
1999 WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

THE GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS AREA (AUSTRALIA)

1. DOCUMENTATION

i) IUCN/WCMC Data Sheet: (7 references)

- ii) **Additional Literature Consulted:** Williams J.E. and J. Woinarski. 1997. **Eucalypt Ecology**. C.U.P.; Keith, D.A. *et al.* 1999. Vascular Flora of Wetlands – East Forest Region, NSW. In press; MacKey. B.G. *et al.* 1997. The Role of Wilderness in Nature Conservation. ANU Report to Environment Australia. 87p.; DEST. 1994. Australia's Biodiversity. Biodiversity Unit Paper No.2. 87p.; Davis, S.D. *et al.* 1995. **Centres of Plant Diversity**. Vol.2. IUCN/WWF; Woinarski, J. and R. Braithwaite. 1990. Conservation Foci for Australian Birds and Mammals. **Search** 21(2); Braithwaite, R. 1990. Australia's Unique Biota. **J. Biogeog.** 17; Westoby, M. 1988. Comparing Australian Ecosystems to Those Elsewhere. **Bioscience** 38 (8); Kirkpatrick, J.B. 1994. The International Significance of the Natural Values of the Australian Alps. Report to AALC. 86p.; Good, R. 1989. **The Scientific Significance of the Australian Alps**. Fenner Conference Proceedings; City of Blue Mountains. 1997. Submission to Minister of Transport and Regional Development on Second Major Airport, Sydney; Total Environment Centre and Colong Foundation. 1998. Submission to Environment Australia on Proposed Badgerys Creek Airport; P.P.K. Consultants. 1997. Second Sydney Airport Proposal. Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Department of Transport; Thorsell, J. and T. Sigaty. 1997. A Global Overview of Forest Protected Areas on the World Heritage List. IUCN; Commonwealth of Australia. 1998. Record of the World Heritage Expert Panel. Regional Forest Agreement Process. 101p.
- iii) **Consultations:** State and Commonwealth Agency representatives, City of Blue Mountains staff, local NGO's.
- iv) **Field Visit:** February 1999. Jim Thorsell, Les Clark and Kevin Jones (ICOMOS).

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

The Greater Blue Mountains Area (GBM) nomination consists of 1.03 million hectares of mostly forested landscape on a sandstone plateau 60-180km inland from central Sydney, New South Wales. The nomination is submitted on both natural and cultural criteria. It comprises 8 protected areas in two blocks separated by a transportation and urban development corridor. The GBM are not "mountains" in the conventional sense but are a deeply incised sandstone plateau rising from less than 100m to 1,300m elevation with basaltic outcrops on the higher ridges. Despite the small size of the rivers in the GBM, deep gorges have been formed where underlying shales have been eroded faster than the sandstones. 300m high cliffs, slot canyons and waterfalls are notable physical features. There is also a limestone belt that contains various karst features including a cave system. The climate is warm temperate with rainfall of up to 1,400mm with occasional snowfall. The GBM are thought to have acted as a refugia through climatic oscillations during recent geological history enabling the survival of a broad spectrum of biota.

A diverse range of 70 plant communities occur depending on the variety of substrates, altitudinal gradients and slope. The GBM contains a wide and balanced representation of eucalypt habitats from wet and dry sclerophyll, mallee heathlands, as well as localised swamps, wetlands, and grassland. 90 eucalypt taxa (13% of the global total) occur in the GBM, 12 of which are considered endemic to the Sydney sandstone region. Representation of all 4 groups of eucalypts occur. Some rainforest occurs on high basalt outcrops and as admixtures in fertile valleys and gullies. Principal components of rainforest include families with warm temperate affinities and many species reach their southernmost limit in the GBM. There is also a high level of endemism with 114 endemic taxa found in the area as well as 120 nationally rare and threatened plant taxa. GBM hosts several evolutionary relic species (*Wollemia*, *Microstrobos*, *Acrophyllum*) which have persisted in highly restricted microsites. At least 7

plant species are considered extinct.

The GBM hosts a representative spectrum of Australian fauna made up of 52 native and 13 exotic species. The former include grey kangaroo, red-necked wallaby, wallaro, wombat and koala. The avifauna is varied with 265 native species and 10 exotics with a particularly high diversity of honeyeaters (25 species). In addition, there are 60 species of reptiles, 30 species of frog and a diverse but poorly known invertebrate fauna.

3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

As is often noted, Australia is a continent on its own with many unique ecosystem processes and unique flora and fauna. The infertility of the soil and the climatic variability in Australia are the most extreme of all the continents and, after a long period of relative isolation, have resulted in a highly characteristic biota. Intra-continental comparisons are thus difficult and the discussions below are primarily made with other sites within Australia.

