



Australian Government

STATE PARTY REPORT

ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION

OF THE

TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA (AUSTRALIA)

PROPERTY ID 181bis

**IN RESPONSE TO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE
DECISION WHC 32 COM 7B.41**

**FOR SUBMISSION BY
1 FEBRUARY 2010**

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WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION

Thirty-second session - Quebec City, Canada - 2-10 July 2008

41. Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia) (C/N 181) - Decision: 32 COM 7B.41

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7B.Add*,
2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 7B.43**, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),
3. Takes note of the findings of the recent World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS / IUCN monitoring mission to the property, and requests the State Party to:
 - a) institute a mechanism through the future Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) management plan reviews, and involving all relevant stakeholders, to monitor, assess and manage the ecological integrity of the TWWHA and adjoining reserves by considering activities related to forestry operations, road construction and regeneration fires in the areas adjacent to the property;
 - b) submit a proposal for modifying the boundaries of the TWWHA to include the adjacent 21 areas of national parks and state reserves, which are currently not a part of the inscribed World Heritage property but are covered by its management plan;
 - c) not to renew the existing leases for mineral exploration and exploitation within the property and immediately adjacent to it (such as in the Melaleuca Cox Bight area), after their expiry and to rehabilitate the areas concerned and to incorporate them into the World Heritage property. Further, no new mining licenses should be granted within the property or in the areas which are being recommended for addition;
 - d) maintain and improve the resourcing for the research, documentation, protection, monitoring and effective management for archaeological and Aboriginal cultural sites both those within the TWWHA and those in the adjacent forestry areas that reflect the wider context of Aboriginal land-use practices and are of potential Outstanding Universal Value;
 - e) manage the forestry areas outside the inscribed property in order to protect cultural sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value;
 - f) ensure logging roads in areas adjacent to the TWWHA consider the ecological integrity, possible cultural sites and aesthetic values of the property, and reclaim roads no longer required;
 - g) prepare and implement a vegetation management plan covering the TWWHA and the adjoining forest reserves jointly by national parks and the forestry authorities, to address representativity of vegetation types and to reduce risks, particularly from fires and climate change;
 - h) implement the recommendations emanating from the recently completed 2008 review of the Tasmania Regional Forest Agreement;
 - i) establish an active programme for monitoring the impacts of climate change on the property and incorporate this programme into a risk-reduction strategy and action plan;
4. Also requests the State Party to revise the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property to include relevant recent natural and cultural knowledge available regarding the site, for approval by the World Heritage Committee;
5. Reiterates its request to the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate areas of tall eucalyptus forest, having regard to the advice of IUCN; and also further requests the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate cultural sites reflecting the wider context of Aboriginal land-use practices, and the possibility of re-nominating the property as a cultural landscape;
6. Requests moreover the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2010**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including a revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and progress related to the above mentioned issues, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Progress Report on the State of Conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA, the property):

- responds to World Heritage Committee **Decision 32 COM 7B.41** made in Quebec City (2008) by providing an updated Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and reporting progress against issues raised in the decision; and
- provides an update to the **2007 and 2008 reports** prepared in response to World Heritage Committee **Decisions 30 COM 7B.32** and **31 COM 7B.43**.

Decision 32 COM 7B.41 relates to issues regarding the management of the TWWHA itself, external threats to the property and issues related to potential outstanding universal values outside the property.

3a) Stakeholder involvement & monitoring

In collaboration with the Australian Government, the Tasmanian Government is considering a range of options to establish the most appropriate and representative framework to monitor, assess and manage the TWWHA and adjoining reserves for ecological integrity. The roles and arrangements for stakeholder involvement and engagement in management of the TWWHA are also being considered in the context of a national review of World Heritage advisory committees and executive officers.

3b) Proposal for boundary modification

In response to the Committee's request, Australia is pleased to provide a proposal for modifying the boundaries of the TWWHA which adds a total of 23,873 hectares to this property which already extends to 1.38 million hectares, or 20% of the State of Tasmania. A map of the proposal is provided at **Appendix 1**.

3c) Mineral exploration, exploitation and rehabilitation

Australia agrees that mining is not appropriate in the World Heritage property. Further, the Australian and Tasmanian Governments are working to ensure that the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight is incorporated into the property once the existing small scale mining lease arrangements have been resolved. Governments are also working together to resolve existing exploration licence arrangements at Adamsfield. National environmental legislation protects the values of the World Heritage property from threats originating both inside and outside the property.

3d) Resourcing for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Australia has maintained and improved resources for Aboriginal heritage in Tasmania. Resources for management of Aboriginal heritage in the TWWHA are provided by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. Additional funds and resources have been made available for Aboriginal cultural heritage identification and management within and around the property, as well as for Aboriginal community capacity building. This includes an additional AU\$387,500 from the Australian Government for an Aboriginal heritage project inside the TWWHA.

3e) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage management outside property

Forestry Tasmania endorsed all of the recommendations in the World Heritage Committee's Mission report, including recommendations for enhanced protection measures for archaeological and Aboriginal sites within and adjacent to the TWWHA.

Forestry Tasmania's Sustainability Charter has the following specific aims to protect Aboriginal heritage in State forests:

- Identify, protect and maintain Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values in State forests.
- Seek active consultation with the Aboriginal community to develop opportunities for collaborative management of Aboriginal sites and values.

3f) Logging Roads

Through the application of the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code and relevant recommendations emanating from the 2008 Second Five Yearly Review of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement, the ecological integrity and aesthetic values of the property, as well as possible cultural sites, continue to be taken into account in the planning and management of forest harvesting operations, including logging roads, in areas adjacent to the TWWHA. Decisions on the reclamation and rehabilitation of logging roads adjacent to the TWWHA that are no longer needed for forestry purposes are taken in the context of any future recreational opportunities and the zoning of adjacent areas within the TWWHA.

3g) Vegetation Management

The Tasmanian Government is reviewing vegetation management planning for the TWWHA and adjoining forest reserves in the light of several initiatives, including the next review of the TWWHA Management Plan, the expanded TWWHA area once adopted, and initiatives already under way relating to managing the risks to vegetation from fire and climate change.

3h) Second Five-Yearly Review of Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement

In January 2010 the Governments released a detailed *Joint Australian and Tasmanian Government Response to the "Second Five Yearly Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement"*. The response sets out a range of actions to address each recommendation and sets achievable targets for their implementation (see **Appendix 2**).

3i) Climate Change

The risks of climate change to the World Heritage property have been identified and assessed. This information is incorporated into an active monitoring program and risk management strategy for the property.

4, 6) Revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Australia has prepared a Statement of outstanding universal value for the Committee's consideration which reflects all values of the TWWHA, including the cultural landscape elements (see **Appendix 3**).

5) Extensions to the property

Apart from the addition of the 21 adjacent formal reserves and the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight, Australia restates that it does not propose to extend the boundary of the TWWHA further. The addition of the 21 adjacent formal reserves will increase the representation of tall eucalypt forests and cultural sites of significance to the Aboriginal community in the property. The revised statement of outstanding universal value provided with this report better reflects all the values of the property, including cultural landscape elements.

1. RESPONSE FROM THE STATE PARTY TO THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE'S DECISION

This document includes the progress report requested in **Paragraph 6** of the World Heritage Committee's Decision. The updated report is provided for examination by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

1.1. Paragraph 3a of the Committee's Decision

Institute a mechanism through the future Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) management plan reviews, and involving all relevant stakeholders, to monitor, assess and manage for ecological integrity the TWWHA and adjoining reserves by considering activities related to forestry operations, road construction and regeneration fires in the areas adjacent to the property;

State Party's Response

In collaboration with the Australian Government, the Tasmanian Government is considering a range of options to establish the most appropriate and representative framework to monitor, assess and manage the TWWHA and adjoining reserves for ecological integrity. The roles and arrangements for stakeholder involvement and engagement in management of the TWWHA will also be considered in relation to the monitoring and reporting for the next TWWHA management plan review and in the context of the current national review of World Heritage advisory committees and executive officers, which is expected to be complete in March 2010.

Stakeholder engagement in planning and monitoring

In collaboration with the Australian Government, the Tasmanian Government is considering a range of options to establish the most appropriate and representative framework to monitor, assess and manage the TWWHA for ecological integrity. This consideration will draw on what has been learnt from existing mechanisms, and procedural, legislative and regulatory reviews where possible, as this accords with the "adaptive management" and "continuous improvement" approach to managing the TWWHA and its adjoining relevant land tenures.

