁵

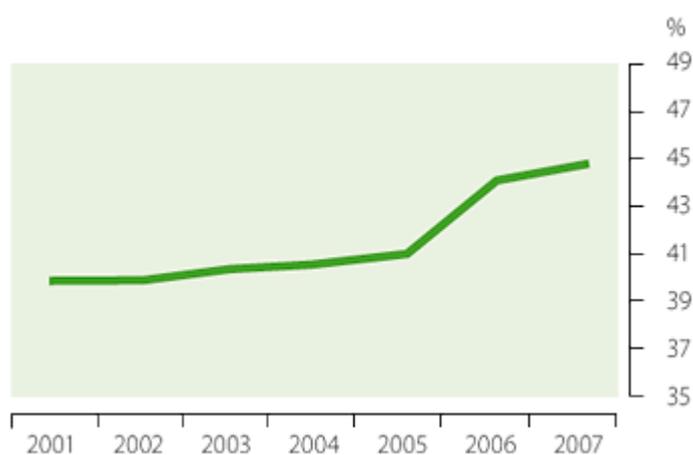


Figure 10

As far as providing the PWS with any real measure of its fulfillment of community expectations for biodiversity conservation and habitat protection, the *Tasmania Together* benchmarks are almost useless. This headline indicator will reach its target of 46% through conservation on private land, which is where most of the increase has taken place in recent years, and therefore provides no incentive for better performance in relation to the public reserve system. The only benchmark that is really needed, increased resources for management of existing protected lands, is no longer even an un-measurable one!

⁹³ This information is drawn from an analysis of data in both *Tasmania Together, Goals and Benchmarks 2001*, and *Progress Report 2006*, <http://www.tasmaniattogether.tas.gov.au/>

⁹⁴ *Tasmania Together 2020*, Tasmania Together Progress Board, p.31-33.
http://www.tasmaniattogether.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/25955/2007_05_07_61112_-_Complete_TTBook_Sml.pdf

⁹⁵ http://www.tasmaniattogether.tas.gov.au/our_progress/12

5.2 *Conflicts of commercialisation*

Far more significant than the conflicts of community outlined above (which are essentially about 'wise use' versus conservation) is the much larger and potentially far more damaging conflict over commercialisation of Tasmania's reserved lands, and particularly its national parks, including the TWWHA. Even compared with the introduction of park fees on the principle of 'user pays', which reflects the trend from the 1980s in the provision of public services across all agencies and jurisdictions, the trend towards privatisation of public land and resources is both more environmentally destructive, and of more far-reaching significance.

Pressure for commercial activities within national parks stemmed, like the restructuring of the PWS itself, from the defeat of the Tasmanian government by the conservation movement in the battle for the Franklin. The Gray government appointed Nick Evers, who later became Minister for Tourism, as a consultant to explore ways of increasing revenue in the south west since it was no longer available for hydro-industrialisation. His report advocated greater infrastructure development on the fringes of, and even inside, national parks, and recommended that the PWS planning process should be more tourism-oriented and cater for new market segments.⁹⁶ Having opened the breach it was soon widened by the government's 1985 call for tenders from private operators for the exclusive right to operate commercial huts on the Overland Track in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. This contract, won by tourism entrepreneur Ken Latona, spearheaded increasing pressure for tourism development in reserved lands, against the judgement of the PWS, which drew criticism from the Tasmanian Tourism Council for its 'obstructive bureaucracy' and 'ideological suppression' of development proposals.⁹⁷ The 'chopper debate' in 2000, over helicopter access to landing sites within the TWWHA, again pitted the PWS against supporters of privatisation in the government and the community. Of 651 public submissions received by the government in response to the proposal, all but twelve opposed it. The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council also opposed the proposal, though its chair Ken Latona, one of the proponents of increased helicopter flights, did not. A meeting in the Hobart Town Hall of 300 protesters finally persuaded Latona to abandon his proposal, but the government nonetheless moved against the PWS, severing its links with nature conservation in a separate agency under Peter Williams, followed by its transfer to the tourism portfolio the next year.⁹⁸

