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## The Minister

During 2012–13 the Hon. Tony Burke MP continued as the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, with responsibility for the Director of National Parks.

The Minister's responsibilities in relation to the Director include assessing proposals for establishing Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*; approving management plans for Commonwealth reserves; establishing and appointing members to boards of management for Commonwealth reserves jointly managed with Aboriginal owners; resolving disputes between the Director and boards of management; and approving Commonwealth reserve use fees and other charges.

During 2012–13 the Minister:

- announced the world's biggest network of marine reserves in November 2012. Today Commonwealth marine reserves protect more than 2.8 million square kilometres of ocean environment, a major achievement for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of Australia's oceans. The final management plans for the marine reserve network were tabled in Parliament in March 2013
- completed the final step to end the prospect of uranium mining at Koongarra and incorporate this area into Kakadu National Park. This decision supports the wishes of Djok traditional owner Jeffrey Lee to secure protection of his country for future generations
- added the Wet Tropics, Tasmania's Island Heritage and Sydney Harbour to Australia's National Landscapes collection. The National Landscapes Program is a partnership between Parks Australia and Tourism Australia, showcasing Australia's premier ecotourism destinations to visitors wanting to connect with world-class nature and cultural experiences.

## The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks is a corporation sole established under Division 5 of Part 19 of the EPBC Act, and a Commonwealth authority for the purposes of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* (CAC Act). The corporation has a single director—the person appointed to the office named the Director of National Parks.

The current office holder is Peter Cochrane, who was first appointed as Director in October 1999 and was reappointed to the position by the Governor-General on 12 December 2008 for a period of five years.

The EPBC Act requires the Director to perform functions and exercise powers in accordance with any directions given by the Minister, unless the Act provides otherwise. The Minister responsible for the CAC Act may, via a General Policy Order, also notify the Director under the CAC Act of general government policies that apply to the Director. No General Policy Orders were issued to the Director in 2012–13.

The EPBC Act provides for the proclamation and management of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones. The term 'Commonwealth reserve' includes all areas proclaimed under the EPBC Act with names such as national parks, Commonwealth marine reserves and botanic gardens. This report generally uses the term 'reserves' to encompass all types of Commonwealth reserves under the EPBC Act. Three reserves, Uluru–Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Booderee national parks, are established on Aboriginal-owned land and are managed by the Director of National Parks in conjunction with a board of management established under the Act with a majority of members being Indigenous persons nominated by the traditional Aboriginal owners.

The Director of National Parks is responsible under the EPBC Act for the administration, management and control of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones. The Director is assisted by staff of Parks Australia—a division of the environment department. In this report, reference to Parks Australia means the Director of National Parks and Parks Australia staff members.

## Statutory functions

The Director is responsible for the administration of Divisions 4 and 5 of Part 15 of the EPBC Act (Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones) and regulations made for the purposes of those divisions.

The functions of the Director as set out in subsection 514B(1) of the EPBC Act are to:

- administer, manage and control Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- protect, conserve and manage biodiversity and heritage in Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- contribute to the protection, conservation and management of biodiversity and heritage in areas outside Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- cooperate with any country in matters relating to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves in that country
- provide, and assist in the provision of, training in knowledge and skills relevant to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves
- carry out alone, or in cooperation with other institutions and persons, and arrange for any other institution or person to carry out research and investigations relevant to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves
- make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves
- administer the Australian National Parks Fund
- undertake any other functions conferred on the Director under the EPBC Act or any other Act
- do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the functions mentioned above.

As at 30 June 2013 seven Commonwealth terrestrial reserves (national parks and botanic gardens), 59 Commonwealth marine reserves and one conservation zone were declared under the EPBC Act and were the responsibility of the Director.

The terrestrial reserves and 58 of the 59 marine reserves are managed by staff of Parks Australia. In 2012–13, under delegation from the Director, staff of the department's Australian Antarctic Division managed the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve and the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Conservation Zone. The locations of the Commonwealth reserves and conservation zone are shown in Figure 1.

In addition to managing Commonwealth reserves, the Director is in a partnership with Tourism Australia to identify and promote national landscapes that capture the essence of Australia and offer distinctive natural and cultural experiences. Parks Australia's interest in the program is to enhance and promote the role of protected areas in the social and economic wellbeing of regional Australia.

## Non-statutory functions

The Director has been delegated functions and powers by the Minister and the secretary of the department for programs that complement the Director's statutory functions. Under these delegations, the Director administers the National Reserve System Program and the Indigenous Protected Areas Program, both of which are significant components of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative. During 2012–13 these functions were transferred to the department's Biodiversity Conservation Division and are reported in the department's annual report.

The Director manages the Australian Biological Resources Study and the development of Australian Government policy on management of Australia's genetic resources, including regulating access to such resources in Commonwealth areas. The outputs of these non-statutory functions are reported in the department's annual report.

## Financial summary

A \$9.69 million operating loss was recorded for 2012–13, predominately as a result of the asset revaluation in 2010–11 which increased depreciation expenses across the organisation. The Director has received approval from the Minister for Finance and Deregulation for this operating loss, along with further deficits forecast over the next three financial years.

Overall, for 2012–13 income and expenditure had minor variances to budget, with a variance of one per cent for income and less than one per cent for expenditure. An analysis of the variances is in Table 1.

Table 2 summarises income and expenses information for the Director of National Parks. Audited financial statements are in Chapter 6 of this report.

Table 3 shows a five-year overview of financial, staffing and area information for Commonwealth terrestrial and marine reserves and Table 4 provides an overview of individual reserves for 2012–13.

An Agency Resourcing Statement was introduced to Portfolio Budget Statements for government departments in 2008–09 to provide information about the various funding sources that CAC Act agencies draw upon during the year. An Agency Resourcing Statement that reconciles to cash reserves in the financial statements for the Director of National Parks is provided at Appendix A.

**Table 1: Analysis of variance against budget 2012–13**

Business area	Income	Expenses
Jointly managed parks	Down \$0.235 million due to lower than expected entry fees at Uluru–Kata Tjuta and Booderee and lower than anticipated staff recoveries at Kakadu. These amounts are partially offset by an increase in permit revenue at Kakadu.	Up \$0.430 million due to overspends in depreciation and repairs and maintenance. In addition, each of the jointly managed parks recorded a loss on the sale of assets that was not originally budgeted for. These overspends are partially offset by underspends in employee expenses, acquisitions of goods and consultants.
Other parks and reserves	Up \$0.074 million due to higher than budgeted sales of goods and services at Christmas Island.	Up \$0.401 million as a result of higher than anticipated depreciation and employee expenses.
Governance, corporate services and executive	Down \$0.240 million due to lower than anticipated interest revenue.	Down \$0.325 million due predominately to underspends on audit fees and conference and employee expenses.