There will be consultation with the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Consultative Committee (WHACC), a key component of the longstanding partnership arrangements between the Australian and the Tasmanian Governments. The Consultative Committee has an independent chair and 16 members representing major stakeholder groups and interests in the TWWHA. The WHACC is actively engaged in advising on planning, management and policy matters concerning the property and, as in previous reviews, will play a major advisory role in the next review of the TWWHA management plan when that process commences.

The WHACC was involved in the first State of the TWWHA report published in 2004, which looked at the extent to which the objectives of the TWWHA management plan had been achieved.

To inform the next review of the current TWWHA management plan, there will be an update monitoring report prepared on achievement of key outcomes identified in the 1999 plan. With the involvement of the WHACC, Forestry Tasmania and public consultation, this update monitoring report for the TWWHA can provide a mechanism to monitor, assess and report activities adjacent to the boundary that could affect the TWWHA and surrounding reserves. This process is linked to future Periodic Reports and the TWWHA management plan review process which will also include public consultation.

Outcomes of a review of World Heritage governance and advisory committees being undertaken by the Australian Government will also be a critical consideration in this process, as outlined below.

Review of World Heritage Governance in Australia

Since November 2008, Australia has undertaken a national review of World Heritage governance. The review has achieved the following outcomes as agreed between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments:

- abolition of the various property-specific World Heritage Ministerial Councils, elevating discussions on World Heritage from a single property to a national Ministerial forum,
- establishment of the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC), comprising the Chairs of advisory committees of each World Heritage property – to advise ministers on national issues affecting Australia's World Heritage,
- agreement on new World Heritage management principles and funding principles for Australia's World Heritage properties, and
- an Australian World Heritage Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) (agreed in November 2009).

Following on from the World Heritage governance review, the Australian Government is reviewing property-specific World Heritage advisory committees and executive officers. The aim of this review is to determine the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the current arrangements in delivering high quality, on-ground outcomes for Australia's World Heritage properties. This review will ensure that the arrangements in place are the most efficient, effective and appropriate means of fulfilling Australia's obligations under the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (the World Heritage Convention), specifically Article 5.

This national review, together with the World Heritage Committee's decision on the TWWHA, will provide the context for reviewing the arrangements for stakeholder involvement and engagement in management and monitoring of the TWWHA. It is envisaged that there will be a bilateral agreement regarding an improved mechanism by June 2010.

Relevant Recommendations from the 2008 Second Five Yearly Review of the Tasmanian RFA

In addition, through the 2008 Second Five Yearly Review of the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement* (RFA), both Governments have reconfirmed their commitments to continuous improvement in Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management as envisaged by the National Forest Policy Statement and the

Tasmanian RFA. The RFA is designed to adapt to new information, priorities and community expectations. Although there were no specific recommendations relating to the management of the property in the Second Five Yearly Review of the RFA, relevant recommendations relate to monitoring activities, reserve management, water and climate change (see **Appendix 2**).

Relevant outcomes from the current review of the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code and consultation with stakeholders tasked with managing adjoining forest production areas will also inform this process. Details of the review of the Forest Practices Code are available at:

<http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=81>

1.2. Paragraph 3b of the Committee's Decision

Submit a proposal for modifying the boundaries of the TWWHA to include the adjacent 21 areas of national parks and state reserves, which are currently not a part of the inscribed World Heritage property but are covered by its management plan;

State Party's Response

In response to the Committee's request, Australia is pleased to provide a proposal for modifying the boundaries of the TWWHA which adds a total of 23,873 hectares to this property which already extends to 1.38 million hectares, or 20% of the State of Tasmania. A map of the proposal is provided at **Appendix 1**.

The areas proposed for inclusion in the TWWHA add to the integrity of the TWWHA and the representation of existing values, and are listed below. See attached map (**Appendix 1**) for location and size of the areas.

The 21 formal reserves outside the TWWHA but covered by the TWWHA Management Plan (20,063 hectares)

As noted by the 2008 reactive monitoring mission, there are currently 21 formal reserves, mainly to the north and east of the property, which are adjacent to the property and covered by its management plan. The mission noted that the World Heritage Committee had long hoped that these areas would be incorporated into the World Heritage property.

The mission's report recommended expanding the World Heritage property to include these reserves to provide for a more coherent management regime and to increase the representation of the tall eucalyptus forest in the TWWHA. This recommendation was subsequently adopted by the World Heritage Committee in Quebec City, in **Decision 32 COM 7B.41**, as noted above.

The 21 areas include two small areas that were added to the Southwest National Park (south of Hartz Mountains [the 'Hartz hole'] and south-east of Cockle Creek) in June 1991. Another two small areas were included in the Franklin–Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, one in the vicinity of the Navarre Plains, the other in the Beech Creek area in January 1992 and August 1991 respectively. Two further small areas at Lees Paddocks in the Mersey Valley were added in 1991.

In December 1998 the *Regional Forest Agreement (Land Classification) Act 1998* received Royal Assent. On commencement of the Act a further 15 areas (one area of State Reserve and 14 National Park additions) were declared to be reserved land.

All 21 areas are within the area covered by the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999* and are managed in accordance with this plan.

Values of the TWWHA that are also particularly well expressed in these 21 areas include, but are not limited to:

- Vegetation, including tall eucalypt forest, rainforest, alpine and subalpine flora and buttongrass moorland.

- Habitat for threatened flora and fauna species, such as the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle.
- Geoheritage values, particularly karst landscapes.
- Aesthetic values.
- Cultural values and sites significant to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight

The 2008 mission visited the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight. The mission recommended that while some of the areas discussed by IUCN in the 1982 technical evaluation had already been incorporated into the property, Melaleuca should be incorporated into the World Heritage property as soon as the existing leases expire and that renewal or granting of any new leases should not be considered. This recommendation was also adopted by the World Heritage Committee in Quebec City, in **Decision 32 COM 7B.41**, as noted above.

Australia considers it appropriate to resolve the existing mining lease (Rallinga 20M/1992) before the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight is incorporated into the property. Should there be a delay in resolution of the lease or in the legislative amendments required in the Tasmanian Parliament, this may necessitate a two-stage boundary modification or a delay in the boundary modification coming into effect. It is the clear intent of both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, however, that the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca should be incorporated into the property. To this end, and noting provisions for compensation under relevant Tasmanian legislation, the Australian Government is undertaking an independent valuation of the existing mining lease.

Values of the TWWHA that are particularly well expressed in the area around Melaleuca through to Cox Bight include, but are not limited to:

- Habitat for threatened flora and fauna species, such as the orange-bellied parrot,
- Geoheritage values, particularly relating to the Cox Bight dunes, bogs and peat mounds,
- Wilderness values, some high quality wilderness lies within the Melaleuca to Cox Bight corridor,
- Aesthetic values, and
- Cultural values and sites significant to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

1.3. Paragraph 3c of the Committee's decision

Not to renew the existing leases for mineral exploration and exploitation within the property and immediately adjacent to it (such as in the Melaleuca Cox Bight area), after their expiry and to rehabilitate the areas concerned and to incorporate them into the World Heritage property. Further no new mining licences should be granted within the property or in the areas which are being recommended for addition;

State Party's Response

Australia agrees that mining is not appropriate in the World Heritage property. Further, the Australian and Tasmanian Governments are working to ensure that the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca is incorporated in the property once the existing small-scale mining lease arrangements have been resolved. Governments are also working together to resolve exploration licence arrangements at Adamsfield. National environmental legislation protects the values of the World Heritage property from threats originating both inside and outside the property.

The Australian Government's policy position is that mining is not appropriate inside World Heritage properties.

National environmental legislation is also in place to protect matters of national environmental significance, including World Heritage properties, from significant adverse impacts. This legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), applies not only to activities within or immediately adjacent to World Heritage properties, but wherever they occur, if they are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the values for which the property was inscribed. This means that if an activity such as mineral exploration or mining were to be proposed for any area where it is likely to have a significant impact on the values of the TWWHA, or any other World Heritage property in Australia, the provisions of the EPBC Act relating to the protection of World Heritage properties would be triggered.

Australia is satisfied that appropriate mechanisms are in place to protect World Heritage properties from significant impacts caused by mineral exploration and mining.

Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca (3,810 hectares)

The Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca was excluded from the World Heritage property because of the pre-existing tin mining operations and mineral potential of the area. It should be noted that this mining operation, which was carried out on a very small scale, has now ceased.

