



# Australian Government

PROPOSAL FOR  
A MINOR MODIFICATION TO THE BOUNDARY  
OF THE  
TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA  
(AUSTRALIA)

PROPERTY ID 181quinquies

FOR SUBMISSION BY  
31 JANUARY 2014

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Australia requests a minor modification to the boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, property ID 181quinquies. This dossier is submitted for the review of the relevant Advisory Bodies and for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee at its 38<sup>th</sup> session in June 2014.

The dossier includes the required documentation as set out in Annex 11 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

## 1. Area of the property (in hectares)

- a) The area of the property as inscribed is 1,584,460 hectares.
- b) The proposed modification to the property is a reduction in the area of 74,039 hectares which is a reduction in the geographic extent of the property of 4.7%.

## 2. Description of the modification

Australia requests the removal of the areas as described in Table 1 and as shown in Map 1 in relation to the inscribed property boundary.

- Map 2 shows the proposed revised boundary following the requested modifications.
- Map 3 shows the approximately 98,000 hectares in the June 2013 extension that would be retained within the proposed revised boundary.
- Map 4 shows the combination of areas to be retained and those proposed to be removed relative to the June 2013 extension.

TABLE 1: NAME, TENURE AND AREAS FOR REMOVAL			
Name of Section	Current tenure <sup>1</sup>	Area in each tenure (hectares)	Total Area (hectares)
Dove River	3	748	748
Upper Mersey	3	3,906	3,906
Great Western Tiers (Eastern)	3	5,924	5,924
Great Western Tiers (Northern)	3	3,668	3,668
Upper Derwent	1	15,631	16,193
	3	544	
	other	18	
Florentine	1	1,350	1,375

<sup>1</sup> Note that on 16 December 2013 the Tasmanian Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage announced 95,725 hectares of Tasmanian forest had been officially proclaimed as reserves under the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Act 2013. New reserves were created in the Weld, Florentine and Styx valleys, as well as extensions to the Hartz Mountains, Southwest National Parks and the Picton River Conservation Area. Details of the new reserve areas can be found at: [http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/media\\_room/media\\_releases/additional\\_reserves\\_for\\_tasmania](http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/media_room/media_releases/additional_reserves_for_tasmania).

TABLE 1: NAME, TENURE AND AREAS FOR REMOVAL

Name of Section	Current tenure <sup>1</sup>	Area in each tenure (hectares)	Total Area (hectares)
	other	25	
Mount Field	1	5,388	5,390
	3	2	
Mount Wedge – Upper Florentine	1	9,378	10,580
	2	1,074	
	3	128	
Styx-Tyenna	1	3,052	3,099
	3	47	
Weld-Snowy Range	1	5,778	5,778
Huon-Picton	1	6,510	6,587
	2	77	
Hartz-Esperance	1	6,873	6,873
Recherche	1	3,918	3,918
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>74,039</b>

1. Reserve under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*
2. State Forest under the Tasmanian *Forestry Act 1920*
3. Other

### **3. Justification for the modification**

The Australian Government believes that the excision of these areas from the property will enhance the credibility of the World Heritage List by excluding areas that detract from the Outstanding Universal Value and the overall integrity of the property (refer Table 2).

The proposed excisions do not include any areas of National Park that were protected under state law at the time of the 1 February 2013 request to the Committee for a minor boundary modification.

The minor boundary modification to the property approved in 2013 (Decision WHC 37 COM 8B.44) included areas along the northern and eastern boundary, encompassing extensive stands of tall eucalypt forest, associated rainforest, significant karst and glacial landforms as well as alpine and sub-alpine environments.

The Australian Government agrees with the Committee that the 2013 extension contains significant natural and cultural attributes that contribute to the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

The cultural values require further study and consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in order to better document and understand how these relate to the Outstanding Universal Value. The current proposal retains many of these important features within the property.