**Table 2: Overview of financial results 2012–13**

		2012 Actuals \$000s	2013 Actuals \$000s	2013 Budget \$000s	2013 Variance \$000s
Jointly managed parks <sup>(a)</sup>	Income	35,999	34,223	34,458	(235)
	Expenses	(47,831)	(43,463)	(43,033)	(430)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(11,832)	(9,240)	(8,575)	(665)
Other terrestrial parks and reserves <sup>(b)</sup>	Income	15,837	16,711	16,637	74
	Expenses	(16,379)	(17,536)	(17,135)	(401)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(542)	(825)	(498)	(327)
<b>Total for terrestrial parks and reserves</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>51,836</b>	<b>50,934</b>	<b>51,095</b>	<b>(161)</b>
	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>(64,210)</b>	<b>(60,999)</b>	<b>(60,168)</b>	<b>(831)</b>
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(12,374)</b>	<b>(10,065)</b>	<b>(9,073)</b>	<b>(992)</b>
Governance, corporate services and executive <sup>(c)</sup>	Income	10,418	11,351	11,595	(244)
	Expenses	(10,477)	(10,970)	(11,295)	325
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(58)	381	300	81
<b>Total for Director of National Parks</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>62,254</b>	<b>62,285</b>	<b>62,690</b>	<b>(405)</b>
	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>(74,687)</b>	<b>(71,969)</b>	<b>(71,463)</b>	<b>(506)</b>
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(12,433)</b>	<b>(9,684)</b>	<b>(8,773)</b>	<b>(911)</b>

(a) Kakadu, Uluru–Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks.

(b) Includes Calperum and Taylorville Stations which are not formal reserves.

(c) Governance, corporate services and executive includes administration, finance, legal, insurance, planning, interest income and bank charges.

**Table 3: Five-year overview of terrestrial and marine Commonwealth reserves**

	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13
<b>Number of staff (full-time equivalent)</b>					
Management of terrestrial reserves	293	290	281.4	261	260
Management of marine reserves <sup>(a)</sup>	16	15	13.7	18.2	18.2
<b>Area of Commonwealth reserves (hectares)</b>					
Terrestrial reserves area (number of reserves)	2,130,774 (7)	2,130,774 (7)	2,130,774 (7)	2,130,774 (7)	2,132,002 (7)
Marine reserves area (number of reserves)	49,844,075 (26)	49,844,075 (26)	49,844,075 (26)	49,844,075 (26)	282,773,335 (59)
<b>Visitors to Commonwealth terrestrial reserves</b>					
Number of visitors	1,410,021	1,445,381	1,368,868	1,364,714	1,300,309
<b>Safety incidents recorded in Commonwealth terrestrial reserves (including staff, contractors, visitors)</b>					
Minor injury or near miss	101	126	126	171	86
Moderate injury	52	41	54	37	24
Major injury	8	20	25	6	4
Death	4	2	4	2	2
<b>Compliance and enforcement—Commonwealth terrestrial reserves</b>					
EPBC Act incidents detected	126	203	105	125	116
Warnings and cautions issued	56	147	58	62	59
Infringement notices issued	20	38	42	87	67
Cases taken to court	0	2	1	0	1
Court convictions	1	0	0	0	0
Court cases pending at year end	1	2	0	0	0
<b>Financial summary—Commonwealth terrestrial reserves (\$ millions)</b>					
<b>Operations</b>					
Total operating expenditure <sup>(b)(c)</sup>	61.25	58.88	54.64	64.21	60.99
Total operating revenue <sup>(c)</sup>	62.63	59.04	67.07	51.83	50.93
<b>Financial position<sup>(d)</sup></b>					
Current assets	29.30	29.30	44.91	45.35	44.79
Non-current assets	149.48	41.67	219.73	208.12	200.47
Current liabilities	10.90	151.54	12.17	13.30	14.75
Non-current liabilities	0.50	17.80	0.59	0.73	0.76
Total equity	167.38	0.54	251.87	239.44	229.75
<b>Financial summary—Commonwealth marine reserves (\$ millions)</b>					
Total operating expenditure	4.55	2.80	3.51	3.32	7.20
Total operating revenue	4.55	2.80	3.51	3.32	6.97

(a) In addition, in the 2012–13 financial year an additional 24.6 staff transferred to the Director following the proclamation of new Commonwealth marine reserves. Staff numbers for management of marine reserves for 2013–14 will reflect all staff of the Commonwealth Marine Reserves Branch.

(b) Includes the management contract for Calperum and Taylorville Stations which are not Commonwealth reserves. Excludes governance, corporate services and executive, which can be found in table 2.

(c) Includes revenue from all sources including grants from portfolio agency and externally raised revenue.

(d) Changes in accounting policy had prior year impacts.

Table 4: Overview of individual reserves in 2012–13

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category <sup>(a)</sup>	Operating cost (\$'000s)	Capital expenditure <sup>(b)</sup> (\$'000s)	External revenue <sup>(c)</sup> (\$'000s)	Payment to traditional owners (\$'000s)
<b>Jointly managed national parks</b>							
Booderee National Park	6,379	1992	II	7,300	803	1,509	632
Kakadu National Park	1,980,995	1979	II	21,084	2,197	3,082	1,706
Uluṛu–Kata Tjuṛa National Park	132,566	1977	II	15,079	1,561	6,281	1,666
<b>Other Commonwealth terrestrial reserves</b>							
Australian National Botanic Gardens	85	1991	IV	10,645	1,793	1,421	
Christmas Island National Park	8,719	1980	II	5,024	1,358	3,208	
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	656	1986	II	988	169	47	
Pulu Keeling National Park	2,602	1995	II	492	0	15	
<b>Commonwealth marine reserves<sup>(d)</sup></b>							
On 17 November 2012, 40 Commonwealth marine reserves were proclaimed under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> and the names of four existing reserves were amended. Associated with declaration of the new reserves was revocation of seven reserves and one conservation zone as the areas are included in the new marine reserves.							
Argo-Rowley Terrace	14,609,910	2012	II, VI				
Ashmore Reef (formerly Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve)	58,337	1983	Ia, II				
Carnarvon Canyon	617,669	2012	IV				
Cartier Island (formerly Cartier Island Marine Reserve)	17,237	2000	Ia				
Dampier	125,158	2012	II, VI				
Eighty Mile Beach	1,078,521	2012	VI				
Gascoyne	8,176,611	2012	II, IV, VI	293.5			
Kimberley	7,446,857	2012	II, IV, VI				
Mermaid Reef (formerly Mermaid Reef National Nature Reserve)	53,987	1991	Ia				
Montebello	341,279	2012	VI				
Ningaloo (formerly Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters))	243,513	1987	II				
Roeback	30,370	2012	VI				
Shark Bay	744,254	2012	VI				