The Committee's request coincides with a long-term management objective for the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca. Australia agrees with the Committee's request to incorporate this area into the TWWHA and to rehabilitate it.

The management intent for this area has long been that the lease should be cancelled once the current lessee ceases mining. The Management of Adjacent

Areas section of the *TWWHA Management Plan 1999* states specifically in relation to Melaleuca:

“Mineral Exploration and Mining.

- *Seek to ensure that the current consolidated mining lease at Melaleuca is cancelled once the existing lessee ceases mining. [It is noted that compensation may be payable under Section 94(4) of the Mineral Resources Development Act 1995.]” (p 205)*

The Melaleuca – Port Davey Area Plan 2003 (a subordinate plan to the TWWHA Management Plan), although currently excluding the corridor south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight, has the following vision and relevant management prescription:

To provide appropriate recreational opportunities and facilities for visitors consistent with the protection of wilderness quality and the natural and cultural values of the area. (p 6)

Following the cessation of mining at Melaleuca, consider the inclusion of the Melaleuca – Cox Bight corridor of the Southwest Conservation Area into the Southwest National Park. (p 81)

The current leaseholders, Rallinga Mines Pty Ltd (Rallinga), of the existing mining lease (Rallinga 20M/1992), which covers 128ha, ceased mining activity in the first quarter of 2007. The lease is now subject to an independent valuation by the Australian Government.

Rehabilitation requirements are set out in Rallinga’s Draft Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (1991). The Melaleuca–Port Davey Area Plan also encourages rehabilitation of exposed gravel areas resulting from past mining activity, with a priority action to liaise with Mineral Resources Tasmania in the preparation and implementation of a revised environmental plan for the existing mining lease area.

Australia considers it appropriate to resolve the existing mining lease before the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca is incorporated into the property, and this may necessitate a two-stage boundary modification as discussed in section 1.2. However, as shown by the attached boundary proposal and map, it is the clear intent of both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments that the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight should be incorporated into the property as soon as practicable.

The World Heritage Committee is asked to note that in September 2008, the Tasmanian Government refused an application for an exploration licence over a significant portion of the Southwest Conservation Area between Cox Bight and Melaleuca. Under the Tasmanian *Mineral Resources Development Act 1995*, (MRD Act) it is a fundamental objective that Exploration Licences be issued in the expectation that the successful proving of a resource carries the reasonable prospect of a mine proceeding. On the basis that there was no reasonable prospect of mining meeting approvals consistent with the area’s likely inclusion in the TWWHA, the Exploration Licence application was refused by the Tasmanian Minister for Energy and Resources.

Adamsfield

As reported in 2008, Adamsfield is the only place inside the TWWHA where mineral exploration and mining are permitted under the TWWHA Management Plan. The area is a Strategic Prospectivity Zone under the Tasmanian *Mining (Strategic Prospectivity Zone) Act 1993*. The current exploration licence at Adamsfield expires in 2011. An amendment to relevant Tasmanian legislation will be required to end mineral exploration and mining at Adamsfield. The Australian and Tasmanian Governments have agreed in principle to the Committee's decision in relation to Adamsfield and are working together to resolve exploration licence arrangements at Adamsfield, noting provisions for compensation under relevant Tasmanian Government legislation.

1.4. Paragraph 3d of the Committee's decision

Maintain and improve the resourcing for the research, documentation, protection, monitoring and effective management for archaeological and Aboriginal cultural sites both those within the TWWHA and those in the adjacent forestry areas that reflect the wider context of Aboriginal land-use practices and are of potential outstanding universal value;

State Party's Response

Australia has maintained and improved resources for Aboriginal heritage in Tasmania. Resources for management of Aboriginal heritage in the TWWHA are provided by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. Additional funds and resources have been made available for Aboriginal cultural heritage identification and management within and around the property, as well as for Aboriginal community capacity building. This includes an additional AU\$387,500 from the Australian Government for an Aboriginal heritage project inside the TWWHA.

Resources for management of Aboriginal heritage in the TWWHA are provided by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments. Baseline funding for the TWWHA from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative has been confirmed for the period 2009-10 to 2012-13. Over the four years the Australian Government will provide AU\$13.6 million for the TWWHA. The regular annual allocation of AU\$40,000 (from the TWWHA baseline budget) for Aboriginal heritage works on Aboriginal land within the TWWHA will be maintained.

The Australian Government also recently provided a AU\$1.8 million stimulus package from the Jobs Fund for works within the TWWHA. An allocation of AU\$387,500 from this fund has been made for a project starting in 2009-10 dealing specifically with Aboriginal heritage management matters, most particularly with south coast Aboriginal heritage in the TWWHA. The project includes targeted, accountable resources for State-wide Aboriginal community organisations. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service will work with Aboriginal community organisations on, for example, interpretation of Aboriginal heritage, and protective measures for sites under threat from human and natural disturbance.

The Tasmanian Government provides (on average) AU\$8.5 million per year in direct funding for the TWWHA, including for Aboriginal heritage management.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has also secured funding under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Program (Working on Country) for an Aboriginal trainee ranger program, through which five Aboriginal trainees will be placed in Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service field operations across Tasmania, including in the TWWHA, for four years. The program, which commenced in late 2009, builds on an objective of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to engage with the Aboriginal community and increase Indigenous employment in the Service. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service also has an Aboriginal Trainee Field Officer Program employing Aboriginal community members in the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. The Trainee Rangers will be supported in gaining academic qualifications under the program as part of their four year training period. The trainees will gain

experience in managing Aboriginal heritage issues in the TWWHA and at other locations across the State. The Aboriginal Trainee Field Officer Program has been instrumental in providing a pathway for members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to enter a career in environmental and reserve management.

In addition, the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service regularly works with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC) and Aboriginal community groups that represent Aboriginal people in the TWWHA and adjacent areas. This collaboration addresses management and conservation of Aboriginal heritage, including such diverse issues ranging from the impact of vehicles on the coastal environment, to the development of walking tracks and interpretation for visitors. The Consultative Committee for the TWWHA continues to include a representative from the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Forestry Tasmania has also developed an Aboriginal employment strategy, which includes cadetships and other employment opportunities. Further details of Forestry Tasmania's strategies for ongoing management of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage are included in the response to decision 3(e) as part of this report.

1.5. Paragraph 3e of the Committee's decision

Manage the forestry areas outside the inscribed property in order to protect cultural sites of potential outstanding universal value;

State Party's Response

Forestry Tasmania endorsed all of the recommendations in the World Heritage Committee's Mission report, including recommendations for enhanced protection measures for archaeological and Aboriginal sites within and adjacent to the TWWHA.

Forestry Tasmania's Sustainability Charter has the following specific aims to protect Aboriginal heritage in State forests.

- Identify, protect and maintain Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values in State forests.
- Seek active consultation with the Aboriginal community to develop opportunities for collaborative management of Aboriginal sites and values.

Forestry Tasmania acknowledges Aboriginal heritage management is a vital part of maintaining natural, cultural, social, religious and spiritual values. In State forests, Aboriginal heritage is protected under the Tasmanian *Aboriginal Relics Act 1975*, the Tasmanian *Forest Practices Act 1985* and the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code 2000.

A dedicated Tasmanian Government unit (Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania) provides regulatory advice on Aboriginal heritage under current protective legislation that applies to all land tenures. The Forest Practices Authority provides regulatory advice in relation to forestry activities in accordance with relevant legislation. Contemporary legislation being drafted for Aboriginal heritage in Tasmania will include a framework for increased involvement of Aboriginal community members and improved integration with land use planning, natural resource management and decision-making.

Heritage sites in State forests are specifically recognised in the management decision classification system and special management zones. Forestry Tasmania also uses a system of archaeological potential zoning maps to assess the probability of Aboriginal sites in State forests. All new Aboriginal heritage sites identified in State forests are submitted to the Aboriginal Heritage Office for inclusion in state-wide databases.

In State forests, cultural heritage sites are managed under the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code and the principles of the Burra Charter (the Australian ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance), which provides fundamental strategies for the conservation of cultural heritage values. Where appropriate, existing guidelines are supplemented by direct consultation with the Forest Practices Authority and with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC) and Aboriginal community groups.

As reported in its "Stewardship Report 2009" (formerly known as the Sustainable Forest Management Report) Forestry Tasmania incorporates all elements of the Tasmanian and Australian Governments' regulatory framework for management of Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage in all land tenures under its management.

Archaeological surveys are undertaken as part of the pre-harvest assessment of special values.