Compare this intent, and ability, of the PWS to stand firm against commercialisation in the 1980s and 1990s with its abject co-option and political subservience illustrated by the recent Bryan's Corner debacle in Freycinet National Park. From information revealed in response to a Freedom of Information request by (then) Tasmanian Greens Opposition Leader Peg Putt, it is clear that members of the PWS were aware of a sea eagle's nest close to the proposed location of a luxury standing camp. However the general manager of the PWS, Peter Mooney, advised his staff that there was 'political pressure for the proposal to proceed and [he] considered that the issues relating to the site could be managed by PWS staff'. One Expression of Interest in the standing camp even mentions the interpretative value of the nearby eagle's nest, but the PWS Evaluation Panel that awarded the tender in July 2005 did not refer to it at all. In fact it was not until after the Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA), who had found the nest, insisted the development be relocated, that Peter Mooney recommended that the camp be moved, thus destroying its value to the commercial operator, and involving PWS in a protracted compensation case.⁹⁹

This illustrates not only the politicisation of the PWS leading to the dominance of tourism development interests over conservation concerns, but also the consequences of the separation of

⁹⁶ *South West Tourism Study*, Evers Consulting Services, 1984 quoted in Quarmby p.285.

⁹⁷ The Tourism Council's criticism was leaked to the media, and reported in the *Sunday Tasmanian*, 28 November 1999.

⁹⁸ See section 4.1 above.

⁹⁹ 'Bryan's Corner -Expression of Interest -All4 Adventure Report', nd. Attachment to Peg Putt Press Release 'Come clean, apologise, make restitution' 22 November 2007. This issue was finally resolved with a 'six figure sum' being reportedly paid to All4Adventure; see 'Couples big compo payout', *The Mercury*, 24 December 2008.

PWS and NCB, and the role of the TNPA as the ‘watchdog’ of the public interest in national parks and reserved lands.

TNPA was set up for this very purpose in 2001, ‘in response to the increasing threats to park values posed by inappropriate development, questionable management, and the on-going failure of governments to bestow national park status on important natural and cultural assets that deserve the highest level of protection.’ Its aims are:

- To ensure the conservation, protection, and where possible, the rehabilitation of the natural environment of national parks.
- To maintain conservation as the primary role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.¹⁰⁰

It has fought the Pumphouse Point development proposal in its various manifestations, the proposal for a 200 bed conference facility on Maria Island, the Planters Bay development at Cockle Creek, and the proposed ‘iconic’ Three Capes Walk on the Tasman Peninsula. However, opposition is becoming increasingly difficult with the co-option of the PWS by the commercial tourism industry, so that management plans, for example for Cockle Creek, are changed in small and subtle ways that allow a broader interpretation of the scope of development.¹⁰¹ Furthermore the way the PWS proceeds with proposals such as the Three Capes Walk no longer includes public consultation in developing the proposal, but only an opportunity to comment on it after it is made public. Thus what should be two processes — an environmental impact statement which is put forward for public assessment, followed by a development plan — are conflated into one, which allows the PWS to ‘write out impacts where it suits them’.¹⁰²

5.3 *Conflicts of ideology*

At the root of these conflicts already discussed there is the deeper one of ideology. The PWS is locked into the business strategy of Tourism Tasmania, most explicitly expressed in *Tourism 21: A New Ten-year Vision 2004-2014*. This plan is intended to build on the success of the 1997 version, which achieved its key long-term target of a \$1 billion industry employing 26,000 people three years ahead of schedule. The 2014 goal is a \$2.5 billion industry with over 70% of the spend coming from overseas and interstate visitors, and employing 54,000 people. This goal is essentially the doubling of the size of Tasmania’s tourism industry, based on ‘the essence of the Tasmanian brand’ which is ‘unforgettable natural experiences’. It is probable that the value of this ‘brand’ is considerably enhanced by the ‘icon value’ of the World Heritage Area.¹⁰³

To double the size of the tourism industry, ‘Tourism Tasmania and Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, in partnership with key state government resource agencies, will work to ensure that Tasmania’s natural assets have the infrastructure to support sustainable visitor growth and will encourage best practice conservation management and sustainable tourism development through (*inter alia*):

- establishing agreements with land managers relating to resources and management systems to support the development of experiential product

¹⁰⁰ TNPA Manifesto, November 2003.