There are currently 65 sites on the World Heritage List with universally significant forest values. Five of these are found in Australia including 3 in the same Biogeographical Province (Eastern Sclerophyll Open Forest) as the GBM. These are the Wet Tropics of Queensland (partly) (894,420ha), Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (366,455ha) and Fraser Island (166,283ha). (The forest values of the latter were considered secondary to the geophysical features but its forests were also considered as part of its basis for meeting criterion (iii)). All the above three existing sites as well as Kakadu and Southwest Tasmania contain extensive sclerophyll communities although not with the variety found in the GBM. (It would be useful to have a dendrogram to show the overlap and relationships among the floral groups but this is not available.)

From the northern part of the GBM it is possible to see in the distance the southernmost unit in the existing Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (CERRA) World Heritage site. This site, though much smaller in size, contains 70+ species of eucalypts, which, on a unit area basis is 300% higher than the GBM (90 species). Species diversity, however, is not the only measure of what constitutes representation of the eucalypt ecosystem. CERRA, for instance, (as well as the Wet Tropics) displays a far greater diversity of interaction between rainforest and eucalypt communities which is a process of considerable ecological interest. Likewise, the GBM has a more diverse representation of plant life-history responses to fire. Thus, despite their proximity, there are many distinctions between the rainforest-dominated CERRA site which follows the Great Dividing Range and the eucalypt-dominated GBM area found in the Sydney Sandstone region (the Hunter Valley being the biogeographical break).

There are broader similarities with the Alps area to the south of the GBM which have also been suggested for World Heritage nomination (see Kirkpatrick, 1994 and Good, 1989). The GBM nomination does not discuss comparisons in any length with the Alps protected area complex but each area has its particular merits and there would be a substantial overlap in the rationale for nomination. (The Australian Vice-Chair of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas has, in fact, suggested that the two areas be linked and considered as a cluster nomination. Another reviewer, however, has noted that the Alps has integrity problems which could preclude its inscription.) Other reviewers also referred to the importance of eucalypt forests in south-west Australia.

The GBM nomination makes several references to the Commonwealth of Australia's Report of a World Heritage Expert Panel (1998) which undertook a comparative assessment of forests in three States as part of the Regional Forest Agreement Process. This report adopted a thematic context (7 overall themes and 15 sub-themes) in identifying forest areas in the three States that "warrant further investigation as possible best global expressions of each sub-theme". IUCN considers such a reductionist approach useful at a State and National level but its findings on such a detailed list of sub-themes may not necessarily apply at the global level.

The findings of the Panel's report vis-à-vis the relevant natural sub-themes for the GBM nomination were as follows:

- ◆ Sub-theme: Passive continental margins: The GBM "are not amongst the best global expressions of the sub-theme" (p.14).
- ◆ Sub-theme: Refugia, Relicts: no sites in NSW, including the GBM (apart from examples already included in the CERRA site) warrant further investigation as a best global example.

- ◆ Sub-theme: Rainforest: “the Panel concluded that the Blue Mountains are not of major significance in representing the sub-theme of rainforest. The rainforest patch containing the Wollemi Pine was noted, but the Panel considered that it does not warrant further investigation in its own right...” (p.33-34).
- ◆ Sub-theme: Scleromorphy: “While recognising the importance of the expression of scleromorphy in the area, the Panel concluded that the Blue Mountains does not warrant further investigation as a globally-significant representation of the sub-theme.” (p.38).
- ◆ Sub-theme: Eucalyptus-dominated vegetation: the Panel noted that 3 existing World Heritage sites all have eucalypt values and suggested possible additions to each of them to provide better coverage. It also noted that 2 major peaks of eucalypt species richness – one centred on the Blue Mountains area and a second in the Coff’s Harbour to Border Ranges area (geographic areas of the CERRA site). It also identified 3 other areas (including the “sea to the Alps” transect) that warrant further investigation. It also concluded that “... a best global representation of Eucalypt-dominated vegetation in Australia ... would necessarily be based on a series of areas” (p.40). The GBM is thus one of 8 forests in 3 States that warrant further investigation under this sub-theme (Table 8).

Finally, the Panel noted that, although the natural values of the Blue Mountains did not warrant further investigation as globally-significant for 4 out of the above 5 sub-themes, the GBM have many important associative values that could contribute to the nomination if it was shown to be the best global expression of another theme.

The statement in the nomination that the GBM “constitutes one of the world’s most important significant habitats for the *in situ* conservation of threatened plant species” was challenged by several reviewers, especially in the absence of comparative data. It is known that the adjacent and much smaller CERRA site has 170+ rare and threatened plant species compared with 120+ for the GBM and the Wet Tropics would have even more. Another question raised was the claim in the GBM nomination that it was “the centre of diversity of eucalypts...” (p.22) and that more comparative data on levels of endemism was needed. It is noted, for instance, in Williams and Woinarski (1997 p. 105), that the Darling Botanical District in south-western Australia has more eucalypt taxa (101) than the central-eastern region (of which GBM is a part) (84), and has many more endemics (31) than GBM (13).