During 2008-09, 570 hectares were surveyed for non-Aboriginal heritage, with 26 new sites being found. These included timber tramways, huts, water races and early prospecting implements. One new Aboriginal cultural heritage site was found as a result of surveys conducted over an area of 211 hectares.

Auditing by the Forest Practices Authority for the 2008-09 year indicated a rating of better than 3.8, out of a maximum of four, for Aboriginal and cultural heritage management on State forests. Further information on 2008-09 performance can be found at:

http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/General/FPA_08-09_annual_report.pdf

Engagement with Tasmania's Aboriginal community

Forestry Tasmania's "Sustainability Charter 2008" lists the identification, protection and maintenance of Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage in State forests as one of its key aims. This is achieved through active consultation with the Aboriginal community to develop opportunities for collaborative management of Aboriginal sites and values.

In order to foster awareness of Aboriginal sites and values, Forestry Tasmania collaborates with TALSC in the development and delivery of cultural awareness training for Forestry Tasmania staff. Forestry Tasmania has also developed an Aboriginal employment strategy, which includes cadetships and other employment opportunities.

Forestry Tasmania undertakes collaborative projects with Aboriginal community groups, particularly TALSC. This includes joint management of significant sites identified in State forests and promotion of Aboriginal culture, including arts and crafts, at Forestry Tasmania tourism sites and exhibition venues.

Further information

Further information on Forestry Tasmania's "Stewardship Report" can be found at:

http://www.forestrytas.com.au/uploads/File/pdf/pdf2009/6005_StewardshipReport.pdf

Further details on Forestry Tasmania's aims under the Sustainability Charter regarding the protection and management of Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage can be found in Section 4 at:

<http://www.forestrytas.com.au/uploads/File/pdf/Charter.pdf>

1.6. Paragraph 3f of the Committee's decision

Ensure logging roads in areas adjacent to the TWWHA consider the ecological integrity, possible cultural sites and aesthetic values of the property, and reclaim roads no longer required;

State Party's Response

Through the application of the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code and relevant recommendations emanating from the 2008 Second Five Yearly Review of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement, the ecological integrity and aesthetic values of the property, as well as possible cultural sites, continue to be taken into account in the planning and management of forest harvesting operations, including logging roads, in areas adjacent to the TWWHA. Decisions on the reclamation and rehabilitation of logging roads adjacent to the TWWHA that are no longer needed for forestry purposes are taken in the context of any future recreational opportunities and the zoning of adjacent areas within the TWWHA.

This section builds upon information provided in the 2008 Update Report's Attachment F "Additional information from Forestry Tasmania on roading".

As detailed in the 2008 Update Report, roads, tracks and fire trails in State forests provide access for a range of forest management and other activities, including tourism, fossicking, hunting, and for the apiary industry. All roading activities undertaken by Forestry Tasmania are regulated through the Forest Practices Code which includes the following general principles:

- Ascertain the presence of significant natural and cultural values before building roads; and
- Avoid road locations in areas where roading would substantially affect significant values.

The Forest Practices Code is available at:

http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/Admin/FPC2000_Complete.pdf

When a forestry road is no longer required, decisions in relation to its future are made in accordance with the Forest Practices Code and the Tasmanian Reserve Management Code of Practice (2003), as well as in the context of recreational opportunities. For example, in the past, properly constructed roads in the vicinity of the TWWHA have generally not been reclaimed, apart from the Picton Road south of Farmhouse Creek where about 1.7 km covering an area of 1200 m² was rehabilitated in 2000. A number of tracks constructed during mineral exploration prior to the declaration of the TWWHA have been closed, removed from maps and allowed to regenerate. A good example is the mineral exploration track on the southern side of the Weld Valley which is now impassable to motor vehicles but still used occasionally by bushwalkers to access Mt Weld.

An independent expert panel has finalised a review for the Tasmanian Forest Practices Authority of the biodiversity provisions of the Forest Practices Code within a broader review of the Code in its entirety. The Forest Practices Authority has advised that it will report to both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, as Parties to the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997* on this review by

2010, as a basis for ongoing consultations with both Governments on the protection and recovery of threatened species, to allow the Governments to meet their obligations in respect of forestry operations under the RFA. This includes a review of the processes used within the forest practices system for the management of threatened species within wood production forests, including the construction of roads.

The report entitled "Review of the biodiversity provisions of the Tasmanian *Forest Practices Code* is available at
[http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=81&tx_avotherresources_pi1\[action\]=ResByCat&tx_avotherresources_pi1\[cat\]=60](http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=81&tx_avotherresources_pi1[action]=ResByCat&tx_avotherresources_pi1[cat]=60)

Results from the 2008-09 audit of road works on State forests by the Forest Practices Authority have been released. These results indicate a rating of more than 3.7 (out of a maximum of 4), which exceeds the 'above sound' benchmark. This annual report is available at:
http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/General/FPA_08-09_annual_report.pdf

1.7. Paragraph 3g of the Committee's decision

Prepare and implement a vegetation management plan covering the TWWHA and the adjoining forest reserves jointly by national parks and the forestry authorities, to address representativeness of vegetation types and to reduce risks, particularly from fires and climate change;

State Party's Response

Australia agrees in principle with the Committee's request and the Tasmanian Government is reviewing vegetation management planning for the TWWHA and adjoining forest reserves in the light of several initiatives, including the future full review of the TWWHA Management Plan, the expanded TWWHA area once adopted, and initiatives already under way relating to managing the risks to vegetation from fire and climate change.

While Australia is pleased to report the following progress relating to paragraph 3(g) of the Committee's decision, the State Party is of the view that vegetation management planning is best considered in the context of other activities such as: the full review of the TWWHA Management Plan; the expanded TWWHA area (should the Committee adopt the proposal at section 1.2); and initiatives relating to managing the risks to vegetation in the TWWHA from fire and climate change.

- The Tasmanian Government has undertaken preliminary scoping work in consultation with all relevant Tasmanian Government agencies and Forestry Tasmania, including high level management principles to be applied to all relevant land tenures.
- Through the State Fire Management Council, the Tasmanian Government is developing a strategic approach to the management of fire across all tenures in Tasmania, including the TWWHA, through the development of a State Fire Management Policy. A draft policy, which incorporates consideration of forestry plantations, the effect of drought and the potential impacts of climate change, has been considered by the State Fire Management Council and is being reviewed by stakeholders prior to finalisation. This is occurring concurrently with the development of a Strategic Fire Management system for all reserves managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, including the TWWHA, which will guide the management of vegetation to reduce risks to values from unplanned fires.
- A report on monitoring of vegetation in the TWWHA with respect to climate change was released in July 2009 (refer section 1.9 of this report addressing paragraph 3(i) of the Committee's decision for this and other initiatives). This represents a more detailed guide for management of the risks of climate change to vegetation.

- A joint response to the recommendations of the 2008 RFA Review, in particular recommendations 11 (a review of current mechanisms for ensuring that forest harvesting operations do not impact on the integrity of the boundaries of formal reserves), and 26 and 27 (fire and smoke management) (refer **Appendix 2**).

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999 will continue to be the primary management planning mechanism for the TWWHA and the 21 identified reserves which form part of the boundary modification proposal outlined in section 1.2. Management arrangements for the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca will be reviewed when the mining licence arrangements are resolved, and the area will be managed under the TWWHA management plan as part of the next review of the plan. Both Governments will consider the timing for the next review of the plan, in relation to other priorities, as future budgets are framed.

1.8. Paragraph 3h of the Committee’s decision

Implement the recommendations emanating from the recently completed 2008 review of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement;

State Party’s Response

In January 2010 the Governments released a detailed *Joint Australian and Tasmanian Government Response to the “Second Five Yearly Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement”*. The detailed response sets out a range of actions to address each recommendation and sets achievable targets for their implementation.

In March 2008, the Australian and Tasmanian Governments released the *Report to the Australian and Tasmanian Governments on the Second Five Yearly Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement*. The Parties announced in principle agreement with all 43 recommendations in the report and agreed to develop a detailed response.

In January 2010 the Governments released a detailed *Joint Australian and Tasmanian Government Response to the “Second Five Yearly Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement”*. The detailed response sets out a range of actions to address each recommendation and sets achievable targets for their implementation.

In the detailed response, the Parties have reconfirmed their commitments to provide support to those reserves covered by the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan and to the continuous improvement of the Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management system which underpins the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997*. The commitments in this detailed response from the Parties will demonstrate that Tasmania's forest management systems continue to adapt to new information, priorities and community expectations.