North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network



Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category <sup>(a)</sup>	Operating cost (\$000s)	Capital expenditure <sup>(b)</sup> (\$000s)	External revenue <sup>(c)</sup> (\$000s)	Payment to traditional owners (\$000s)
Arafura	2,292,416	2012	VI				
Arnhem	712,486	2012	VI				
Gulf of Carpentaria	2,377,453	2012	II, VI				
Joseph Bonaparte Gulf	859,704	2012	VI	0			North Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network
Limmen	1,39,919	2012	VI				
Oceanic Shoals	7,174,328	2012	VI				
Wessel	590,807	2012	II, VI				
West Cape York	1,601,223	2012	II, VI				
Central Eastern	7,005,406	2012	II, IV, VI				
Cod Grounds (includes former Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve)	407	2012	II				
Gifford	582,851	2012	IV				
Hunter	625,737	2012	VI				
Jervis	247,342	2012	VI				
Lord Howe (includes former Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters) and Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve)	11,013,878	2012	II, IV, VI	278.7			Temperate East Commonwealth Reserves Network
Norfolk	18,844,343	2012	II, IV, VI				
Solitary Islands (includes former Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters))	15,232	2012	II, VI				



Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category <sup>(a)</sup>	Operating cost (\$'000s)	Capital expenditure <sup>(b)</sup> (\$'000s)	External revenue <sup>(c)</sup> (\$'000s)	Payment to traditional owners (\$'000s)
Abrolhos	8,812,598	2012	II, IV, VI				
Bremer	447,230	2012	II, VI				
Eastern Recherche	2,057,403	2012	II, VI				
Geographie	97,665	2012	II, VI				
Great Australian Bight (includes former Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters))	4,592,550	2012	II, VI				
Jurien	185,089	2012	II, VI				
Murat	93,777	2012	II	88.3		South-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network	
Perth Canyon	740,923	2012	II, IV, VI				
Southern Kangaroo Island	62,994	2012	VI				
South-west Corner	27,189,789	2012	II, IV, VI				
Twilight	464,131	2012	II				
Two Rocks	88,225	2012	II, VI				
Western Eyre	5,794,609	2012	II, VI				
Western Kangaroo Island	233,533	2012	II, VI				

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category <sup>(a)</sup>	Operating cost (\$000s)	Capital expenditure <sup>(b)</sup> (\$000s)	External revenue <sup>(c)</sup> (\$000s)	Payment to traditional owners (\$000s)
Apollo	118,360	2007	VI				
Beagle	292,758	2007	VI				
Boags	53,748	2007	VI				
East Gippsland	413,664	2007	VI				
Flinders	2,704,306	2007	Ia, VI				
Franklin	67,077	2007	VI				
Freycinet	5,794,248	2007	Ia, II, VI				
Huon	999,074	2007	Ia, VI	319.5			South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network
Macquarie Island	16,189,466	1999	Ia, IV				
Murray	2,580,312	2007	Ia, VI				
Nelson	612,311	2007	VI				
South Tasman Rise	2,770,437	2007	VI				
Tasman Fracture	4,250,056	2007	Ia, VI				
Zeehan	1,989,697	2007	VI				
Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve (includes former Coral Sea Conservation Zone, Coringa–Herald National Nature Reserve and Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve) <sup>(e)</sup>	98,984,225	2012	II, IV, VI	0			
Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve <sup>(f)</sup>	6,465,845	2002	Ia	30.0			

(a) The IUCN protected area classification system comprises seven management categories, not all of which have been applied to reserves declared under the EPBC Act. Sections of some reserves are zoned a different IUCN category from the reserve as a whole, to reflect the management strategy for those sections.

(b) Includes assets recognised for the first time as part of the asset revaluation process.

(c) External revenue represents total revenue from the income statement less grants from portfolio agency and assets recognised for the first time.

(d) Operating costs for the 58 marine reserves managed by Parks Australia include relevant annual business agreement, aerial surveillance and incident management costs and exclude services provided under MOUs or business agreements by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and costs across all reserves that are not attributable by region.

(e) Services provided by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service are not included.

(f) Managed by the Australian Antarctic Division under delegation from the Director.

# Overview of the Director of National Parks' responsibilities

## Joint management of nationally significant protected areas

Parks Australia has a long and proud history of working with Indigenous Australians in the joint management of protected areas. The Director, together with traditional owners, jointly manages three national parks—Kakadu and Uluru–Kata Tjuta national parks in the Northern Territory, both World Heritage listed, and Booderee National Park in the Jervis Bay Territory.

Traditional owners maintain strong links to their country in these parks, links that are demonstrated through their cultural and spiritual beliefs and traditional use and management of their country. Parks Australia supports traditional owners in maintaining their living culture and incorporates traditional land management practices into park management.

Kakadu National Park is an Aboriginal living cultural landscape. A strong relationship exists between Bininj and their country in ongoing traditions, cultural practices, beliefs and knowledge. An estimated 15 000 rock art sites and innumerable artefacts and sites of cultural, archaeological and historic significance in the Kakadu region contribute to archaeological evidence indicating that people have lived continuously in the region for at least 50 000 years.

Kakadu contains almost an entire major tropical river catchment (the South Alligator River catchment) and large representative examples of the wet-dry tropical ecosystems of northern Australia. The park is ecologically and biologically diverse, encompassing the sandstone plateau and escarpment, monsoon forests and extensive areas of savanna woodlands as well as riverine environments such as billabongs and floodplains. The entire park is listed under The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) and many species in the park are protected under international agreements.

In June 2011 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Heritage Committee included Koongarra—a 1 200 hectare site surrounded by, but excluded from, Kakadu National Park—as part of the Kakadu World Heritage Area. The process of fully protecting Koongarra under the EPBC Act was completed in February 2013 with its incorporation in the park.

Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park is the physical and metaphoric heart of Australia. A key part of Australia's iconic Red Centre, this living cultural landscape is a world-class visitor destination and, along with Kakadu, was one of the first areas identified in the National Landscape program. Parks Australia works with the Anangu traditional owners to protect, conserve and document the cultural and natural heritage of the park using *Tjukurpa* (traditional law and culture) as a guiding influence. Located in the Greater Sandy Desert bioregion, which includes parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the park contributes significantly to long-term biodiversity conservation in the region. The park has a particularly rich and diverse suite of arid environment species and supports populations of a number of rare and endemic species.