The nomination document and the report of the expert Panel do not provide a comparative analysis of the values of the GBM under natural criterion (iii) – natural beauty. Certainly the GBM landscape is outstanding at the national level. Most reviewers felt, however, that there are many other areas in Australia that contain more striking sandstone landforms (e.g. Kimberly, Bungle-Bungles, Carnarvon Gorge) and others that have a greater aesthetic impact (e.g. Uluru, Kakadu, Southwest Tasmania). It is recalled that the CERRA World Heritage site also has equally high scenic values but these were considered secondary to its biological values and it was not inscribed on the basis of criterion (iii). The nomination also makes a claim to the aesthetic importance of the GBM being so close to a large city but this city/park proximity phenomenon is found in many other places (e.g. Capetown, Nairobi, Vancouver, Miami).

In summary, there are a number of claims in the nomination that may have been overstated when additional comparative data are considered and these need to be refined and clarified before the case for inscription can be answered. It is also clear that the GBM is not the only area that has important eucalypt forest values and that 5 existing World Heritage properties as well as 2 other sites also have their own (and in some cases more convincing) distinctive qualities. The major distinction of the GBM is that it contains the highest number of eucalypt taxa (13% of global total) and that it has the widest and most balanced representation. It is also acknowledged as a Gondwana refugia and contains one of the largest tracts of old growth eucalypt forest. These forests display a particularly diverse fire history. The remaining natural values are considered secondary to other sites but supportive of the area in an additive fashion.

4. INTEGRITY

There are three aspects relating to integrity that relate to the GBM nomination. These are the effects of previous land uses; boundary issues; and threats.

4.1. Previous Land Uses

The statement in the nomination (p. 180) that “The GBM area is close to pristine” and that most if it is “unmodified by European settlement” needs to be qualified. A number of uses have had substantial cumulative impact on the nominated area in the past (though most have now been phased out) These are:

- ♦ **Water storage dam.** The Warragamba dam, which created lake Burragorang, supplies 70% of Sydney’s water requirements. A substantial area of the GBM valley bottom forest was lost when the dam was constructed. Although the reservoir itself has been excluded from the nominated area, part of its catchment area extends into the Nattai, Blue Mountains and Kanangra Boyd areas of the GBM.
- ♦ **Cattle grazing,** particularly in Kanangra and Nattai National Parks and to a lesser extent in Wollemi and Yengo. Now mostly removed but grazing by feral cattle and horses still occurs.
- ♦ **Logging,** has occurred in a few localities in the nominated area, especially in key mountain habitats in Kanangra Boyd National Park.
- ♦ **Coal mining,** formerly occurred in parts of Blue Mountains National Park (several major features are the result of cliff collapses). One of the popular visitor attractions is a relic of coal mining – the Scenic Railway at Katoomba. Much of this mining was long ago (late 19th and early 20th century) and is now regarded as a part of the cultural heritage of the area. Nevertheless, the coal mining did impact on the catchments of both the Nepean and Grose catchments of the nominated area.
- ♦ **Military activities.** Much of Wollemi National Park was a military exercise area prior to its reservation. Whilst much of the military exercises were low key and confined to the more accessible areas, there remains evidence of impacts including tracks, an airstrip, many unfilled trenches and old campsites with rubbish.
- ♦ **Oil shale mining.** Although the past oil shale mining in the Wolgan and Newnes valleys are noted in the context of the cultural heritage, no mention is made of the massive impacts of these operations on the natural environment. Some of the areas now presented as pristine forest were completely stripped of forest for pit props and fuel, all of which has been photographically recorded.
- ♦ **Clearing.** Many valley sites and some plateau sites have been subjected to clearing and roading since the commencement of colonisation. Some have completely regrown and others remain evident. Extensive areas in the Nattai were cleared before farmers were moved out to protect the water catchment. Even in some of the more remote parts of the Wollemi, small clearings remain, often associated with small patches of volcanic soils.
- ♦ **Fire Policy.** A major change in the fire regime in the GBM has occurred since European settlement. Although the fire history is not well understood, there have been a number of species shifts that have altered the natural functioning of the GBM ecosystem.

On the positive side, all of the above impacts are being reduced by active management and the landscape is recovering. In presenting the case for the GBM, however, these previous uses were not clearly identified.

4.2. Boundary Issues

Although the nominated area is of sufficient size to protect the biota and ecosystem processes, it does have several boundary anomalies that reduce the effectiveness of its 1 mil ha. size. First, the map of the area reveals an extraordinarily convoluted boundary, particularly in the north and east. This is explained by historical patterns of clearing and private land ownership that preceded establishment of the parks. Aside from the complexity in managing an area with such a high boundary/area ratio, these private lands represent relatively little threat (e.g. source of runoff, introduced species and wildfires) to the GBM. The New South Wales Government also has guidelines for controlling developments in adjoining lands which address this issue.

Of greater concern is the central corridor occupied by the City of the Blue Mountains and a national transport artery that splits the nominated area in two (the GBM not a “contiguous” unit as stated in the nomination {p. 121}). All of this corridor is upslope from the nominated area and poses a number of threats to the site as will be discussed below.