The response is attached at **Appendix 2**.

1.9. Paragraph 3i of the Committee's decision

Establish an active program for monitoring the impacts of climate change on the property and to incorporate this program into a risk-reduction strategy and action plan;

State Party's Response

The risks of climate change to the World Heritage property have been identified and assessed. This information is incorporated into an active monitoring program and risk management strategy for the property.

A National Response to Climate Change

In 2007 Australia prepared a National Adaptation Framework as part of its *Plan of Collaborative Action on Climate Change*. A key focus of the Framework is to support decision-makers in understanding and incorporating climate change into policy and operational decisions at all scales and across all vulnerable sectors. The Framework is available at:

http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2007-04-13/docs/national_climate_change_adaption_framework.pdf

In August 2009, the Australian Government released a report entitled *The Implications of Climate Change for Australia's World Heritage Properties: A Preliminary Assessment*. The report was prepared by the Australian National University and assesses the likely impacts of climate change on properties, identifies major gaps in knowledge and recommends a range of responses. A copy of the report is available at:

www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/climatechange

Australia believes this report is the first comprehensive report by any country into the impacts of climate change on all of its World Heritage properties.

This report is informing the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Australia's World Heritage and Iconic Areas (in preparation) which will set out clear principles and actions for incorporating climate change adaptation into management of Australia's World Heritage and iconic areas.

A National Climate Change and Commercial Forestry Action Plan has been developed in consultation with all Australian States and Territories and was released on 6 November 2009. The action plan covers those forests intended for commercial production. It is intended to guide action by the forestry industry, with the support of Governments, to respond to climate change through adaptation and mitigation, underpinned by research and development and communication. The plan identifies knowledge gaps and proposes actions to assist forest industries to respond to climate change. Governments have consulted with stakeholders to develop practical strategies and actions to manage the risks, and take advantage of opportunities, brought about by climate change impacts and policy responses. The Action Plan is available at:

www.daff.gov.au/forestry/national/national_climate_change_and_commercial_forestry_action_plan

The Australian Government is also undertaking a national climate change and forests vulnerability assessment in consultation with all States and Territories for all forests, both in reserves and production forests.

Climate change risk management in Tasmania

Climate change and water were a focus of the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement* (RFA) Second Five Yearly Review which was completed in 2008. In response to relevant recommendations on Climate Change arising from the RFA Second Five Yearly Review, the Parties to the RFA have stated that they recognise the role of Tasmania's forests in mitigating climate change. The Australian and Tasmanian Governments are preparing for the impacts of climate change, including investigating climate change impacts on forests and vegetation across all relevant land tenures.

In 2006-07 the Tasmanian Government established a Climate Change Office and began development of a State climate change strategy, and required all Government agencies to develop a framework and policies within their own areas of concern. The Tasmanian Government has also developed the strategy, *Tasmanian Framework for Action on Climate Change* which recognises the importance of forests and other natural carbon stores. The document identifies a range of potential impacts on the environment, with specific reference to the TWWHA, and sets protection of Tasmania's natural carbon stores as one of eight priorities. The document notes that future action may include research into the most effective methods for managing the risks of climate change and developing a risk-mapping database of Tasmania's carbon stores with a particular focus on their susceptibility to fire. The Tasmanian climate change strategy can be found at:

<http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/climatechange/framework>

Within this framework, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) has undertaken a range of work which is relevant to the World Heritage Committee's decision.

The Tasmanian Government recognises the potential impact on water availability due to changes in rainfall patterns from climate change and the likely increase in carbon sequestering activities through tree plantations. Consequently, DPIPWE has adopted a risk-based and adaptive management approach to the analysis and management of water interception and extraction activities across all relevant land tenures, including the TWWHA and production forests. Risk assessments using the Water Availability and Forest Land Use Planning Tool to assess the impacts of plantation forest interception have been undertaken in Tasmanian catchments over 2008-09, and the results have been incorporated into Tasmanian water planning processes as a priority.

DPIPWE has also prepared a report on the development of the Water Availability and Forest Land Use Planning Tool, and its initial application in one catchment. This report has been publicly released, together with the independent reviews undertaken by two external experts, and the technical report prepared by the

consultant who undertook the Water Availability and Forest Land Use Planning Tool development. These reports are available at <http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/CGRM-7KL4RA?open>

More specifically related to the World Heritage Committee's decision, DPIPWE released a report in July 2009 entitled *Monitoring the Impact of Climate Change on the Flora and Vegetation Values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area: A Review*. The aim of the report was to:

- review the main monitoring themes and questions for the future management of vegetation in the TWWHA in the context of climate change; and
- recommend ways in which a monitoring strategy might be developed to answer these questions.

The Review is part of an ongoing process to identify future work priorities in this area. An extensive set of recommendations was provided by the review and DPIPWE is currently considering their implementation.

In 2009, the Tasmanian Government established a new initiative in DPIPWE, *Natural Systems Resilient to Climate Change*, as a four year project. A key outcome of the project is to incorporate policy and management responses around adaptation into the core business of DPIPWE of sustainably managing and conserving Tasmania's natural resources. By the end of the project a climate change adaptation strategy will be developed for a whole of Government approach, in line with the priority areas for action in the *Tasmanian Framework for Action on Climate Change (2008)*.

1.10. Paragraph 4 of the Committee's decision

Also requests the State Party to revise the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property to include relevant recent natural and cultural knowledge available regarding the site, for approval by the World Heritage Committee;

State Party's Response

Australia has prepared a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Committee's consideration.
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A Statement of Outstanding Universal Value has been prepared for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee (refer **Appendix 3**).

The Tasmanian Wilderness is inscribed on the World Heritage List under seven criteria. At the time of its inscription it was the only property that met so many criteria and today remains one of only two properties (Mt Taishan in China being the other) to meet seven criteria. This is a reflection of the breadth and richness of outstanding universal value present in the Tasmanian Wilderness and is a distinction of which Australia is proud.

The original nomination identified values consistent with the 1982 cultural criteria¹ (iii), (v) and (vi), and the inscription of the cultural property was against these criteria. This is consistent with the 1989 re-nomination of the property.

As noted in section 1.11, the State Party considers that a cultural landscape renomination is not required, as the attached Statement of Outstanding Universal Value presents cultural landscape values against the criteria for which the property was originally nominated and inscribed.

¹ The 1982 World Heritage criteria for a cultural property were as follows:

- (iii) be unique, extremely rare, or of great antiquity;
- (v) be a characteristic example of a significant traditional style of ... human settlement, that has ... become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible socio-cultural or economic change;
- (vi) be most importantly associated with ... events ... of outstanding historical significance.

1.11. Paragraph 5 of the Committee's decision

Reiterates its request to the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate areas of tall eucalyptus forest, having regard to the advice of IUCN; and also further requests the State Party to consider, at its own discretion, extension of the property to include appropriate cultural sites reflecting the wider context of Aboriginal land-use practices, and the possibility of re-nominating the property as a cultural landscape;

State Party's Response

Australia has considered the Committee's request. Apart from the addition of the 21 adjacent formal reserves (covered by the TWWHA management plan) and the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight, Australia restates that it does not propose to extend the boundary of the TWWHA further. The addition of the 21 adjacent formal reserves will increase the representation of tall eucalypt forests and cultural sites of significance to the Aboriginal community in the property. The revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value provided with this report better reflects all the values of the property, including the cultural landscape elements.

In preparing its response on this matter, Australia has considered the findings of the World Heritage Committee's 2008 reactive monitoring mission to Tasmania as well as progress against commitments under the *Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997*.

This mission, which included independent experts from the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN, concluded that no extension into tall eucalypt forests in production areas was necessary, as the property already includes a good representation of these forests.

In reaching this conclusion, the mission considered the representation of old growth forest within the area covered by the TWWHA and its management plan, as well as in other reserves in Tasmania, and the fact that potential threats from production forestry activities outside the World Heritage property boundary are well managed. The mission also concluded that the Regional Forest Agreement and Tasmania's forest practices system provide an appropriate framework for managing conservation values outside the TWWHA. Further, the inclusion of the additional areas in the boundary modification proposal at Section 1.2 increases the representation of tall eucalypt forests within the TWWHA.

In relation to the request to consider a renomination of the property as a cultural landscape, Australia is of the view that the attached Statement of Outstanding Universal Value covers the cultural landscape elements for which the Tasmanian Wilderness was inscribed in 1982 and for which there is an enhanced justification (refer **Appendix 3**).