¹⁰¹ Personal communication. Refer also TPNA Newsletter #5, Spring 2005. The changes required to allow the Cockle Creek development to proceed included zoning the previously unzoned development site as part of the Cockle Creek East Visitor Services Site, and then changing the wording of the Management Plan from “*In the Southwest National Park development of infrastructure, including huts, is not allowed in view of the natural character of the area*” to “*In the Southwest National Park development of infrastructure, including huts, is not allowed, except within Cockle Creek East Visitor Services Site.*”

¹⁰² Personal communications.

¹⁰³ Buckley, Ralf, *World Heritage Icon Value: the contribution of World Heritage branding to nature tourism*, Australian Heritage Commission, 2002.

-
- creating a framework that encourages a market focus in developing interpretation and experience based product in natural areas'.¹⁰⁴

It is difficult to see how this can be achieved without further drastic erosion of the conservation values and management principles of the state's national parks and reserved lands, which has already been demonstrated above. The IUCN definition of a national park is a natural area of land and/or sea, designed to:

- 'protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations;
- exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the designated purposes of the area; and
- provide a foundation for spiritual, educational and recreational visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally compatible.'

According to TNPA :

- 'national parks are about the maintenance of wildness, for a nation bereft of wild things and wild places is a nation without a soul; a nation without a future. National parks are about love of land for its own sake. They are a milepost in the evolution of our ethics which now encompasses the spiritual welfare of all the creatures with which we share the planet and the inanimate world which houses them.
- their fate will be determined by not just our management, but by the love we bestow upon them. National parks are a measure of that love.'¹⁰⁵

The sale of '*unforgettable natural experiences*' as Tasmania's tourism brand comes close to selling our soul, on the basis of TNPA's and IUCN's ideology. It is on this level that the most fundamental conflicts over the management of national parks and reserved lands occur.

¹⁰⁴ *Tourism 21: A New Ten-year Vision 2004-2001*, Tourism Tasmania,
<http://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/tasind/tourism21/>

¹⁰⁵ TNPA Manifesto.

6. The future: other modes, other models

6.1 *The Parks and Wildlife Service*

All the people interviewed for this report, whether or not they were past or present staff of the PWS, were united in their insistence that the PWS must:

- Be brought back together in one agency with the Nature Conservation Branch.
- Become independent when reunited, ideally as a stand-alone agency.
- Re-assert as its primary role the conservation of biodiversity and protection of species and habitat in the national parks and reserved lands estate.
- Be adequately resourced to perform this role

Most pointed as a model to the status and role of the PWS during the 1970s and 1980s (until the first restructure in 1987) and under the Labor–Green accord in the early 1990s.

Many emphasized the importance of proactive leadership instead of the reactive, politically driven managerialism of the current senior management of the PWS. One current staff member expressed this as the need for a ‘champion’ with broad experience of environmental protection issues to lead the PWS, and cited Peter Murrell and Max Kitchell as models.¹⁰⁶

It has recently been proposed that ‘an independent Parks and Reserves Authority needs to be established with a legislated long-term mandate to protect and promote the conservation of natural and cultural values for which areas of public land were reserved’. The essential difference from the current structure of the PWS would be that an Authority ‘is governed by a board of management and therefore not subject to the direction of a minister/government in relation to the performance of its functions’. This would give the PWS greater autonomy and freedom from ‘interference from vested interest groups in the community, business and other arms of government’, who often lobby the Minister directly to achieve their objectives which may conflict with the professional judgment of PWS staff.¹⁰⁷

For an independent Parks and Reserves Authority – or even a reunited PWS – to effectively manage its conservation and habitat protection tasks for the 2.5 million hectares – nearly 40% of the total area of Tasmania – for which it is responsible under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*, it will require substantially greater resources of both funds and particularly, staff.