A second issue with boundaries is the existence in the GBM of 155 inholdings totalling 75,000ha. In light of potential concerns over the existence of enclaves, IUCN requested supplementary information on the specific location, uses and threats in these private inholdings. This additional information noted that the land use on half of the inholdings is cattle grazing on native vegetation. Other uses made of the inholdings are for rural residences and selective logging. Although there is one mining lease within one inholding and coal does exist in others, mining is not economic and is not permitted within the external boundaries of the GBM. It is also the policy of the NPWS to acquire inholdings that have conservation significance as funds are available. Sydney Water has also acquired 13 enclaves for catchment protection. Nevertheless, inholdings within the site are substantial in number and size and, although, not presenting any great current threat, have the potential of becoming problems in the future.

4.3. Threats

As for any protected area, the GBM have an array of management issues to face. The nomination document (section 5) provides a good overview of all but one of these (see below) and how they are being met. During the field mission IUCN was impressed with the overall standard of management, commitment and cooperation with the City of Blue Mountains. As the City is a critically important interface between the GBM and major urban development, such cooperation is essential. Particularly commendable initiatives were the Bioindicators Survey, Bush Care Programme, the trail system, the Introduced Species Management Plan and the State Government's sewerage transfer scheme which has diverted discharge into the nominated area from the City. Control of stormwater runoff, however, has just begun with only about 10% of the \$150 mil required now allocated. With a major city running along a rocky ridge above the nominated area runoff into the Grose and Nepean rivers will always be a problem and will always detract from the integrity of the site.

One threat not mentioned in the nomination is the proposal for a new international airport at Badgerys Creek 10km from the eastern boundary of the GBM. IUCN has reviewed relevant portions of the draft Environmental Impact Statement as well as copies of submissions against the proposal by conservation and community groups. The proposed airport would maximise use of airspace over the Blue Mountains area resulting in aircraft noise levels of 70 to 80 decibels. Such flights would also be visually intrusive and adversely affect the natural quiet and ambience of this part of the GBM. The airport would also increase air pollution through vehicle traffic to the site and airborne fuel emissions and fuel dumping. As noted in the submission by the City of Blue Mountains, the World Heritage nomination of the GBM "... would be unacceptably compromised by the adverse impact... caused by aircraft flights over the Blue Mountains". Other local governments and the State Government also oppose the project. A decision by the Commonwealth Government on construction of the new airport is expected to be announced in mid-1999.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

IUCN conducted the field inspection of the GBM jointly with ICOMOS. Strong linkages between the cultural and natural values of the area clearly do exist. On the question of the conservation history of the area, IUCN concurs with the report of the ICOMOS representative that this is of national rather than international value.

6. APPLICATION OF WORLD HERITAGE NATURAL CRITERIA

The GBM was nominated as a mixed site including natural criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv). The nomination notes that "...the crux of the case for its World Heritage listing could be said to lie in the outstanding universal significance of eucalypt-dominated vegetation, of which it represents the best single example...". The first question that arises then is – is there some way in which eucalypt –dominated vegetation is universally important in the sense that this judgement could be applied to other taxa, for example the *acacias*, *grevilleas*, *banksias*, *quercus*.

Certainly the eucalypts are a remarkable group of plants with many distinctive ecological traits. They have evolved in isolation on a fragment of Gondwana and represent a major component of global biodiversity. Eucalypts illustrate the importance of edaphic factors in community evolution and the unique structure of their canopies creates an environment without parallel in other taxa. Eucalypts are considered typically "Australian" but they also occur naturally in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

Several reviewers felt that to base a nomination, however, on the universal significance of one taxa of plants is a somewhat narrow focus and could lead to a precedent for many others. Also the question was raised of whether the GBM, with only 90 or 13% of 700 known eucalypt taxa, was sufficient on its own to demonstrate the traits of

the genus. IUCN suggests that it may be more realistic to view the GBM nomination as an ecosystem that is dominated by eucalypt taxa (though it also has a substantial *acacia* element) but that has a mix of other natural and cultural values that combine to make the GBM the special landscape that it is.

Apart from this general question, of focus on one taxa, IUCN came to the conclusion that the case for World Heritage inscription of the GBM under natural criteria has not been demonstrated. This conclusion is partly based on (1) several claims in the nomination that require qualification; (2) the discussion in section 3 above on the comparison of the GBM with other sites; and (3) the findings of the World Heritage Expert Panel which did not suggest a clear basis for the GBM as being sufficient on its own. In more detail:

