



Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area— Frequently asked questions

The purpose of this fact sheet is to give landholders whose properties adjoin or are nearby to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area information about what this means for them.

What has happened so far?

The Tasmanian Wilderness was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982 and extended in 1989, June 2010, June 2012 and again in June 2013.

Following a review of the 2013 extension to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, the Australian Government requested that UNESCO's World Heritage Committee approve a minor boundary modification to remove some 72,000 hectares from the property.

The World Heritage Committee did not support the request at its meeting in June 2014.

As a signatory to the World Heritage Convention, Australia has accepted the decision of the World Heritage Committee. Therefore, the boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness approved in 2013 remains in place and is protected under national environment law.

What is national environmental law?

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's primary piece of environmental legislation.

It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places—defined in the EPBC Act as matters of national environmental significance. World Heritage values are a matter of national environmental significance.

What does this mean for me?

As a landowner adjoining the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area you are unlikely to be impacted as a result of the changes to the boundary. However, you should be aware that the EPBC Act regulates actions occurring within or outside a declared World Heritage property that are likely to have a significant impact on the World Heritage values of a World Heritage property. Information about the values of the property may be obtained by following the web link at the end of this fact sheet.

An action that is likely to have a significant impact on the World Heritage values of a declared World Heritage property is subject to environmental assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

The normal activities of individual landholders and residents typically will not be affected by the boundary change. Routine property maintenance, land management and other established practices are unlikely to have a significant impact and may not require referral under national environment law. For instance, the following actions are very unlikely to require assessment under the EPBC Act:

- ongoing grazing, dairy, horticultural or cropping activities, including continuing approved irrigation activities or installing new irrigation technology
- maintaining existing fences, roads, internal access tracks and firebreaks
- maintaining existing farm dams, water storages, pumps and drainage lines
- replacing and maintaining sheds, yards and other farm buildings
- controlling weeds and spraying for pests on individual properties or roadside verges
- management and harvesting of private timber reserves.

What is an action?

‘Action’ is defined broadly in the EPBC Act and includes: a project, a development, an undertaking, an activity or a series of activities, or an alteration of any of these things.

Actions include, but are not limited to: construction, expansion, alteration or demolition of buildings, structures, infrastructure or facilities; industrial processes; mineral and petroleum resource exploration and extraction; storage or transport of hazardous materials; waste disposal; earthworks; impoundment, extraction and diversion of water; agricultural activities; aquaculture; research activities; vegetation clearance; and culling of animals¹.

What about a significant impact on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area?

An action is likely to have a significant impact on the World Heritage values of a declared World Heritage property if there is a real chance or possibility that it will cause:

- one or more of the World Heritage values to be lost
- one or more of the World Heritage values to be degraded or damaged, or
- one or more of the World Heritage values to be notably altered, modified, obscured or diminished.

What do I do if I think my action will be significant?

If you believe your action is likely to have a significant impact on the World Heritage Area you should refer the action to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment. You can refer an action or contact the Commonwealth Department of the Environment for advice by emailing epbc.referrals@environment.gov.au or calling **1800 803 772**. Where you have limited information available on which to make an assessment of the impacts of a particular action, the Commonwealth Department of the Environment recommends referring the action on a precautionary basis so potential issues can be addressed if necessary through the EPBC Act referral process.

What are the values of the extended Tasmanian Wilderness Area?

The values² of the extended areas adjacent to landholders are outlined below.

Dove River

Dove River contains a vegetation transition that extends from the treeline into montane *Eucalyptus delegatensis* forest and woodlands to dense rainforest in the steep valleys. Dove River also contains habitat for threatened species of conservation and scientific value such as the Tasmanian devil and spotted-tailed quoll.

¹ Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1—Matters of National Environmental Significance

² The Tasmanian Wilderness has natural and cultural heritage values. The identification of cultural values requires further evaluation in consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. The Australian Government will report on progress on identification of cultural values to the World Heritage Committee next year.

Upper Mersey

The forested areas of Upper Mersey have high aesthetic and wilderness values. Geomorphic processes are represented throughout the Walls of Jerusalem and the Central Plateau, including glaciated dolerite mountain terrain. Some examples of tall Eucalyptus delegatensis forest (>41 m) are scattered amongst eucalypt forest and rainforest of lower stature.

Mole Creek Karst

The majority of the Mole Creek karst is vegetated with tall Eucalyptus delegatensis forests and contains some of Australia's most spectacular and ornamented caves, including the magnificent Kubla Khan and Croesus Caves that are rich in biota including rare, relictual cave fauna species that are endemic to the area and demonstrate speciation processes.

Great Western Tiers

The forested slopes of the northern section of the Great Western Tiers have high scenic values and provide greater ecological connectivity to the property. The escarpment is an integral component of the distinctive glaciated alpine dolerite terrain of central Tasmania. Extensive sandstone caves and shelters are present. The eastern section of the Great Western Tiers enhances ecological integrity and contributes to the integrity of glaciation of the property.

Upper Derwent

Upper Derwent has important tracts of forest including old-growth tall eucalypt forest with very high aesthetic qualities. The button grass moorland community provides habitat for species such as burrowing crayfish. This area includes important glacial deposits and provides critical evidence for the location and timing of ice fronts in the upper Derwent Valley.

Mt Field

Mt Field contains areas of tall eucalypt forest, glacial and karst landforms, alpine environments, tall trees, a complex and extensive system of limestone caves and palaeo-endemic species. Mount Field has a diverse range of habitats supporting a diverse range of rare flora and fauna, such as the mountain shrimp, the Tasmanian redspot and the Tasmanian spotwing.

What exemptions are there?

Certain actions are exempt from the requirement for assessment and approval under the EPBC Act. These include lawful continuations of a use of land that started before 16 July 2000 and actions that were legally authorised before 16 July 2000.

How does the One-Stop Shop process fit into this?

The Australian Government is committed to delivering a One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals in Tasmania. This will simplify the approvals process, ensuring that only one environmental approval that covers both Commonwealth and state requirements is needed for an action. Many actions previously required approval at both the Commonwealth and state or territory level.

An approval bilateral agreement is being negotiated with the Tasmanian Government. When finalised, it will allow the Tasmanian Government to assess and approve, (or decide to not approve) proposed actions that are likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance, through a range of specified processes that are accredited by the approval bilateral agreement.

On 8 August 2014, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment released a draft Tasmanian approval bilateral agreement for a public consultation period of 28 days. The public consultation period has closed. The Minister will review all of the comments received then make a determination as to whether the approval bilateral agreement satisfies the relevant requirements of the EPBC Act. The Minister must also table the Tasmanian processes in the Australian Parliament before they can be accredited.

Until the approval bilateral agreement is formally entered into and the Minister has decided to accredit relevant Tasmanian processes, all actions that may have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance require referral under the EPBC Act, regardless of how they are assessed by the Tasmanian Government.

The draft approval bilateral agreement has been developed to provide broad scope for accreditation of Tasmanian processes. While all major actions are expected to be covered by the approval bilateral agreement, actions assessed through Tasmanian processes that are not accredited by the agreement will still require referral under the EPBC Act.

Where can I find more information?

Information on the Tasmanian Wilderness is available on the Departments website at www.environment.gov.au/node/19816 and the Tasmanian Governments website at www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspX?base=391

Information on the values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is available at www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/tasmanian-wilderness/values

General guidance on whether an activity is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance is available at www.environment.gov.au/resource/significant-impact-guidelines-11-matters-national-environmental-significance

Information on the One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals is available at www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999/one-stop

Information on exemptions under the EPBC Act is available at www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html

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