As discussed above (see 4.3.1) it is very difficult to form an accurate picture the number of ‘hands on’ conservation and field staff in the PWS. For example, in response to criticism of the Government’s resourcing of the PWS following the bushfire in the Tarkine wilderness in March 2008, Minister O’Byrne stated that ‘Parks and Wildlife has 286 staff in 26 locations’,¹⁰⁸ giving the impression they were widely scattered around the state taking care of parks and reserves. However, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT) recently estimated that out of a ‘head count’ of 325 PWS employees, there were only 45 rangers, 28 field officers and 9 parks and reserve managers with responsibility and skills for actual land management – total of 82 people to manage the entire reserve system. In comparison, Parks Victoria had a ‘head count’ of 997 staff in 2007-08, and in 2004 (the most recent year for which information is available) employed 415 rangers. Thus Parks Victoria has three times as many staff, and 9.2 times the number of rangers, to manage a reserve estate only 1.5 times as large as Tasmania’s.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Personal communication.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Why we need a Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Authority’ *Tasmanian Conservationist*, April 2000, p.8-9.

¹⁰⁸ ABC News, March 26, 2008 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/03/26/2199157.htm?site=idx-tas>

¹⁰⁹ ‘It’s time to stop starving the Parks and Wildlife Service’, *Tasmanian Conservationist*, December 2008, p.5. Matthew Denholm ‘Tasmania’s Parks and Wildlife Service hides a dirty secret beneath the green image’, *The Australian*, 7 February 2009, p.7.

In terms of financial resources, the actual budget for the PWS in 2007-08 was \$44.4 million.¹¹⁰ The Tasmanian Greens Alternative Budget 2008-09 called for \$10 million additional core funding for PWS, \$5 million for additional reserves, \$7.5 million for biodiversity programs and \$7 million for the Resource Management and Conservation Branch of the Department of Primary Industries and Water.¹¹¹ In its budget submission for 2009-10, the TCT sought an increase of \$22 million from consolidated revenue for the PWS, plus \$6 million for DPIW, while an additional \$2.5 million would be required to establish an independent Authority. According to TCT, Parks Victoria's total budget for 2007-08 was \$166 million. This is 3.7 times the budget of the Tasmanian PWS, for managing only 1.5 times the area of reserved land.¹¹²

These proposals for increased funding for the PWS are essentially ambit claims which would require substantial justification to become realised within the government's overall budget framework. However there is heartening evidence that the Minister is aware of this need and in her State of the State Speech in March 2009, signaled her intention to appoint a task force within the PWS to develop a 10 year plan as a framework for budget proposals.¹¹³

6.2 *The reserved lands estate*

The inadequacy of Tasmania's reserves is well documented. Although they amount to over 2.5 million hectares or over 38 % of the state, habitat types are very unevenly represented. For example less than 1% of white gum grassy woodland is in reserves, and wetlands, estuarine and marine habitats are under-represented; while button grass moorlands and alpine vegetation are over abundant. Forest communities are poorly represented, especially the commercial species such as Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Stringy Bark (*E. obliqua*). Not only were there few of these forest types in initial reservations, but even when there were, they were vulnerable to revocation. For example, pressure from commercial logging interests led to four major revocations from the Hartz Mountains, resulting in the loss of 4,052 hectares, while 1,489 hectares were excised from Mount Field. In both cases these were mostly stands of Swamp Gum and Stringy Bark. The RFA notably failed to reserve these forest types to the 15% benchmark

The distribution of reserves is also concentrated in a few bioregions. While 83% of the west bioregion has been reserved, 56% of the Central Highlands and 44% of the Southern Ranges, six of the state's nine terrestrial bioregions have less than 20% of their area in reserves. In the case of the Northern Midlands, for example, it is only 2%.¹¹⁴

The need to protect more of more forest types is pressing, especially given the rate of clear-felling. The complete cessation of clear-felling by 2010 is one *Tasmania Together* benchmark that has to be met. Creating a genuinely comprehensive, representative and adequate reserve system for all bioregions and habitats needs to become a priority goal of the PWS, and will require an increase in voluntary private conservation covenants and even compulsory purchase.