- ◆ There were shown to be 5 existing World Heritage sites in Australia that all had significant eucalypt and sclerophyll features along with various other outstanding natural values. Although the GBM is one of 2 peaks of eucalypt diversity, there is considerable overlap with existing sites and the nomination did not demonstrate that, on its own, this focus was sufficient to meet the test of outstanding universal value.
- ◆ The World Heritage Expert Panel recognised 4 other areas in 3 states that had globally important eucalypt values. Two of these – the Australian Alps and the GBM – were presented as equivalent to two other existing World Heritage sites (Kakadu and Southwest Tasmania) in terms of their importance in representing the sub-theme of eucalyptus-dominated vegetation. The Panel then went on to suggest that a series of areas would be required to constitute a globally-significant expression of the eucalypt vegetation sub-theme. Based on the recommendations of the World Heritage Expert Panel Report, it is concluded that the GBM on its own is not sufficient to meet World Heritage criteria (ii) and (iv) and that a serial nomination might be worth considering.
- ◆ Although the Panel noted the importance of the GBM for 4 other sub-themes (for example the significance of the Wollemi pine as a relict species), it did not rate the area as warranting further investigation on the global significance for any of these. IUCN would concur with this and also adds caution on taking such an additive approach where a collection of secondary values is combined to build a case for inscription.

In conclusion, IUCN has found this a difficult nomination to assess. The GBM have many important heritage features, and the protected areas within them are well managed. The arguments, moreover, are finely balanced, but IUCN's judgement is that the nomination in its present form does not meet the criteria for World Heritage status. The GBM are clearly significant at the national level but a clear and convincing case for their importance at the global level has not been made. Whether a serial nomination consisting of the GBM and one or more other areas, as suggested by the Panel and a number of reviewers could be made is a question worthy of further study by the Australian authorities. Part of the revised nomination would also need to take into account issues dealing with the Conditions of Integrity including the 156 inholdings in the site and the threats from the proposed new airport.

Finally, IUCN supports the conclusions of the State/Commonwealth Expert Panel that there is potential in a serial nomination to cover eucalypt systems in Australia, in which the GBM area could be a key component, along perhaps with parts of the Australian Alps and the south-western corner of Western Australia. Indeed IUCN notes that there is a useful precedent in the Australian Fossil Mammal site in which distantly separate sites form part of one nomination.

7. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE TWENTY-THIRD ORDINARY SESSION OF THE BUREAU: JULY, 1999

At its twenty-third ordinary session, the Bureau decided to **defer** the present nomination under natural criteria and to invite the Australian authorities to consider the possibility of a serial nomination to cover the full range of values of eucalyptus ecosystems. The Bureau also noted a number of impacts, including 155 inholdings and the potential for an airport at Badgerys Creek, which might compromise the integrity of the area.

The State Party has advised that they will be submitting information to address the concerns of the Bureau.

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

THE GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS AREA (AUSTRALIA)

ADDENDUM TO 1999 IUCN EVALUATION

1. DOCUMENTATION

The above nomination was reviewed by the 23rd. Session of the Bureau (5-10 July, 1999) which reached the following conclusion:

“The Bureau noted that the site is a deeply incised sandstone plateau with 300-metre cliffs, slot canyons and waterfalls. The area is thought to have acted as a refugia during recent geological history and thus enabled the survival of a broad spectrum of biota. The area is mostly forest covered and represents one of two “peaks” of eucalypt diversity in Australia, containing 90 eucalypt taxa or 13% of the global total. Though nationally important, it is not considered on its own to be a globally significant representation of eucalyptus-dominated vegetation.

The Bureau decided to defer the present nomination under natural criteria and to invite the Australian authorities to consider a serial nomination to cover the full range of values of eucalyptus ecosystems. The Bureau noted also a number of impacts, including 155 inholdings and the potential for an airport at Badgerys Creek, which might compromise the integrity of the area.

The Bureau recommended that the Committee should not inscribe this site on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural criteria, as recommended by ICOMOS.

The Observer of Australia noted that the evaluations from IUCN and ICOMOS raised a number of issues which the Australian authorities wish to clarify, including new information on the EIA process with regard to the airport. He also noted that Australia had not proposed a serial nomination in order to immediately ensure a high standard of site management.”

The 23rd. Session of the Committee (24 November – 4 December, 1999) then also noted that complementary information from Australia was received in October 1999 and that further additional information would be provided by 30 January, 2000.

This Addendum to the original IUCN 1999 Evaluation (attached) is based on the above decision by the Bureau and the additional material provided by Australia. In arriving at the following conclusion, IUCN consulted with seven additional external reviewers, all of whom have had extensive experience on World Heritage and forests in Australia.

2. REVIEW OF SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

The additional information provided by the Australian authorities focussed on:

- verifying that eucalypt vegetation is of international significance;
- reviewing the values of eucalypt vegetation as they occur in the nominated site;
- providing comparative data relating to the eucalypt values in five existing World Heritage sites in Australia;
- reviewing issues relating to issues of integrity of the site; and

- providing comment on the natural beauty of the area.