Booderee National Park at Jervis Bay is of great significance to its traditional owners, the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council, who are increasingly involved through a unique and evolving joint management model in running and servicing the park. The service contract between the Director and the Council is worth \$20 million over 10 years and is a significant employer of community members. Jervis Bay is one of the major biogeographic nodes in Australia and contains a variety of relatively undisturbed marine and terrestrial habitats. The park protects most of the bay's southern Bherwerre Peninsula, Bowen Island and the waters and seabed in the southern part of the bay.

Booderee staff work cooperatively with the adjoining New South Wales Jervis Bay National Park and Jervis Bay Marine Park to protect the region's biodiversity. Intensive control of foxes and other invasive species has led to the recovery of species such as the endangered eastern bristlebird. This has paved the way for the planned reintroduction of several species of small mammals long extinct in the area.

Parks Australia's relationship with Indigenous communities in the jointly managed parks continues to develop. Staff are building business models and providing opportunities for Indigenous employment and enterprises in these parks. The overall objective is to have the parks self-managed by traditional owners. In building a knowledge-based approach to management, Parks Australia is committed to ensuring that traditional knowledge is used effectively.

Parks Australia works with the Northern Territory Government, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in implementing the Australian Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response and the Closing the Gap initiative. The jointly managed parks in particular support Indigenous owned and operated enterprises and provide training and employment for Indigenous communities.

## Protecting unique island ecosystems

Parks Australia manages three national parks in Australia's ocean territories. Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean and Norfolk Island in the Pacific Ocean are home to unique and fragile endemic flora and fauna that have evolved over a long period in isolation. These remote island parks have immense scientific, educational and conservation value and Parks Australia is working to develop more holistic models for their management.

Christmas Island supports a wide range of unusual species and habitats, some found only on the island, and is of great international conservation and scientific interest. Although the island has been mined for phosphates since the late 1890s, most of its rainforest ecosystem remains relatively intact and Christmas Island National Park now protects about two-thirds of the island environment, including two wetlands listed as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The island's marine waters supports more than 650 tropical fish species, including hybrid fish not found anywhere else in the world and habitat for juvenile migrating whale sharks.

The island has the most diverse and abundant land crab fauna on earth, most notably an estimated 45 million red crabs which are the island's 'keystone' species as they influence the structure and species composition of the island's rainforest. Red crabs are renowned for their annual wet season breeding migration, where tens of millions migrate to the sea to release

## An historic moment

Emotions ran high this year as Koongarra officially became part of Kakadu National Park, protecting it forever from the possibility of mining.

The shady woodlands of Koongarra lie in the shadow of Nourlangie Rock, one of Kakadu's most popular visitor destinations.

On its other side, Koongarra faces Lightning Dreaming, home of Namarrgon or Lightning Man, the creation ancestor responsible for the dramatic electrical storms on the Arnhem plateau.

This stunning country was excluded from Kakadu National Park's original boundaries in 1979 because of its potential uranium resources.

Koongarra's senior custodian, Djok man Jeffrey Lee has led a decades-long campaign to protect this land as part of Kakadu.

Along the way, Jeff turned down a substantial amount of money in potential mining royalties for the sake of looking after his cultural land.

Jeff's fight took him to Darwin, Sydney—even Paris to successfully argue for the area to be World Heritage listed.

He came to Canberra on Wednesday 6 February this year to hear then Environment Minister Tony Burke introduce legislation in the Australian Parliament to repeal the *Koongarra Project Area Act*, a law created in 1981, to make uranium mining economically feasible at Koongarra.

"Today—this is the day. This is the moment that I was waiting for, (for a) very long, long time," Jeff said at the time.

And it was the day. Jeff sat with former Prime Minister Bob Hawke in the gallery and Kakadu traditional owner Stewart Gangali to hear the reading, the emotion from Jeff and everyone else watching proceedings was intense. The Bill passed with the support of all parties.

Then on the stroke of midnight on Thursday 14 February 2013, the fight was finally over, when the proclamation signed by Governor-General Quentin Bryce to add Koongarra to Kakadu National Park came into force.

This proclamation completed a three year process by the Australian Government to protect these spectacular ancestral lands.

It ensures Koongarra can never be mined, giving it permanent protection under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.



*Koongarra traditional owner Jeffrey Lee.*

their eggs. The island also provides the last remaining nesting habitat for two threatened seabird species (Abbott's booby and the Christmas Island frigatebird) and supports many endemic plant and animal species.

The island's geology, unique rainforest and spectacular views are well represented in the park. But its establishment has not prevented continuing incursion and impacts of exotic species, which have disrupted the island's natural ecological processes. Yellow crazy ants have severely reduced numbers of red crabs and pose a significant threat to many other species. The ants are the subject of a major control program which includes researching and implementing biological control as a long-term alternative to current baiting techniques.

The Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the final report of the Christmas Island Expert Working Group, first established in response to the dramatic decline of the endemic pipistrelle bat, was released in November 2011. The response provides the basis for a more integrated approach to tackling pressures on the island's biodiversity; the collaborative feral cat and rat control that is currently under way provides a great example of what is possible. While resources remain a challenge, expanding cat and rat control, improvements to biosecurity procedures and enhanced monitoring of biodiversity (particularly determining the threats leading to some native species' declines) are the focus of further work. Although the pipistrelle is now presumed extinct, further implementation of the working group's recommendations will help shape effective measures to stem further decline in the island's unique biodiversity.

North Keeling Island is an isolated coral atoll in the Territory of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and its relatively untouched environment is a valuable biological resource. It is one of the few tropical islands in the Indian Ocean to have largely escaped the damaging effects of human settlement.

Pulu Keeling National Park consists of North Keeling Island and its marine area extending 1.5 kilometres from the shore. The park is listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is an internationally recognised seabird rookery and supports one of the world's largest remaining populations of the red-footed booby. The park also provides critical habitat for the threatened Cocos buff-banded rail. Pulu Keeling's forests and other flora are examples of the original vegetation of the region and include a number of species now not found elsewhere in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The park's waters are one of the last areas of pristine reef systems in the world.

Norfolk Island National Park is jointly proclaimed under Commonwealth and Norfolk Island legislation. Set in the south-west Pacific Ocean, the Territory of Norfolk Island provides a link between tropical and temperate oceanic island environments and is home to unique flora and fauna.

The park covers 19 per cent of the Norfolk Island Group, comprising remnant areas of subtropical rainforest and viney hardwood forest that once covered the island before human settlement. The park is habitat for a range of threatened plants, birds and other species. Neighbouring Phillip Island, which is included in the park, is free of damaging introduced species such as cats and rats and is home to large numbers of nesting seabirds.