In the current bureaucratic and economic climate, however, it is hard to see how these twin goals, of creating a truly comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve estate and a dynamic, independent agency to manage it, can be achieved. It can be argued that in one sense, the 'glory days' of the PWS in the 1970s and early 1980s to which most interviewees referred as the ideal, are in fact a positive aberration when considered in the whole history of reserved lands management from the creation of the SPB to the present structure of PWS as part of DEPHA. In the 94 years since 1915, for only sixteen years (or possibly twenty if the period of DPWH in the early 1990s is included), or at most 20% of that time, has the management of reserved lands been directed by an active conservation ethic, rather than a utilitarian, primarily tourism-focused, orientation.

¹¹⁰ DEPHA Annual Report 2007-08, p. 114.

¹¹¹ *Alternative Budget Statement 2008-09*, The Greens Tasmania, p.24-27.

¹¹² op.cit.109, p. 7.

¹¹³ See Parliamentary Hansard 3 March 2009.

¹¹⁴ Quarmby p. 256-7.

Furthermore, our whole society is so wedded to the values of neoliberal economics (privatisation, de-regulation, user pays) in the pursuit of the endless growth of financial profit, that recreating the PWS as an independent agency dedicated primarily to the conservation of the natural environment for its own sake would be a very ‘courageous’ undertaking in Sir Humphrey’s terms! However, there are other factors which may soon have a countervailing influence.

6.3 *The impact of climate change, oil depletion and the global financial crisis – the triple crunch*

Seeking to double the size of Tasmania’s tourism industry by 2014, from its current \$1.4 billion in 2008, in itself an increase of 12% over the previous year¹¹⁵ may be even more ‘courageous’. Tourism is a sector which depends heavily on transport (especially interstate and overseas tourism), which in turn depends heavily on oil, in an era which will certainly soon impose a price on carbon and will also be facing higher costs as a result of oil depletion. In addition, in the current international financial climate, tourism is one of the industries being hardest hit and this is likely to persist for several years. As a result, the tourism value of reserved lands may decline quite rapidly, and management for a set of broader, more conservation-dependent values will be more appropriate.

One obvious value of this kind is the value of reserved lands as a carbon sink in a carbon trading regime, both nationally and internationally. According to the 2008 State of the Forests Report, of Tasmania’s total area of 3.1 million ha of native forest, 1.1 million ha (36%) was in nature conservation reserves on public land. In Australia as a whole, only 16% of native forest was similarly protected.¹¹⁶ In 2007, public land reserved in Tasmania under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* amounted to 2.5 million ha; of which 45% (1.1 million ha) was native forest. Thus public reserved lands contain a substantial carbon sink.

There are widely varying estimates of the amount of carbon sequestered in the 1.1 million ha of native forest in held Tasmanian reserved lands. The 2008 State of the Forests Report states that the wood in the 147 million hectares of native forest Australia wide sequester 6.5 billion tonnes of carbon (down from the 10.5 billion tonnes estimate in the 2003 Report) giving a rate of 44 tonnes of carbon per hectare (tC/ha) in the wood (biomass), and 82 tC/ha if soil carbon is added. So Tasmania’s 1.1 million ha of reserved forests contain 48.4million tC in biomass and 90.2 million tC in total.¹¹⁷

However, in a study commissioned by the Wilderness Society (and discounted by many critics, for that reason) scientists from the Australian National University (ANU) focused on the 14.5 million hectares of eucalypt forests in south-eastern Australia, including Tasmania, to determine how much carbon native forests ‘undisturbed by intensive human land-use activity’ could store. Distinguishing the specific characteristics of ‘intact natural forests’ such as those in reserved lands, they estimated that such forests sequestered on average a total of 640 tC/ha (biomass +soil). This is three times the average IPCC figure (and nearly eight times the figure in the State of the Forests Report quoted above). Furthermore ‘the highest biomass carbon stocks, with an average of more than 1200 tC/ha and maximum of over 2000 tC/ha, are in the mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forests of Victoria and Tasmania’.¹¹⁸ Using these figures, Tasmania’s reserved forests could hold a stock of between 700 to 1320 million tC. At a carbon price of \$20 per tonne, as suggested in the

¹¹⁵ Tourism sustains Tasmania’s economy’, Tasmanian Tourism Industry Council press release, 18 March 2009, <http://www.tict.com.au/news/posts/view/2/Tourism+Sustains+Tasmania%27s+Economy/>

¹¹⁶ *State of the Forests Report 2008*, Bureau of Rural Sciences, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, <http://adl.brs.gov.au/forestsaustralia/publications/sofr2008.html> Table 6.