The supplementary documentation does not address the request of the Bureau “...to consider a serial nomination to cover the full range of values of eucalypt ecosystems” because the authorities consider that the Greater Blue Mountains (GBM) merit designation on their own right. Some of the relevant points brought out in the additional documentation are:

- In scientific terms, there are a number of reasons why eucalypt vegetation is considered to have “outstanding universal value”. These reasons will not be repeated here but the case presented by Australia (particularly in Attachments A and B) is much strengthened. It should however be noted that the distinguished authors and peer reviewers of this analysis do not specifically refer to the GBM.
- GBM provide a particularly good representation of eucalypt vegetation in terms of environmental variation, structural types, species diversity, eucalypt groups, significant taxa and representation of community types.
- Five existing World Heritage sites in Australia also have substantial areas of eucalypt vegetation including a total of 204 species. The GBM has greater representation, however, of eucalypt diversity which would increase the combined total of eucalypt species in Australian World Heritage sites from 29% to 37% of the global total number of species (700). (No comparative data were given on other non-World Heritage eucalypt areas, such as southwest Australia or East Gippsland).
- The past effect of previous land uses not mentioned in the original nomination is acknowledged. The supplementary documentation claims that none of these has significantly disrupted the integrity of the GBM.
- Impacts from the City of the Blue Mountains (population 80,000) which lies in a corridor through the site (but is not part of the nomination) do not pose a significant threat to the site according to the documentation.
- The proposed nearby new international airport at Badgery’s Creek has been subject to a comprehensive EIA, but it is claimed that this development would not adversely affect the ecological processes or aesthetic values of the GBM.
- Caution is urged in making aesthetic value judgements but the natural beauty of the GBM is claimed to be “unique”.

3. CONCLUSION

IUCN appreciates the detailed extra work undertaken by the Australian authorities in support of the case for the GBM as a World Heritage site.

IUCN believes that this has successfully demonstrated that Australia’s eucalypt vegetation is worthy of recognition as of outstanding universal value, because of its adaptability and evolution in post-Gondwana isolation, thereby confirming the merits of the Bureau’s earlier suggestion. The importance of eucalypt vegetation could be reflected in the establishment of a serial nomination of several sites in Australia. These are likely to include some existing World Heritage sites, and several new ones as well – quite possibly including the whole or part of the GBM site.

IUCN also appreciates that the Supplementary Documentation addresses many of the questions of integrity which were raised in the 1999 evaluation.

However, IUCN concurs with the 1999 Bureau decision that the GBM do not – on their own – meet World Heritage criteria. The additional information provided does not compare the site with other important eucalypt sites that are not already on the World Heritage list, and so does not fully respond to the Bureau’s request. Moreover, the increase from the 29% of total eucalypt global species now found in World Heritage sites to 37% if the site were added would not be sufficient justification for inscription.

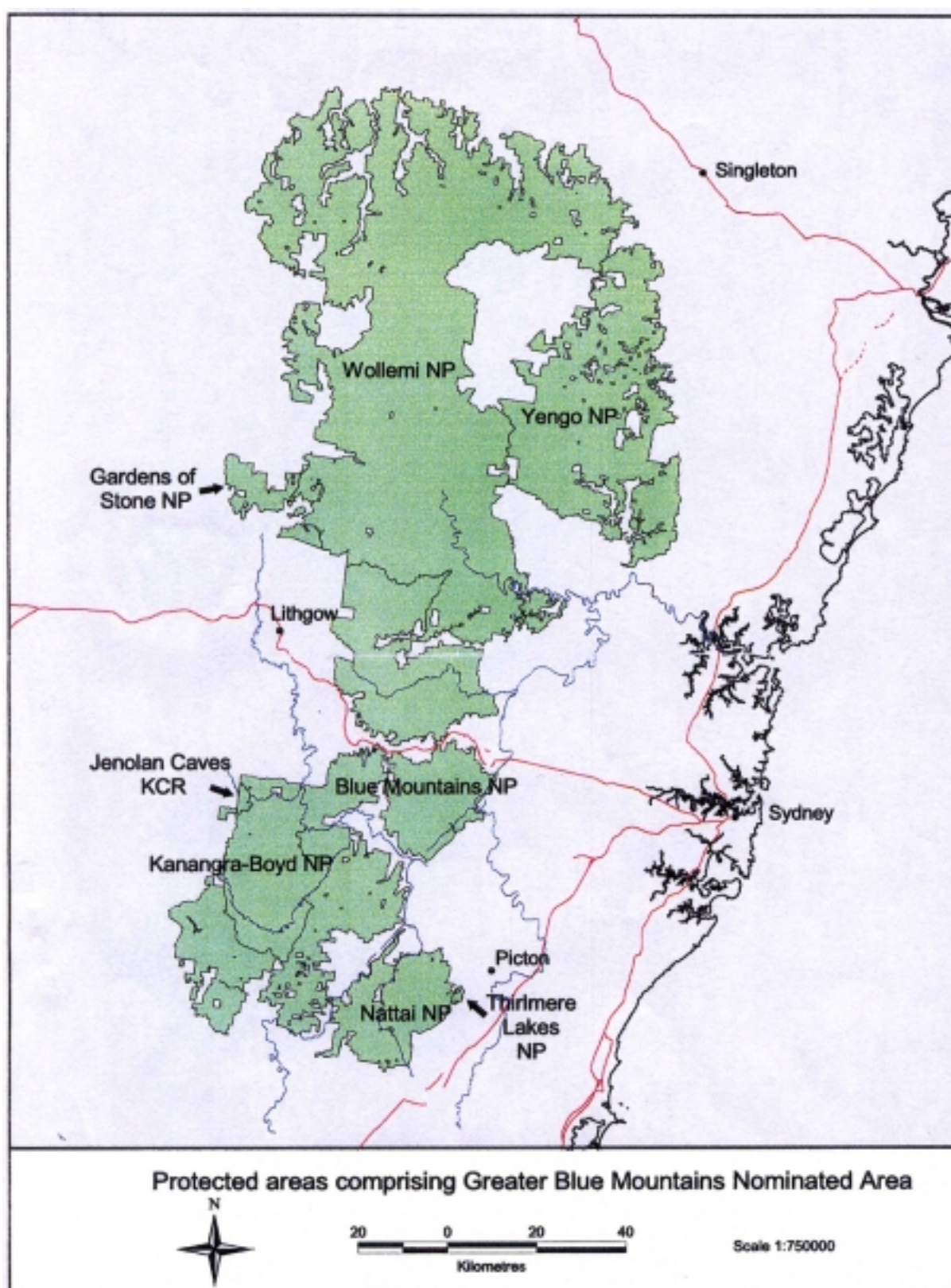
So, while the value of the area in national terms is clear, its claim to be of outstanding international value can only be established as part of a serial nomination of a number of Australian sites of importance for eucalypt vegetation. IUCN sees this as an opportunity to give international recognition to the vegetation type which biologically defines Australia. Such a serial nomination would be challenging to put together, but the need for it