Management of Norfolk Island National Park is strongly focused on habitat restoration through controlling invasive species, planting native vegetation and controlling erosion. The park and adjacent Norfolk Island Botanic Garden also provide educational, scientific, cultural and recreational opportunities for Norfolk Island residents and visitors and are a valuable resource for the Norfolk Island tourism industry.

## Calperum and Taylorville stations

The Director also manages Calperum and Taylorville stations, adjoining pastoral leases located near Renmark in South Australia. The properties comprise more than 300 000 hectares of predominantly open mallee bushland and Murray River floodplains and form part of the Riverland Biosphere Reserve. They include wetlands recognised as internationally significant under the Ramsar Convention and large areas of intact mallee which are habitat for several nationally endangered species.

The Director holds the leases for the properties which are managed for conservation purposes consistent with trust arrangements established when they were acquired with funds contributed by the Australian Government. The properties have been managed for a number of years on behalf of the Director by Austland Services Pty Ltd (a company owned by the Australian Landscape Trust).

## Protecting the marine environment

Australia's vast coastal waters and oceans contain some of the greatest marine biodiversity on Earth. Australia is the world's largest island, with a coastline stretching more than 32 000 kilometres. Australia's marine jurisdiction is larger than the mainland and covers around 14 million square kilometres of ocean.

In 2012–13 the department completed an extensive consultation process to extend Australia's network of marine reserves: networks of Commonwealth marine reserves in the South-west, North-west, North and Temperate East marine regions and the Coral Sea were developed as the end result of the detailed marine bioregional planning process. During the year the department developed the statutory tools to ensure the reserves are managed effectively and efficiently.

Following consideration of approximately 80 000 submissions received in response to an invitation for public comment on a proposal to establish new reserves, 40 new Commonwealth marine reserves were proclaimed under the EPBC Act in November 2012. Associated with the declaration was revocation of seven existing marine reserves and one conservation zone as these areas are included in the new reserves.

The new reserves cover more than 2.3 million square kilometres of ocean and expands the marine environment under protection to some 2.8 million square kilometres. With the new declarations, the Director is responsible for a network of 59 Commonwealth marine reserves that extend from southern sub-Antarctic waters through temperate southern waters to the tropical north.

Most Commonwealth marine reserves are managed by staff of Parks Australia. The management of the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve is delegated to the Australian Antarctic Division, in recognition of the division's responsibilities for the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Territory and its expertise in working in the remote sub-Antarctic environment. Outside the Director's responsibility is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park which is managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority under separate legislation.

## Protecting Australia's marine environment

In November 2012 the Australian Government declared a new national network of Commonwealth marine reserves which protects more than 2.8 million square kilometres of Australia's marine environment.

The forty new Commonwealth marine reserves are spread around Australia, adding to a small number of existing reserves and the fourteen reserves in the South-east regional network that were proclaimed in 2007. The system now consists of 57 separate marine reserves grouped in five regional networks plus the large Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve.

How the reserves are managed and the type of activities allowed are set out in management plans that cover each network and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve.

The development of the marine reserves networks and the plans that underpin them, have involved a lengthy public consultation process which included public meetings around Australia and resulted in an unprecedented public response. At the end of four years of consultation more than 745,000 submissions were received.

Parks Australia is now working with industry and stakeholders to ensure they are informed and stay up to date with the management of the new marine reserves.

Existing management arrangements for former reserves, including those areas subsumed into new reserves, will remain in place until the new management plans come into effect.

Australia's significant marine reserves network plays a central role in the ecosystem-based management of the marine environment, providing for ecologically sustainable use as well as the protection of habitats and species.

The **South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network** has a range of shallow shelf, slope and deep water ecosystems that provide important habitats for a variety of bird and sea life. Migratory whales make their way through these waters on their journey to and from Antarctica along Australia's east coast twice a year. Beneath the waves, iconic species such as white sharks, southern bluefin tuna and blue whales roam. In the deep sea, there are a diverse range of fishes and other creatures, such as crabs, coral, sea urchins and sponges that have bizarre and fascinating adaptations to survive in the dark depths. There are three historic shipwrecks in marine reserves of the South-east contributing to the heritage and cultural values of the network.

Several endangered or vulnerable species can be found within the **Temperate East Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network** including the critically-endangered east coast population of grey nurse shark and the vulnerable white shark. Scientists have recently discovered that several significant seamount ridges in the region support hundreds of species, including some previously unknown to science. The network also includes important offshore reef habitats that support the threatened black cod; the southernmost extent of many reef-building coral species; as well as important breeding, foraging and feeding areas for several species of seabird including the little tern. There are a number of historic shipwrecks,



a World Heritage Place, National Heritage Places and a Ramsar site that contribute to the values of the Temperate East network.

The **Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve** provides for the protection of many endangered or vulnerable species, including endangered loggerhead and leatherback turtles and the critically endangered herald petrel.



*Whale Shark in the Ningaloo Marine Park. Photo: Erik Schlogl*

The reserve also supports the world's only confirmed spawning aggregation area for black marlin. Areas of high productivity in the reserve, such as those around seamounts, are important aggregation sites for a range of species including lanternfish, albacore tuna, billfish and sharks. Large marine mammals journey hundreds or even thousands of kilometres to breed in the reserve, or travel through it en route to breeding areas. In addition to being adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, there are five important and historic shipwrecks, several other listed historic shipwrecks and a Ramsar site that contribute to the heritage and cultural values within the Reserve.

Six of the world's seven species of marine turtles can be found within the **North Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network**, as well as migratory birds of international significance such as the common noddy, bridled tern, roseate tern and the crested tern. A number of unique seafloor features as well as habitats for other species such as dugongs, whales, dolphins, sea snakes and sharks are included in the North network.

Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle can be found within the **North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network**, along with dugongs, sawfish and many species of sea snake. The world's largest fish – the whale shark – aggregates every year off the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef, while the world's largest population of Humpback whales migrates every year from Antarctica to breed in the warm waters off the Kimberley coast. There are three historic shipwrecks, the Ningaloo World Heritage Area, National Heritage Place and a Ramsar site that contribute to the values of the North-west network.

**The South-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network** provides protection for the habitat of species endemic to Australia's South-west, including the Australian sea lion and the Australian lesser noddy. Several threatened species that travel long distances and visit the region during important stages of their life cycles, such as the endangered southern right whale, blue whale and humpback whale. The iconic biodiversity hotspots of the Abrolhos, Perth Canyon, Geographe Bay, the Naturaliste Plateau, Diamantina Fracture and Recherche Archipelago are all included in the South-west network. In addition to being adjacent to the Shark Bay World Heritage Area the South-west network includes an historic shipwreck.