1.12. Paragraph 6 of the Committee's Decision

Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2010, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including a revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and progress related to the above mentioned issues for examination by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

State Party's Response

This document is the progress report requested in **Paragraph 6** of the Committee's Decision. This updated report on the state of conservation of the property is provided for examination by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

As noted in section 1.10 above, the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is provided at **Appendix 3**.

2. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE PARTY

This section of the report provides an update of issues identified in the 2008 State of Conservation report.

Potential threats are addressed through national and state recovery programs and the adaptive management arrangements for the property. As part of this adaptive management of the property, a limited review of the 1999 Management Plan has been undertaken and will come into force in early 2010.

2.1. Review of Management Plan

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is finalising the limited mid-term review of the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999*. This review was designed to update under-performing aspects of the plan and take on relevant emerging issues. As this updated plan is now likely to come into force early in 2010, the timing for the next review of the TWWHA management plan will be considered in relation to other priorities, as future budgets are framed.

More information is available on the mid-term management plan review at: <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=702>

2.2. Environmental Impact Assessment

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service has upgraded its impact assessment process. The revised system is more thorough, has increased accountability, greater transparency and offers significantly improved assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts. The system has four levels of assessment, is electronically distributed and integrates with all other local and Federal assessment processes.

Initial trials and training of field staff have been completed. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is currently finalising its first audit of the upgraded system and will then improve the system based on the outcomes of the audit as required.

2.3. Flood Damage

In the 2008 State of Conservation Report, it was reported that there had been damage to the property from floods and heavy rains in late 2007. Values affected are mostly vegetation including Gondwanan linked species such as Huon pine along the rivers, as well as severe damage to visitor infrastructure such as jetties and walkways.

Australia is able to report that remediation work has been conducted on flood-damaged areas at Bird River and Mt McCall. In addition, the replacement of visitor infrastructure at Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour (completed October 2009) and Sir John Falls on the Gordon River (completed December 2009) has occurred.

2.4. Lake Fidler

Lake Fidler is one of three meromictic lakes located in the Gordon River system, all of which are subject to disturbance related to the operation of the Middle Gordon Power Scheme which pre-dates the World Heritage listing of the property in 1982.

As reported during the 1989 renomination process, Lake Fidler was the only one of the three to retain its meromixis at the time of the extension. Following the loss of meromixis in Lake Fidler in 2003, Hydro Tasmania had partial success in restoring the meromixis through a saline recharge in 2004. The 2008 State of Conservation Report noted that following that recharge, the meromictic state of Lake Fidler continued to decline gradually.

In April 2008, it appears recharge occurred, assisted by minimal power station discharge from mid-April, low tributary inflows and a series of high tides. This resulted in a wedge of salt water reaching far enough upstream to naturally recharge the meromixis of Lake Fidler. The meromixis continues to be monitored.

2.5. Basslink

As reported in 2008 State of Conservation Report, the installation of the Basslink undersea power cable connecting Tasmania to mainland Australia resulted in a changed management regime for the Gordon River Power Station. Prior to the commissioning of the cable, research during the assessment process indicated that the operation of Basslink could potentially cause changed conditions downstream along the Gordon River system in the south west of the World Heritage property.

Hydro Tasmania conducted monitoring for close to five years prior to Basslink commissioning in April 2006 and will continue to monitor the effects of Basslink operations on the middle Gordon River. Monitoring examines the following aspects:

- hydrology
- water quality
- fluvial geomorphology
- karst geomorphology
- riparian vegetation
- benthic macro-invertebrates
- benthic algae
- fish.

Results of the 2008–09 monitoring period were greatly influenced by the unusual flow regime experienced in the Gordon River. Discharge from the Gordon Power Station was low compared to previous years, with few periods of high discharge and significant periods of operation with only the environmental flow. The flow regime was influenced by the need to rebuild the storage and was made possible by the supply of power from non-hydro sources, of which imported power via Basslink was the major source.

In general, conditions in the Gordon River in 2008–09 were largely similar or improved relative to 2007–08. The recovery in vegetation, the lack of seepage erosion and static trends in net erosion can be attributed to the effects of low discharge from the power station, and may be considered an unexpected influence of Basslink as a consequence of power import used to allow the rebuilding of storages. Furthermore, the implementation of the environmental flow also appears to have provided significant benefit to the macro-invertebrate communities.

Further information on this issue is available online at <http://www.hydro.com.au/home/Our+Environment/Water/Basslink+Environmental+Studies/Gordon.htm>

2.6 Climate change

As noted in Section 1.9 addressing the Committee’s decision in relation to climate change risks to the TWWHA, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment has received a report entitled “*Monitoring the impact of climate change on the flora and vegetation values of the TWWHA: A Review*”. A 10 year program to monitor the impacts of climate change has been developed. The data and ongoing monitoring programs will provide crucial information on the status of TWWHA flora values and will inform management actions necessary to document and mitigate effects of climate change on flora assets in the TWWHA. The data will form a key reference for setting management priorities and appropriate management to protect TWWHA flora values. A workshop to develop priority projects was held in October 2009. Discussions have been held with university researchers to encourage research programs in priority areas. Climate change risk assessments for fauna and earth sciences remain a priority to implement.

2.6. Biosecurity issues

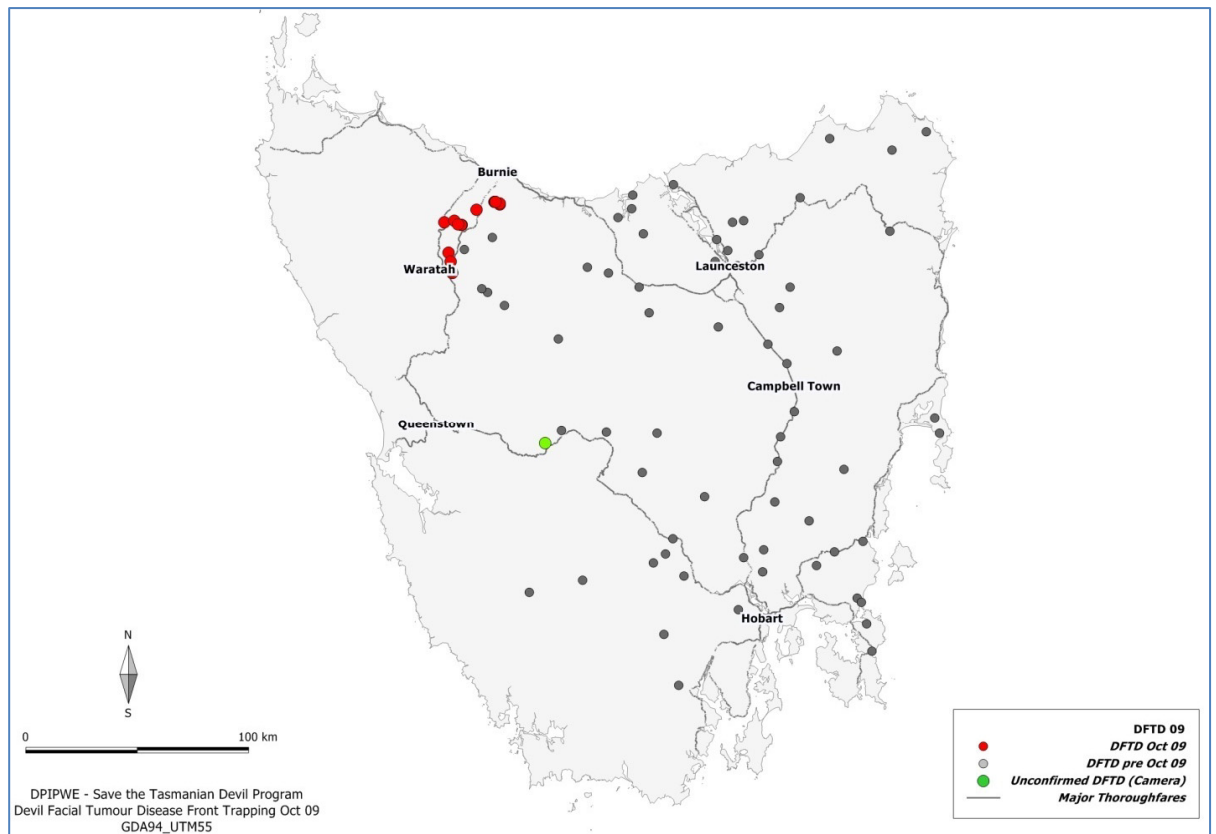
As reported in 2008, a number of biosecurity issues have emerged in Tasmania, some of which may threaten World Heritage values. These emerging issues have been acknowledged in the interim review of the Management Plan for the property and are being addressed as priorities. In addition, since the last State of Conservation report in 2008, a Wildlife Disease Strategy for the property has been developed and is being implemented.