has been amply demonstrated in the Supplementary Documentation provided by Australia and in particular by Dr. Barlow's report, and the supportive commentary by Profs. Slatyer, Mooney and Raven.

While appreciating the efforts made by the State Party in providing additional information, IUCN considers that the Bureau's decision of July, 1999 remains valid.



Map 1 Location Map – Greater Blue Mountains Area



Map 2: Site Map – Greater Blue Mountains Area

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

THE GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS AREA (AUSTRALIA)

SECOND ADDENDUM TO 1999 IUCN EVALUATION

1. DOCUMENTATION

Supplementary information to the above nomination was submitted by the State Party in January 2000 and this was reviewed by the 24th ordinary session of the Bureau. The Bureau reached the following conclusion:

“The Bureau recalled that at its twenty-third session (July 1999), it had recommended deferral for the natural part of this mixed nomination and invited the Australian authorities to consider the possibility of a serial nomination to cover the full range of values of eucalyptus ecosystems. It had also noted that although nationally important, it is not considered on its own to be a significant representation of eucalyptus-dominated vegetation on a global scale. The Bureau at the time did not recommend inscription according to cultural values.”

IUCN informed the Bureau that a thorough evaluation of the additional material presented by Australia took place and that the main feature of the nomination is the eucalyptus vegetation. The additional material did not address the question of a serial nomination to cover the full range of values of eucalyptus ecosystems. The Delegate of Australia informed the Bureau that out of 700 eucalyptus species, 258 are represented in Australia and that 91 are present in the site, which covers 1 million ha.

The Bureau debated extensively on the need to recognize eucalyptus ecosystems on a global scale, on serial nominations and on the links between universality and representativity.

The Chairperson informed the Bureau that he had received a letter dated 30 June 2000 with new information from the State Party which would commence a process for the identification, evaluation and potential listing under new national heritage legislation of a series of areas representing the eucalyptus theme.

IUCN welcomed the willingness of the State Party to consider a serial listing in the context of the State Party's new legislation and asked for more specific details concerning the new information the State Party has committed itself to provide on the make up of such a serial listing.

The Bureau decided to refer the nomination to the twenty-fourth extraordinary session of the World Heritage Bureau.

New information on this nomination was received from the State Party in September 2000.

This report represents a second addendum to the original 1999 IUCN evaluation and is based on the above decision by the Bureau and the additional material provided by the State Party.

2. REVIEW OF SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

The new information document supplied by the State Party supports the World Heritage potential of the Greater Blue Mountains Area (GBMA) and gives an overview of the potential for a eucalypt series of sites of national significance under the State Party's new national heritage legislation.

However, IUCN notes the following section of the 1999 July Bureau decision relating to the World Heritage potential of the Greater Blue Mountains Area:

“Though nationally important, it [GBMA] is not considered on its own to be a globally significant representation of eucalyptus-dominated vegetation.”

Given this decision by the Bureau, IUCN considers that the focus on this issue should be on the merits of the proposed serial nomination, rather than re-opening the issue of World Heritage value of the GBMA.