¹¹⁷ calculated from figures in op.cit 115 table 6 and Figure 47.

¹¹⁸ *Green Carbon, The role of natural forests in carbon storage. A green carbon account of Australia’s south-eastern Eucalypt forests, and policy implications*, Brendan G. Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra L. Berry and David B. Lindenmayer, ANU Press, Canberra 2008.

Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS)¹¹⁸, this would put the value of Tasmania's reserved forests at between \$1.8 billion (at 82 tC/ha) and \$26.4 billion (at 1200 tC/ha); or taking the ANU study's lowest figure of 640 tC/ha, their value as carbon stores would be \$12.8 billion. This almost ten times the value of the tourism industry in 2008.

Furthermore, the CPRS allows for the possibility of measures such as a REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) Plus scheme which would not only reduce emissions from degradation of natural ecosystems (REDD) but also secure their permanent protection (Plus); and incorporate a very large fund to pay for the maintenance, in perpetuity, of biocarbon stores.¹¹⁹ Under such a scheme, the Tasmanian government could seek funding from REDD Plus for the carbon sequestration value of its reserved lands, particular the 45% which are undisturbed native forests.

On the global scale, the Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biodiversity in a recent report has emphasised not only that

- 'Maintaining natural ecosystems (including their genetic and species diversity) is essential to meet the ultimate objective of the UN Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC) because of their role in the global carbon cycle and because of the wide range of ecosystem services they provide that are essential for human well-being'

But also that

- 'Enhancing natural adaptation of biodiversity through conservation and management strategies to maintain and enhance biodiversity can reduce some of the negative impacts from climate change and contribute to climate change mitigation by preserving carbon sequestration and other key functions'.¹²⁰

Thus, managing the reserved estate to minimise the impact of climate change on biodiversity is another challenge for the PWS in the future, and one that it has hardly considered yet, judging from its Annual Reports. This issue was taken up by the recent Senate Committee Report *Conserving Australia*. One of its recommendations is that states should 'boost the resilience of reserves against the effects of climate change by focussing on increasing their connectivity, so that they contain a continuum of different climatic zones, altitudes and ecosystems types'.¹²¹

Other significant values for which parks will need to be more actively managed include water conservation. For example, Namadgi National Park provides up to 85% of Canberra's water from the Cotter Catchment in the ACT. The economic value of this eco-service alone is estimated to be at least \$100 million per year.¹²²

Reserved lands contribute not just to the health of natural systems and biodiversity, but also to human health. Several interviewees suggested that natural areas were much better suited to provide a source of health, rather than wealth, to the Tasmanian community and other visitors. 'Ecotherapy' is emerging in the western world as a clinically valued treatment option. In the United Kingdom it is a core component of the public mental health strategy. An Australian ecotherapy study *Feel Blue Touch Green* indicated that 'for people experiencing depression, anxiety or social isolation,

¹¹⁸ Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, Fact Sheet 12, Price Impacts, <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/greenpaper/factsheets/fs12.html>

¹¹⁹ 'Biocarbon, biodiversity and climate change. A REDD Plus scheme for Australia', Green Institute Working Paper 3, July 2008 http://www.greeninstitute.com.au/images/uploads/Biocarbon_biodiversity_and_climate_WP3_v.1.pdf

¹²⁰ 'Draft findings of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Biodiversity and Climate Change', Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, May 2008 <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cc/ahteg-bdcc-01/other/ahteg-bdcc-01-findings-en.pdf>

¹²¹ *Conserving Australia: Australia's national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas*, Senate Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, p.135.