- **Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD)**

The Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) is considered a World Heritage value, and is one of the marsupial carnivores for which the TWWHA is a stronghold. The species is found across Tasmania. Since 1996 a devastating and previously unknown facial tumour disease (DFTD) has struck the species, with a very high mortality rate amongst those infected. It is believed to be spread from animal to animal, through direct contact.

At the time of the most recent State of Conservation report in January 2008, the disease was found at only a small number of locations at the edges of the property, such as Cradle Mountain and Strathgordon. As shown in the map, however the disease continues to spread in a westerly direction across Tasmania. Sightings of the devil have declined by 70% since DFTD was first observed in 2006. As at May 2009, DFTD is found across more than 60% of Tasmania. However it appears that devils in the more remote areas of the World Heritage property remain free of the disease.

Devil Facial Tumour Disease Front Trapping October 2009.



In May 2009, the Australian Government upgraded the listing of the Tasmanian devil from “Vulnerable” to “Endangered” under national environmental law. Tasmania’s *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* has also listed the devil as “Endangered” since May 2008. The revised listing aims to provide the Tasmanian devil with greater protection.

The Australian Government has committed AU\$10 million and the Tasmanian Government AU\$13.5 million over five years to the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program. This is to help with research into disease transmission and treatment, and to support captive and wild populations. The Tasmanian devil has also been listed as “Endangered” on the Red List of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program is focused on the key areas of:

- Population monitoring - Gathering data in the field to clarify disease distribution and impacts, and to help determine conservation strategies.
- Disease diagnostics - Laboratory-based investigation of the disease itself, which includes defining the disease, exploring its transmission, the possible ways to fight it.
- Wild population management - Establishing methods for managing the impact of the disease in the wild.
- Insurance population – An Insurance Population with ‘founders’ taken from areas of the State where there hasn’t been any record of the disease.

The best current estimate of how many Tasmanian devils remain in the wild is between 20,000 – 50,000 mature individuals (which is assumed to be about half the overall number). The use of camera traps is a new technique allowing the more widespread monitoring of devils and the disease, particularly in remote areas.

The decline in devil numbers means there are now large amounts of surplus carrion in the landscape (up to 100 tonnes/day) - and other carnivores are already responding to that surplus. One of the biggest threats is posed by introduced species – such as foxes, feral cats and wild dogs - which now have an opportunity for expansion. Further information on this issue is available online at:
www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/LBUN-5QF86G?open and at
<http://www.tassiedevil.com.au>

- **Amphibian chytrid fungus**

Chytridiomycosis is an infectious disease affecting amphibians worldwide. The disease has been recorded in other regions of mainland Australia and now Tasmania. Some species of endemic frogs are amongst the World Heritage values of the property. As reported to the Committee in 2008, a national Threat Abatement Plan for this disease is in place. In August 2007, researchers reported to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Consultative Committee that the disease had been detected in frogs in many areas across the State, including the margins of the property.

The actions relating to the amphibian chytrid fungus (chytrid) in the Wildlife Disease Strategy primarily focus on stopping the spread of chytrid into the TWWHA. Chytrid monitoring sites have been established within and adjacent to the TWWHA to monitor disease spread and effectiveness of management. Monitoring programs for frogs that are largely endemic to the TWWHA are being trialled.

A two-day workshop was held in January 2009 with land managers and chytrid experts from James Cook University and the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service attending. Two posters (one targeting bushwalkers and the other targeting fresh food importers) and a brochure about chytrid have been widely distributed to industry and the community.

In conjunction with Natural Resource Management South, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment has developed draft hygiene protocols for use by land management agencies. Research and management efforts continue in the development of effective biosecurity measures to contain both the amphibian chytrid fungus and root-rot *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, another pathogen found in the TWWHA.

More information on these issues is available at
<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ktp/frog-fungus.html>

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/phytophthora/index.html>

- **Platypus - fungal disease**

Two of only three surviving species of monotremes – the most primitive group of mammals – are among the World Heritage values of the property. These are the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and the shortbeaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*). Although the platypus is currently common and widespread, there is concern about the potential impact of an infection caused by an aquatic fungus, *Mucor amphiborum*.

The disease was first detected in 1982 near Campbell Town in the central north of the state. Since 1982 the disease has spread across at least 11 northern Tasmanian river catchments. Widespread surveys in 2008-2009 found that mucormycosis is still affecting platypuses in four northern river catchments. However the proportion of sick animals has dropped considerably since the mid 1990's, suggesting disease impacts have declined. The situation continues to be monitored.

Platypus surveys inside the TWWHA and immediately adjacent to it have not detected any diseased animals. Further details on this are available at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/platypusdisease

- **Orange-Bellied Parrot - *Psittacine circoviral* disease**

The Orange-Bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) is a World Heritage value of the property and is listed as critically endangered under Australian and Tasmanian threatened species legislation. A captive breeding program has been established as part of the Recovery Plan for the species. In 2008, Australia reported that some birds held in captivity outside of the property, as part of this program, had contracted *Psittacine circoviral* disease. The disease is listed as a key threatening process under national legislation. The disease is not known within wild populations of Orange-Bellied Parrot.

The disease was recorded in only one of the three captive populations of Orange-Bellied Parrot. The captive population has been monitored since then and no further clinical signs of the disease have been detected.

A volunteer group assisting with Orange Bellied Parrot conservation work is coordinated by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service with financial support from the Australian Government. Teams of two to four volunteers spent fortnightly shifts observing Orange Bellied Parrots at Melaleuca (outside the World Heritage property) and Birchs Inlet (on the Gordon River) between October 2008 and March 2009. A total of 56 volunteers assisted with this work. The Birchs Inlet program included the release and observation of 48 captive-bred birds.

2.7. Introduced species

The Tasmanian Government is reviewing introduced animal management in the TWWHA. The review is being undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. The review documents all introduced animals known to occur in the TWWHA and their impacts. A standard risk assessment is applied to introduced animals occurring inside and outside the TWWHA to determine priorities for management. This review will form the basis for the development of a strategy to better manage the impacts of introduced species in the TWWHA. A draft report has been completed and the review will be completed by mid 2010. More information on introduced animals is available from <http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/ThemeNodes/LJEM-6PX4TJ?open>

- **Weeds**

An emerging issue reported in 2008 is the spread and establishment of highly invasive weeds such as sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralius*) and marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), particularly around the south and west of the property. With the support of the Australian Government, specially trained teams, including volunteers, continue to successfully target weeds around the south and western coastline with the aim of stopping these weeds establishing in the property. In addition, research is underway to see whether biological control may be possible. Further information on this issue is available online at www.parks.tas.gov.au/factsheets/threats/CoastalWeeds.pdf

- **Introduced Trout**

Surveys were undertaken in March 2009 in large coastal river catchments of the southwest of the TWWHA between Cape Sorell and South East Cape to identify waterways which are free of introduced trout and to establish a baseline for future monitoring. Recreational trout fishing is permitted within the property. The survey found, with a high level of confidence, no trout in any coastal river catchment surveyed other than the New River Lagoon, where a self-sustaining population has become established. The trout free area represents 459,000ha and is the single largest area of river catchments that remain free of introduced fish species in south-eastern Australia. The report on this survey also reviews the distribution of trout within the whole TWWHA.

- **Wild Dogs**

Following reports of wild dogs in the TWWHA in the past, the issue has been monitored. Although no further sightings of wild dogs in the property were reported up to June 2009, this issue continues to be monitored.

- **Fallow Deer**

The report entitled “The distribution and abundance of Fallow Deer in the Central Plateau Conservation Area and adjacent areas in Tasmania” (2007) finds that Fallow Deer populations exist in several areas adjacent to the Central Plateau Conservation Area and also within the Central Plateau Conservation Area (part of the TWWHA) at least on a seasonal basis. Abundance was low and during the survey very little obvious damage caused by the deer was observed within the Central Plateau Conservation Area. Much of the TWWHA is unlikely to be suitable habitat for deer and consequently a low level of deer monitoring has been recommended. The next survey is due by the end of the 2009-10 summer.