## Getting fit at Booderee

Fire-fighting is strenuous and demanding work. Every year Booderee National Park staff undergo fitness training to make sure they are ready for the fire season.

Booderee is fire prone and receives most of its 400,000 annual visitors during the summer months when fire risk is high and working conditions hot. Fires can burn for weeks, often needing a long fire-fighting campaign to bring under control.



*Booderee staff undergo fire fitness training.*

Staff also receive regular, good advice about their health with medicals undertaken every one to three years.

Training manager Brenda Duffy said there had been some initial apprehension, but staff had embraced the opportunity to improve fitness at work, with many now taking up regular swimming and exercise at the local sports centre.

Around 90 per cent of Booderee staff have passed medicals and can participate in the program. The level of staff participation is excellent and includes 100 per cent of Indigenous staff in the park.

Indigenous staff member Anthony Roberts says everyone is enthusiastic about the program.

“The benefit of a regular fitness program and the ongoing support provided by the park has been a positive initiative to improve Indigenous health,” he said.

“Many of us have become more aware of health risks in the workplace and have made improvements to include regular exercise.”

Booderee has introduced an eight-week fitness program to improve staff’s health and resilience.

The program can take someone who does not undertake any exercise to the aerobic fitness level required to fight fires. Booderee adopted standardised fitness levels in 2009, categorising them as light, moderate and arduous.

The moderate test is the mandatory starting point for Booderee staff to become active fire-fighters. The test requires staff to walk 3.2 km in 30 minutes while carrying 11.3 kg.

The new marine reserves will be managed as five regional reserve networks. The management plan for the South-east Network applies from 1 July 2013. The management plans for the remaining networks and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve come into effect on 1 July 2014. Transitional management arrangements were put in place during 2012–13 to allow for a period of adjustment prior to the new management plans coming into effect.

As the largest system of marine reserves in the world, these networks of reserves will play an important role in the long-term conservation of marine ecosystems and the biodiversity of our oceans. They also meet Australia's international and national commitments to establish a national representative system of marine protected areas by 2012.

## Understanding and studying Australia's biodiversity

### Commonwealth botanic gardens

Parks Australia is the custodian of three botanic gardens: the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Norfolk Island Botanic Garden and Booderee Botanic Gardens.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens is a major national scientific, educational and recreational resource located in Canberra. It was among the first botanic gardens in the world to adopt the study and display of indigenous species as a principal goal. The living collection currently contains one-third of the nation's known flowering plant species which makes the Gardens the custodian of one of the largest collections (in terms of species) of Australian plants with an emphasis on threatened species. The Gardens provides a diverse range of education and public programs to raise awareness of the value of Australia's unique flora.

Norfolk Island Botanic Garden maintains a living and herbarium collection of Norfolk Island's flora and contributes to raising awareness in the local community and for visitors to the island through education and interpretation programs.

Formerly an annex to the Australian National Botanic Gardens and now part of Booderee National Park, Booderee Botanic Gardens represents the regional biodiversity of south-east coastal New South Wales with a strong focus on the relationship between plants and the park's Indigenous owners, the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community.

### A knowledge bank of Australia's biodiversity

Parks Australia's work to enhance and share knowledge of Australia's biodiversity is delivered via the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research and the Australian Biological Resources Study.

The Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research is a joint venture between the Australian National Botanic Gardens and the CSIRO's Plant Industry Division. Its principal function is to document the identity, origin, occurrence, distribution and human impact of Australia's native and introduced plant species. The Centre's cornerstone is the Australian National Herbarium which houses approximately 1.2 million plant specimens, documenting the diversity of Australian flora and providing voucher specimens for research, environmental studies and for the Gardens' living collection. The herbarium is a major contributor to national projects that disseminate biodiversity information, notably Australia's Virtual Herbarium and the Atlas of Living Australia, as well as international projects such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility.

The Australian Biological Resources Study collects and disseminates information on plants, animals and other organisms found in Australia. Its range of taxonomic work and databases provides authoritative national references for species' names. The program funds research and training in taxonomy through the National Taxonomy Research Grant Program—the only ongoing source of funding for taxonomic research in Australia. Accurate naming of species and understanding their relationships is critical for biodiversity conservation, biosecurity and a range of industry uses such as agriculture, horticulture and forestry.

In partnership with BHP Billiton, the Australian Biological Resources Study manages the Bush Blitz species discovery program that, since 2009, has undertaken 17 biodiscovery expeditions to more than 60 National Reserve System properties totalling more than 3 million hectares. The program to date has discovered more than 650 new species and provided baseline scientific data to help manage and protect biodiversity regionally and nationally.

Outputs of the Australian Biological Resources Study, including performance results for 2012–13, are reported in the department's annual report.

### **Innovation at Australia's top tourism attraction**

The iconic Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park took out the top prize at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards in 2012, being named the country's best major tourist attraction.

Our park beat a strong field of some of Australia's most popular institutions such as the National Gallery of Australia, Tasmania's Port Arthur Historic Site and Melbourne Museum in Victoria.

It's the first time one of our Commonwealth parks has received the prestigious award—well-deserved recognition for Uluru's traditional owners and rangers.

Uluru traditional owner and board member Sammy Wilson collected the award on the night, speaking passionately in his traditional language of Pitjantjatjara and in English.

"This is everybody's award. It says 'we're here' to Australia, we're from the centre of Australia, and we thank everybody from Australia for this award," he said.

"We're working together, the Australian Government, the park, the board, the people, we're all working together to welcome visitors to come and see us, see what we're doing, sharing our place with people from around the world."

The breadth of work going on in the park today is astonishing. Everything from cultural tours and dot painting workshops in the Cultural Centre, to maintaining rock art and sacred sites, to keeping visitors' safe and looking after Uluru's stunning landscapes, plants and animals contributes to the park's success.

More than 250,000 people visit Uluru each year, many of them from overseas, delivering economic benefits back to the communities of Central Australia.

Our park helps support the many and varied jobs at Ayers Rock Resort and tourist spending on flights, hotel rooms, local artworks, souvenirs, groceries and petrol.

Today we're continuing to innovate to support our programs. We hate waste as much as the next person, so we were pretty excited when one of our park staff, Sharon Davies, came up with a brilliant idea to recycle waste and help raise funds for our mala (rufous-hare wallaby) project—mala poo paper.

The mala is a small and critically endangered wallaby, no longer found in the wild. It survives in a few feral proof enclosures scattered around Australia and some islands off the West Australian coast. Uluru's mala enclosure covers 170 hectares and is surrounded by a cat and fox proof fence. Inside, the mala live a fairly natural life, apart from the provision of supplementary food in drier times.