Accordingly, in a letter to the Director of the World Heritage Centre of 25 July 2000, copied to the State Party, IUCN set out its views in relation to “the type of information that would facilitate a clear decision on the proposal for the Greater Blue Mountains to be put forward as part of a serial nomination to cover eucalypt vegetation.” IUCN felt that, based on the relevant section (paragraph 19) of the Operational Guidelines¹ for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the following information should be provided to facilitate a clear decision on this issue:

1. Principles for deciding what should be in the serial nomination.
2. Identification of other areas to be included within the serial nomination, in addition to the Greater Blue Mountains. Also, identification of how these areas would contribute to the World Heritage values of the serial nomination.
3. Firm commitments that these areas would be included in the serial nomination, from both State and Federal Governments.
4. Time lines for this to occur.
5. Clarification of the relationship between the component parts of the serial nomination, specifically to address article [paragraph] 19 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Particularly, the need to clearly outline and justify the “outstanding universal value” of the series as such, rather than its individual components.
6. Management arrangements for each component of the serial nomination, adequate to ensure the long-term integrity of all components of the serial nomination.

IUCN notes that the information document supplied by the State Party in September 2000 does not identify the additional areas to be included in a serial nomination. Below is a summary of the information provided by the State Party under each point and IUCN comments:

1. Principles for deciding what should be in the serial nomination.

The State Party identifies five principles for deciding which areas should be in the serial nomination.

IUCN Comment: IUCN agrees with the principles outlined.

2. Identification of other areas to be included within the serial nomination, in addition to the Greater Blue Mountains and how these areas would contribute to the World Heritage values of the serial nomination.

No specific areas were identified by the State Party.

IUCN Comment: IUCN feels specific areas should be identified before there can be any consideration of a serial nomination from the State Party.

3. Firm commitments that these areas would be included in the serial nomination, from both State and Federal Governments.

The State Party notes that the proposed amendments to the “Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999” are expected to be introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament within the next few months.

IUCN Comment: IUCN welcomes this initiative. However, it is not clear how far this represents a firm commitment that additional areas would be included in the serial nomination.

4. Time lines for this to occur.

The State Party notes that development of the National Heritage List will follow the commencement of the new legislation.

IUCN Comment: IUCN notes that no time lines have been identified.

5. Clarification of the relationship between the component parts of the serial nomination, specifically to address article [paragraph] 19 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Particularly, the need to clearly outline and justify the “outstanding universal value” of the series as such, rather than its individual components.

The State Party notes that:

“Serial listings under the proposed amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are not likely to be constrained by interpretations of paragraph 19 of the Operational Guidelines (ie places forming part of the series will be able to have significance in their own right). Under the proposed national legislation it will be possible to include places in a serial nomination on the basis of their contribution to a theme of national significance even in cases where places may also be on the World Heritage List and having outstanding universal significance in their own right.”

IUCN Comment: IUCN notes that the relationship between the component parts of the serial nomination, as set out in the Operational Guidelines, is not clarified.

6. Management arrangements for each component of the serial nomination, adequate to ensure the long-term integrity of all components of the serial nomination.

The State Party notes that:

“It is proposed that management arrangements for places of national significance under the amended *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* will be of equivalent standard to management arrangements for Australia’s World Heritage places.”

IUCN Comment: IUCN notes this commitment but feels that more specific information is required.

3. CONCLUSION

IUCN welcomes the information supplied by the State Party and applauds the development of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. However, IUCN feels that the additional information provided does not adequately identify a serial nomination as requested by the July 1999 Bureau. The information provided by the State Party deals largely with the World Heritage potential of the Greater Blue Mountains Area nomination but the Bureau has already taken a decision that this area does not meet World Heritage criteria on its own. As noted, the July 1999 Bureau stated: “*Though nationally important, it [GBMA] is not considered on its own to be a globally significant representation of eucalyptus-dominated vegetation.*”

The issue therefore is the adequacy of the serial nomination against the Operational Guidelines Paragraph 19 and the IUCN letter to the Centre of 25 July. Though the information provided by the State Party is very positive for the eventual nomination of a serial site, the areas to be included in such a site have not yet been identified and thus IUCN considers that the State Party has not brought forward a serial nomination as requested by the Bureau.

In view of the above IUCN recommends that the Committee:

- 1) commend the State Party for its efforts to consider a serial nomination; and
- 2) defer this site for further consideration as part of a serial nomination should the State Party wish to nominate such a site.

¹ Paragraph 19 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention states that “*States Parties may propose in a single nomination a series of cultural and natural properties in different geographical locations, provided that they are related because they belong to:*

(i) the same historico-cultural group or

(ii) the same type of property which is characteristic of the geographical zone

(iii) the same geomorphological formation, the same biogeographic province, or the same ecosystem type

and provided that it is the series as such, and not its components taken individually, which is of outstanding universal value.”