- **Lyrebirds**

As reported in 2008, the Superb Lyrebird was introduced into Tasmania in the 1930s and 1940s at both Hastings and Mt Field. Populations have since spread into the TWWHA. In 2000 a study on the possible impacts of the lyrebird was completed. Few conclusive results were found from this study and from further three year study undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks and the Environment. The impacts of the lyrebird are currently being examined through a PhD study. The current research focus is whether TWWHA values are being threatened because of their presence.

- **European Fox**

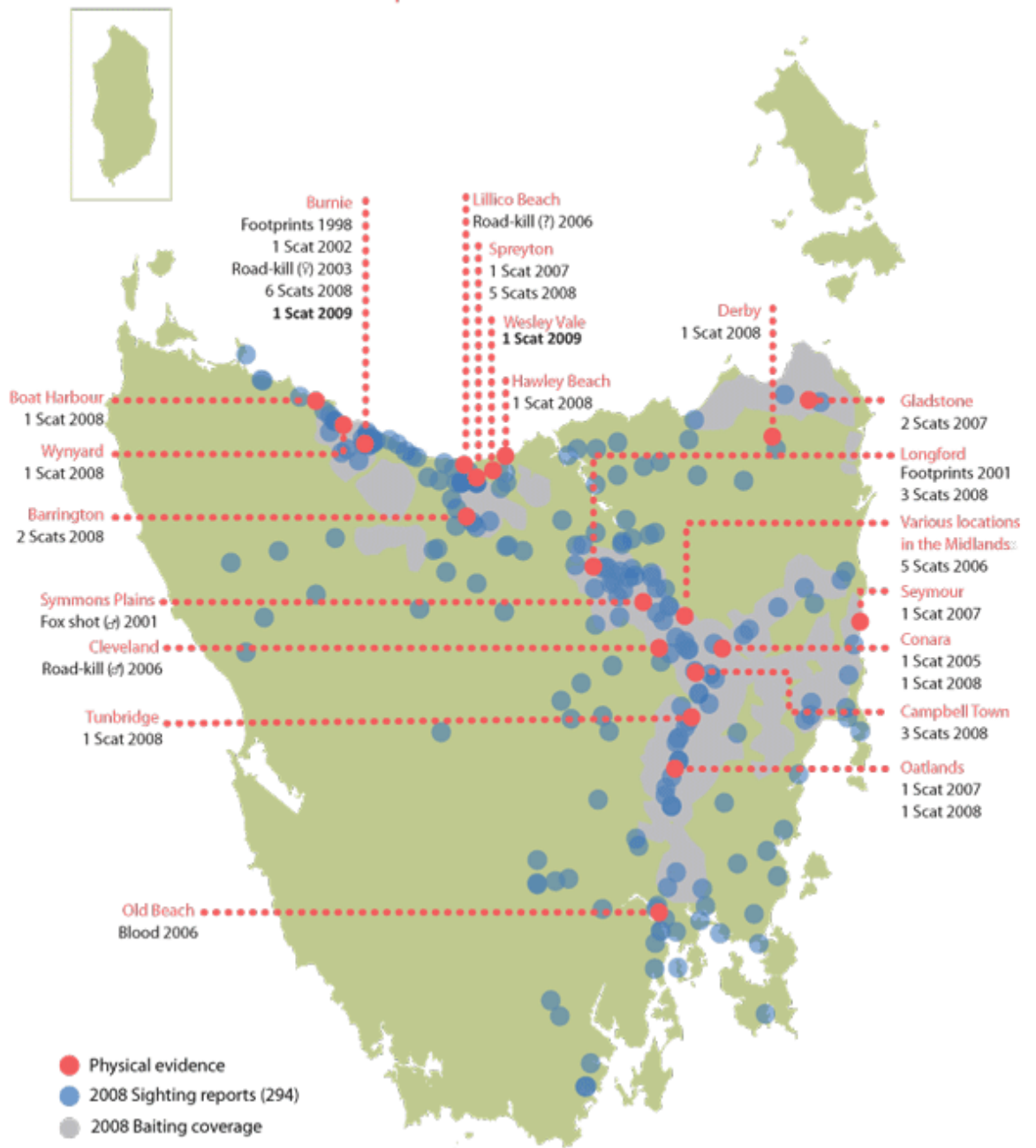
The European fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was introduced illegally into Tasmania in recent years. Evidence for the presence of foxes is shown in the map overleaf. The potential impact of the fox on both native species and livestock has been demonstrated on mainland Australia and it is important that foxes not spread to the World Heritage Area. The Australian and Tasmanian Governments have invested AU\$19 million in the Fox Eradication Program, which aims to eradicate the fox before it can establish in Tasmania.

A map of physical evidence of foxes in Tasmania (as at 16 June 2009) is provided overleaf.

Updates on this issue are available at
<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/ThemeNodes/LBUN-5K438G?open>

Physical Evidence of Foxes in Tasmania

Updated 16 June 2009



Source:
<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Images/PWOD-7T53XS?open>

3. POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTION(S) WITHIN THE PROTECTED AREA

The following section provides an update on current and potential redevelopments within the protected area covered by the Management Plan for the property.

The majority of visitor facilities are provided in Visitor Services Sites or Zones. These are the locations where the majority of visitors experience the property.

The Global Financial Crisis has impacted on tourism to Australia and to Tasmania in particular, which has resulted in some planned tourism ventures not proceeding.

3.1. Tourism redevelopment at Lake St Clair

Lake St Clair, at the edge of the TWWHA, is a Visitor Services Zone provided for in the Management Plan for the TWWHA. Since the 1930s there has been visitor accommodation at Lake St Clair.

In recent years, various redevelopment projects have been proposed, in accordance with the Management Plan for the property, at this location. Proposals reported in 2008 are:

- Redevelopment of tourist facilities at Cynthia Bay
In 2009, Eco-Geo International Pty Ltd bought the lease and now manages the facilities. The new leaseholder is proposing some low level changes at the site for the 2009-10 summer in accordance with the approved Development Plan and Environmental Management Plan.
- Adaptive re-use of Pumphouse Point for tourist facility
The proposal reported in the 2008 Update Report has been granted approval, with conditions.

3.2. Tourism development at Cockle Creek

Cockle Creek is a Visitor Services Site under the TWWHA Management Plan and is located in one of the adjacent 21 formal reserves that form part of the proposed boundary modification (refer Section 1.2 of this Update Report). While a development on private and reserved land has been approved, the proponent has not proceeded to date. Discussions are continuing regarding the future of the development.

3.3. Cradle Valley Centralised Sewerage Scheme

Construction of this sewerage treatment plant is nearing completion. It is expected that individual sewerage systems for each accommodation lodge under the new scheme will significantly improve environmental quality in Cradle Valley. The system will come on line in early 2010.

Toilet system improvements on the Overland Track are nearly complete to protect the environment from untreated waste. Outdated composting toilet systems at some Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service locations have been removed and improvements in one of the commercial operator's treatment systems are under way. These changes will also enhance the visitor experience.

3.4. Liffey Canal maintenance and upgrade

Hydro Tasmania has proposed to undertake works to maintain and upgrade the diversion canal in the upper reaches of the Liffey River in the north-east of the property. The proposal was assessed for impacts by the Parks and Wildlife Service under the TWWHA Management Plan and was also referred to the Australian Government for assessment under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is awaiting further documentation from Hydro Tasmania before further assessment occurs. The proponent will also require final approval from the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act.

Details and status of this proposal are available at:

http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=4079

3.5. Australian Government Jobs Fund Projects

During 2009 the Australian Government has announced additional infrastructure projects for the TWWHA both to protect values and present the TWWHA. These include the projects at the following TWWHA locations and gateways:

- *South Coast Track & Melaleuca* - AU\$265,000 - This project will address the highest priority maintenance tasks and upgrades, primarily track and toilet infrastructure.
- *Sarah Island* - AU\$355,000 - Redesign the walking track infrastructure on Sarah Island to facilitate access by mobility impaired visitors as well as allowing large groups from the cruise vessels to access the island.
- *Cradle Mountain* - AU\$491,000 - Track repairs and maintenance, mostly day walks from Cradle Mountain. Conservation, repairs and maintenance to and around Waldheim.
- *Mt Field* - AU\$194,000 - Track repairs and maintenance.
- *Aboriginal heritage* AU\$387,500 - To record, protect and interpret Aboriginal heritage in the area of the South Coast Track and Melaleuca.

4. APPENDICES