Providing this supplementary food and water costs us \$22,000 per year. Selling mala poo paper to our visitors contributes to this cost. Mala poo is removed from feeding stations to decrease the risk of food contamination and disease. Sharon then uses it to make plain and floral paper, cards and a mala photo card.

Visit the park today to get your own mala poo paper or email [uluru.info@environment.gov.au](mailto:uluru.info@environment.gov.au) to find out how you can help support our mala.



*From left, the park's visitor manager Chris Martin, Anna Morgan and board member Sammy Wilson celebrate Uluru-Kata Tjuta's win at the national tourism awards.*

## Giving our plants a future

Tucked away quietly in our Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra is one of the city's most important institutions—the National Seed Bank.

Home to a large and increasing collection of Australian native seeds, the seed bank is playing a key role in our fight to safeguard native plants against threats such as climate change and disease.

The National Seed Bank currently holds around 5900 seed collections from more than 3000 different species, dating back to the 1960s.

Holding seeds in the short-term supports the living collections of our Gardens and its nursery, making sure we have readily available native plants for display, research and education. Collections in long-term storage are a significant resource for threatened species recovery and scientific research.

These seeds hold the genetic information needed to reproduce a plant, making them an efficient way to insure against the loss of species in the wild. Stored safely in our bank, seeds can remain viable for hundreds of years. Making use of these seeds in the future is

## Managing access to genetic resources

The Director is responsible for developing Australian Government policy for the management of Australia's genetic resources, including regulating access to resources in Commonwealth areas and benefit-sharing arrangements. Parks Australia works with state and territory agencies to support a nationally consistent regulatory approach for access to, and use of, Australia's native genetic and biochemical resources, and promotes best practice in managing access to genetic resources. Queensland and the Northern Territory, along with the Australian Government, have enacted measures to implement a nationally consistent approach to access and benefit sharing, with other jurisdictions working towards that goal.

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization was adopted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, and Australia signed the Nagoya Protocol on 20 January 2012. In consultation with key stakeholders, including regional and other international partners at the first Oceania Biodiscovery Forum, an implementation model for the Nagoya Protocol has been developed to enable an informed decision by government on its ratification. When it enters into force, the protocol will establish a legally-binding framework for access to genetic resources for biotechnology research and development and other research activities. It also provides a framework for sharing benefits arising from the use of genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge.

Outputs of the program to manage access to genetic resources, including performance results for 2012–13, are reported in the department's annual report.



Annette Harry, Australian National Botanic Gardens Seedy Volunteer, and Tom North, the Gardens' National Seed Bank Manager, collect seeds from the nationally listed, endangered Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory. Photo: J. Fitzgerald, Australian National Botanic Gardens

woodlands. They are also collecting and storing seed, and developing propagation protocols, for rare and threatened orchids to help the Territory government's species recovery programs.

A project collecting rare and threatened species from Norfolk Island National Park is part of a national effort, the Australian Seed Bank Partnership's 1000 Species program, supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew's Millennium Seed Bank. The Australian National Botanic Gardens is one of nine institutions across the country working together to add 1000 species not previously collected, to Australia and Kew's seed banks.

The National Seed Bank is one of the unsung heroes of Parks Australia's conservation efforts, an astonishing resource for researchers from around Australia and the world.

the key to using the seed bank as a tool in plant conservation.

The National Seed Bank has focused its seed collecting efforts on nationally listed plant communities and species endemic to Canberra's local alpine, subalpine, grassy woodland and grassland regions. For example, between 2007 and 2013 more than 570 alpine and subalpine seed collections have been banked with us in association with a range of partners such as the ACT Government, Australian National University and the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Not only have these partnerships significantly expanded the number of alpine species held in the National Seed Bank, research into the collection is helping determine the impacts of climate change on reproductive ecology and the demography of alpine flora. Seeds collected from endangered alpine and subalpine *Sphagnum* bogs and fens are helping us to better understand ecological drivers of seed germination in this community so that the knowledge is available for management and restoration.

The National Seed Bank and Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research are providing seeds and expertise to help restore the Australian Capital Territory's grassy

## Providing national leadership

The Australian National Botanic Gardens supports a national role for Australia's botanic gardens in conserving biodiversity through national forums such as the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens and the National Seedbank Partnership. Collaboration with partners in Melanesia and South-East Asia on biodiversity informatics has also strengthened scientific and conservation relationships in the region.

The Director is the national focal point for a number of key thematic areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including the Global Taxonomy Initiative, the Global Strategy on Plant Conservation, the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing and for Protected Areas. These national leadership roles represent a significant contribution to the implementation of Australia's obligations under that convention, and to the scientific knowledge underpinning the management and conservation of our biological diversity.

The Director is an active participant in the work of IUCN and in September 2012 led the Australian Delegation to the IUCN World Conservation Congress, which sets the priorities and work program for IUCN for the next four years.

## Planning for the IUCN World Parks Congress

With New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks Australia will co-host the IUCN World Parks Congress. The congress will be held at Sydney Olympic Park from 12 to 19 November 2014 with 3000 delegates from around 160 countries expected to attend.

Parks Australia has been working closely with partners to set the strategic direction for the congress, its program and plan for delivery. To realise the purpose of the congress—to position parks and protected areas within broader goals of economic and community wellbeing—we are working to bring together not only leaders in the parks and protected areas sector but also business, government and influential individuals beyond it.

### **Bush Blitz—Species discovery—inspiring school kids and their teachers**

Bush Blitz is the cornerstone of our national efforts to discover and protect terrestrial biodiversity. Since it began in 2009, some of Australia's top researchers and scientists have had great success discovering more than 650 species on 17 expeditions across Australia.

The Australian Biological Resources Study within Parks Australia has played the lead role in delivering this logistically complex and demanding program. Due to its success the Australian Government and BHP Billiton (through its Sustainable Communities Program) have committed further funding of \$12 million to support a second four-year Bush Blitz partnership.





*Totally Wild presenter Pip Russell lends Brad Wilken from Alfred Deakin High School and Dane Trembath from EcOz Environmental Services a hand trapping snakes. Photo: Jo Harding*

Bush Blitz TeachLive will be an important addition to the second phase of the program. It was piloted in May 2013 at Henbury Station in the Northern Territory. Bush Blitz TeachLive encourages Australian school teachers and kids to get interested in biodiversity science.

Mady Colquhoun from Armadale Primary School in Perth was one of five teachers invited to be part of the first TeachLive project. She spent eight days and nights scouring Henbury Station, near Alice Springs, for new plant and animal species—and she loved every moment.