The proposed minor boundary modification seeks to remove a number of areas in the extension approved by the Committee in June 2013 that contain pine and eucalypt plantations and previously logged forest. The Australian Government considers these areas detract from the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and its overall integrity and that the assessment work that included such areas in the property did not sufficiently take this in to account.

The Australian Government is also concerned that when taking its decision in June 2013, the World Heritage Committee was not fully aware that a number of communities and landholders whose properties adjoin the revised boundary did not support the extension and did not consider they had adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed change.

In December 2013, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, wrote to Her Excellency, Mrs Sheika Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Al-Thani, the Chair of the World Heritage Committee, indicating that the Australian Government would review the extension to identify those areas that the government considered failed to reach the threshold for listing as areas of Outstanding Universal Value and diminished the overall integrity of the property (a copy of this letter is included in section 8).

Results from this review are presented in Table 2 below including comments on reasons for suggested excisions.

TABLE 2: JUSTIFICATION FOR REMOVAL	
Name of Area	Reason for Removal
Dove River	Contains disturbed areas
Upper Mersey	Contains logged/degraded area
Great Western Tiers (Northern)	Contains logged/degraded areas
Great Western Tiers (Eastern)	Contains logged/degraded areas
Upper Derwent	Contains logged/degraded areas
Florentine	Contains plantations and logged/degraded areas
Mount Field	Contains logged/degraded areas
Mount Wedge - Upper Florentine	Contains logged/degraded areas
Styx-Tyenna	Contains plantations and logged/degraded areas
Weld-Snowy Range	Contains logged/degraded areas
Huon-Picton	Contains logged/degraded areas
Hartz-Esperance	Contains logged/degraded areas
Recherche	Contains logged/degraded areas

Simply removing plantations and recently logged coupes as individual polygons would result in a boundary that does not take account of the principles of ecological connectivity or consider landscape features that enhance the practicality of the boundary. In the Australian Government's view, it would not produce a coherent boundary that would facilitate future management.

Given this, the approach taken in developing this proposal has been to select for excision some of the areas that have been recently logged or are regrowth areas that the Government considers detracts from the integrity and Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in particular the property's status as an extensive and largely undisturbed landscape that is relatively free from invasive species and other disturbance. In selecting areas for excision, consideration was given to retaining the overall coherence of the boundary, maintaining connectivity and areas with important values such as habitat for threatened species, cultural sites, karsts or other features that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

While this approach has resulted in the loss of some attributes (such as an individual registered Giant Tree and some long lived conifers), it has the benefit of minimizing the overall impact on the integrity and coherence of the boundary. In some cases, consideration of these issues has resulted in the proposal to reinstate the 2012 boundary for some sections.

#### **4. Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value**

The Australian Government believes that this proposal will deliver additional economic and social outcomes for all Tasmanians while maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the Tasmanian Wilderness.

The Australian Government has considered the attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and proposes to retain areas which have high conservation value, provide connectivity and an appropriate management boundary.

It is recognized that additional work is required to identify cultural values within the property contributing to criteria (iii), (v) and (vi).

The areas proposed to be retained in the property include those areas with a high incidence of recorded cultural sites including Riveaux Cave with its Pleistocene art.

Australia will report progress on identification of cultural values for the property in the next State of Conservation report to be prepared in response to Decision 36 COM 7B.36 for consideration at the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee in 2015.

#### **5. Implications for legal protection**

All World Heritage properties in Australia are 'matters of national environmental significance' protected and managed under national legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Importantly, this Act also aims to protect matters of national environmental significance, such as World Heritage properties, from impacts even if they originate outside the property or if the values of the property are mobile (as in fauna). The Act forms an additional layer of protection which will protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the Tasmanian Wilderness from external impacts that could arise through the proposed excision of areas from the property.