¹²² *The value of parks*, Parks Forum, Fitzroy 2008, p. 7.

participation in a conservation group undertaking environmental programs has mental and physical health benefits and improves general wellbeing'.¹²³

6.4 A twenty first century conservation ethic

Considerations such as these suggest that a return to the 'glory days' of the 1970s and 1980s will not be sufficient to overturn the damage done to Tasmania's reserved lands estate by the co-option of the Parks and Wildlife Service and the exponential exploitation of national parks in particular, to serve the economic development of the state and the profits of tourism operators. The current obsession is one of development in Tasmania's national parks and the practice of allowing it to proceed regardless of potential, or even known, environmental damage (as in the Bryan's Corner debacle for example). Altering the mindset of the PWS to one which runs counter to that presumption, and restricts or prohibits development where there is a lack of clear evidence about its impacts, may be a long and difficult, but necessary, process.

Even the ecocentric philosophy of the 20th century environment movement may need to be modified to campaign not just against economic exploitation of the reserved estate (the main motivation of the TNPA for example) in order to incorporate a more sophisticated analysis of the broader concepts of biodiversity conservation and habitat protection that climate change will demand.

A much more significant transformation of philosophy and policy in reserved lands management will be needed to address these emerging challenges of the 21st century. Most importantly of all, this broader perspective must embody the precautionary principle, since one thing we are certain of is that the next half century will be a period of increasing uncertainty.¹²⁴

Even more challenging will be the political transformation that will enable governments, both at state and federal level, to make a similar commitment.

¹²³ *ibid*, p. 10.

¹²⁴ Cooney, R. *The Precautionary Principle in Biodiversity Conservation and Resource Management*, IUCN 2004.

Postscript: May 2009

On 14 May 2009, Premier David Bartlett ¹²⁵ announced that the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts (DEPHA) would be abolished on 30 June 2009, as a cost cutting measure in order to reduce the 'black hole in the state budget' caused by the \$1 billion reduction in GST receipts as a result of the global financial crisis.

Although details are as yet unclear, the Parks and Wildlife Service will return to the Department of Primary Industry and Water (DPIW), the agency it left in 1998 when Jim Bacon created his department of 'favourite things' in which PWS formed the spearhead of an economic policy driven by tourism based on the competitive advantage of Tasmania's natural and cultural heritage.

David Bartlett's pronouncement implies that policy is in abeyance – if this is at all a considered policy decision - and PWS is again being used as a political football, floundering once more to find a meaningful position in the alphabet soup of departmental acronyms. More seriously, this decision demonstrates yet again the government's (any government's) wilful misunderstanding of the true value of Tasmania's unique reserved lands system, and the need for it to be managed for the long term benefit of all Tasmanians as not only a tourism asset, but for biodiversity protection and habitat conservation, geoheritage, cultural heritage and increasingly, as a crucial investment in carbon storage. This requires a skilled, innovative, independent and well resourced PWS, staffed by people with high morale and a passionate commitment to the high standards demanded by this vital task.

In making this decision, David Bartlett has jeopardized these critical attributes, put the TWWHA at risk, and made a mockery of Tasmania as 'the natural state'. It is not a decision that does credit to a self proclaimed 'clever, kinder and more caring' Premier.

¹²⁵ David Bartlett, 'Demonstrating real leadership in tough times', Media Release, 14 May 2009, <http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=26698>

Postscript: June 2009 – Rangers per hectare in Tasmania

The report states that Tasmania has only one ranger for every 30,000 hectares of reserved lands compared to one in every 5000 for Victoria. This figure for Tasmania is incorrect.

The number of rangers statewide is presently 49 including three wildlife rangers (in the Department of Primary Industries and Water). This is a reduction of 17% since the 2005 figure shown on page 24 of the report (wildlife and trainee rangers were included in the numbers provided for consistency from 1972 onwards).

Ranger numbers have not been this low since 1976. This equates to one ranger for every 51,000 hectares (128,000 acres) of land reserved under the Nature Conservation Act (note that this figure does not include unallocated Crown land and public reserves, also managed by PWS rangers).