“Bush Blitz has given me the chance to work with some of Australia’s top scientists searching for native snails and collecting plant specimens. I got to ‘do’ science all day and night,” Mady said.

“The highlight for me was being able to Skype and blog my experiences back to the students in the classroom. The kids loved the interaction. They could ask scientists questions directly and get immediate answers.

“Another unexpected benefit was the wider engagement of the teaching community. I developed online class plans for teachers from my school to follow and other schools followed our daily blogs. Since returning to school I have

expanded my skills in the classroom, engaging the kids. We’re making bee hotels and setting up a freshwater aquarium for local fish.”

Bush Blitz TeachLive is run in partnership with not-for-profit conservation research organisation Earthwatch Australia and the Australian Science Teachers Association.

Network Ten’s *Totally Wild* children’s television program also joined in the Henbury Bush Blitz. Two half hour episodes were broadcast in August 2013, reaching an ever-growing audience of potential rangers and researchers.

Species discovery is crucial to helping establish world-class management of our reserves while helping us face the dramatic changes rapidly approaching us, from food security to climate change.

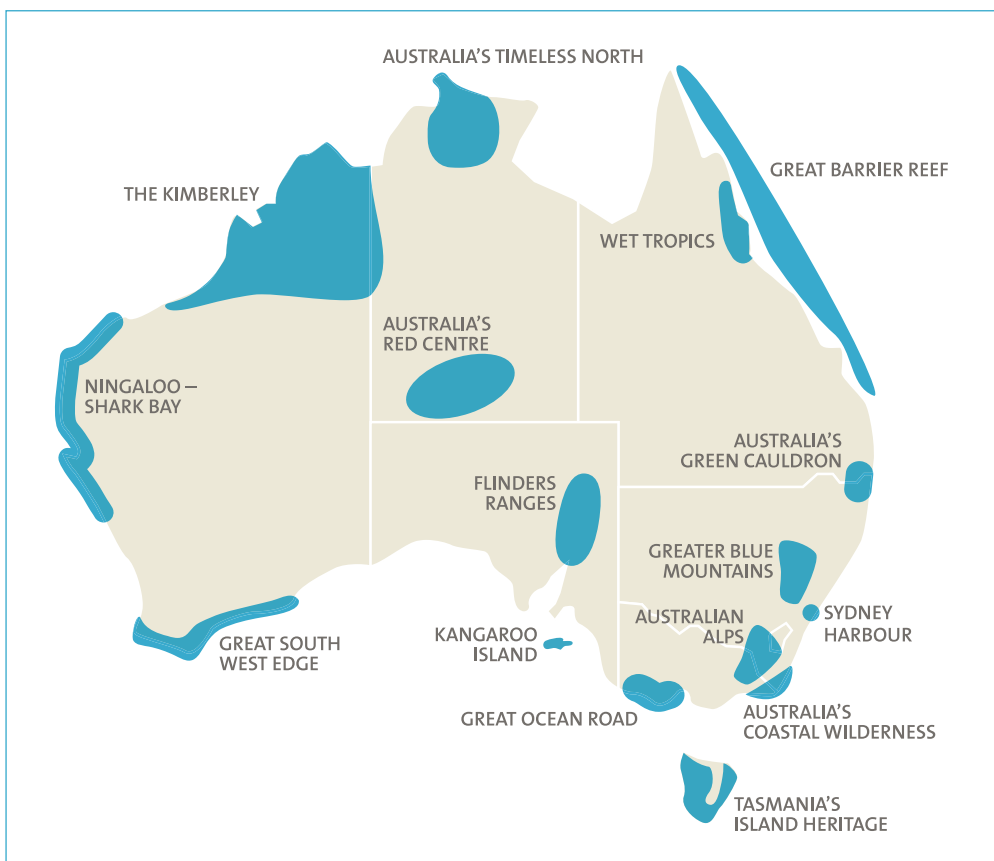
Bush Blitz is a partnership program between the Australian Government, BHP Billiton and Earthwatch Australia. It highlights the outstanding conservation work that can be achieved through public-private partnerships.

## Australia's National Landscapes

Australia's National Landscapes program is a dynamic, ground-breaking initiative. It is a long-term strategy to enhance regional tourism and conservation outcomes. Since 2005, Tourism Australia and Parks Australia have been actively working together to identify and differentiate Australia's iconic natural and cultural destinations and improve the quality of visitor experiences in those regions, in turn, increasing support for their conservation. The program provides a framework to consider tourism infrastructure, conservation and marketing together, encouraging partnerships between the tourism industry and conservation sectors to improve environmental, social and economic outcomes for each landscape.

In February 2013, Sydney Harbour became the 16th and final national landscape to be identified under the current program. The Wet Tropics and Tasmania's Island Heritage were also launched in the past 12 months and join Australia's Red Centre, Flinders Ranges, the Australian Alps, the Great Ocean Road, Australia's Coastal Wilderness, Australia's Timeless North, Australia's Green Cauldron, Greater Blue Mountains, the Kimberley, Kangaroo Island, the Great South West Edge, Ningaloo–Shark Bay and Great Barrier Reef national landscapes to complete this exclusive list of iconic Australian places.

**Figure 2: National Landscapes of Australia as at 30 June 2013**



With the full suite of landscapes established the foundations of the program have largely been set. In future, the focus of the program will be in seeing results including more high quality experiences for visitors; building strategic partnerships and leveraging investment to create additional employment in nature-based tourism; building and profiling conservation successes; and promoting national landscape opportunities to key tourism segments and markets.

Significant progress has been made in marketing the national landscapes to increase awareness among consumers, finalising and implementing visitor experience development strategies, building networks and partnerships and creating and refining tools to assist stakeholders. The national landscapes' philosophy, content and priorities are increasingly embedded in the work of state and territory partner agencies in all states and territories. Networks developed at regional, state and national levels provided impetus and opportunity to identify new partnerships and tourism enterprise opportunities and to explore ways to increase awareness of existing conservation activities among the tourism industry and the wider community. There has been significant on-ground successes with the development of nature-based experiences and associated products and services. Some of these projects have been supported by a \$1 million Strategic Tourism Investment Grant administered by the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.

In the year ahead, visitor experience development strategies will be completed for all national landscapes and the priority projects arising from those strategies will be implemented. Further areas of focus will include inspiring the tourism industry to assist with conservation initiatives in a way that enhances the visitor's experience as well as the environment; strengthening steering committees to improve their regional connections and resilience; and working with stakeholders to enhance the value of regional tourism and protected areas in those economies.