Under the EPBC Act, approvals are not required for certain forestry operations if they are within a Regional Forest Agreement region<sup>2</sup>; this applies to harvesting of forest products and related land clearing, land preparation, regeneration (including burning) and transport

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<sup>2</sup> Listed under *Part 4: Div 4: s 38 (1)* Cases in which environmental approvals are not needed: Forestry operations in certain regions: Part 3 not to apply to certain RFA forestry operations

operations if they are taken in accordance with the Regional Forest Agreement; however this does not apply in a property included in the World Heritage List<sup>3</sup>.

While the Regional Forest Agreements pre-date the EPBC Act, they set out streamlined processes that allow the Australian Government and relevant states to meet their obligations under the Act.

The EPBC Act provides an exemption from the environmental approval process to forestry operations undertaken in accordance with Regional Forest Agreements. This exemption is in recognition that the Regional Forest Agreements—through the Comprehensive Regional Assessments undertaken prior to their signing; the establishment of the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative reserve system; the implementation of ecologically sustainable forest management; and the use of adaptive management—have the capacity to meet EPBC Act objectives.

In signing the Regional Forest Agreements, the Australian Government accredited relevant state's forest management systems as providing for ecologically sustainable forest management under an adaptive management regime. The concept of ecologically sustainable forest management is based on maintaining the ecological process within forests, preserving their biological diversity and obtaining for the community the full range of environmental, economic and social benefits from all forest uses within ecological limits.

Management prescriptions in recovery plans for species listed under the EPBC Act must be adhered to in forestry operations both in, and outside of, regions covered by Regional Forest Agreements.

The Australian Government does not support the creation of new reserves in Tasmania's forests and is committed to a review of the Regional Forest Agreement. The Australian Government is committed to working with the Tasmanian Government on these issues.

Further information about the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and a copy of the Act can be found at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/about/index.html>

## **6. Implications for management arrangements**

The Australian Government believes that this proposal will deliver additional economic and social outcomes for all Tasmanians while maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the Tasmanian Wilderness.

The Australian Government is committed to an appropriate balance of economic, social and environmental outcomes in Tasmania. The Australian Government does not support the creation of any new reserves in Tasmania's forest. This request for excisions from the boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness is part of the Australian Government's *Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania* which was a commitment taken to the recent Australian election as part of a plan to boost Tasmania's competitiveness, particularly in the resources, forestry, fisheries, tourism and agriculture sectors.

The Australian Government believes there should be a long term sustainable forest industry in Tasmania. The proposed amendment to the World Heritage Area boundary extension will

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<sup>3</sup> see *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act: Part 4: Div 4: s42*



assist the long term viability of the special species timber sector and local communities that rely on these areas for their wellbeing.

The Australian Government is honoring its forestry election commitments in Tasmania to strengthen a long-term sustainable industry. The extension of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreements will mean an appropriate balance of economic, social and environmental outcomes for our forests.

Under the Australian federation, future land tenure and management arrangements for the areas proposed for excision are predominantly a matter for the Tasmanian Government. The Australian Government will work with the Tasmanian Government to achieve an appropriate balance of sustainable land uses including a balance between reserves and production areas.

No areas that were National Park on 1 February 2013 have been proposed for removal from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to be the lead agency managing the World Heritage property.

The Australian Government continues to meet its commitment for baseline funding for the property of \$A3.4 million per annum for management of the World Heritage Area which is matched by the Tasmanian Government.

Pending any decision by the World Heritage Committee to amend the boundary of the property, the world heritage values in the existing boundary remain protected under national environment law.

## **7. Maps:**

Maps are included at the end of this document:

Map 1: Showing the delimitation of the boundary and areas to be removed in the proposed revision.

Map 2: Showing the proposed revised boundary.

Map 3: Showing the areas of the June 2013 extension to be retained within the proposed revised boundary.

Map 4: Showing the areas of the June 2013 extension to be retained and those to be removed as a result of the proposed revised boundary.

## **8. Other information**

Copy of the letter of 18 December 2013 to the Chair, World Heritage Committee, from the Hon Greg Hunt MP