



Australian Government

STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE

state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness



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This report should be attributed as '*State Party Report on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia)*, Commonwealth of Australia 2022'.

Cover:

Left: Early morning reflections of Cradle Mountain from Dove Lake boat shed. Photograph: Bruce Cooper. **Right:** Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*). Photograph: Save the Tasmanian Devil Program.



STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE
state of conservation of the
Tasmanian Wilderness

PROPERTY ID 181 quinquies

In response to World Heritage Committee decision 44 COM 7B.75
1 February 2022

world heritage



Left: Alpine herbfield in bloom, the Western Arthurs. Photograph: Tim Rudman.
Right: The very rare King's Lomatia (*Lomatia tasmanica*). Photograph: Tim Rudman.

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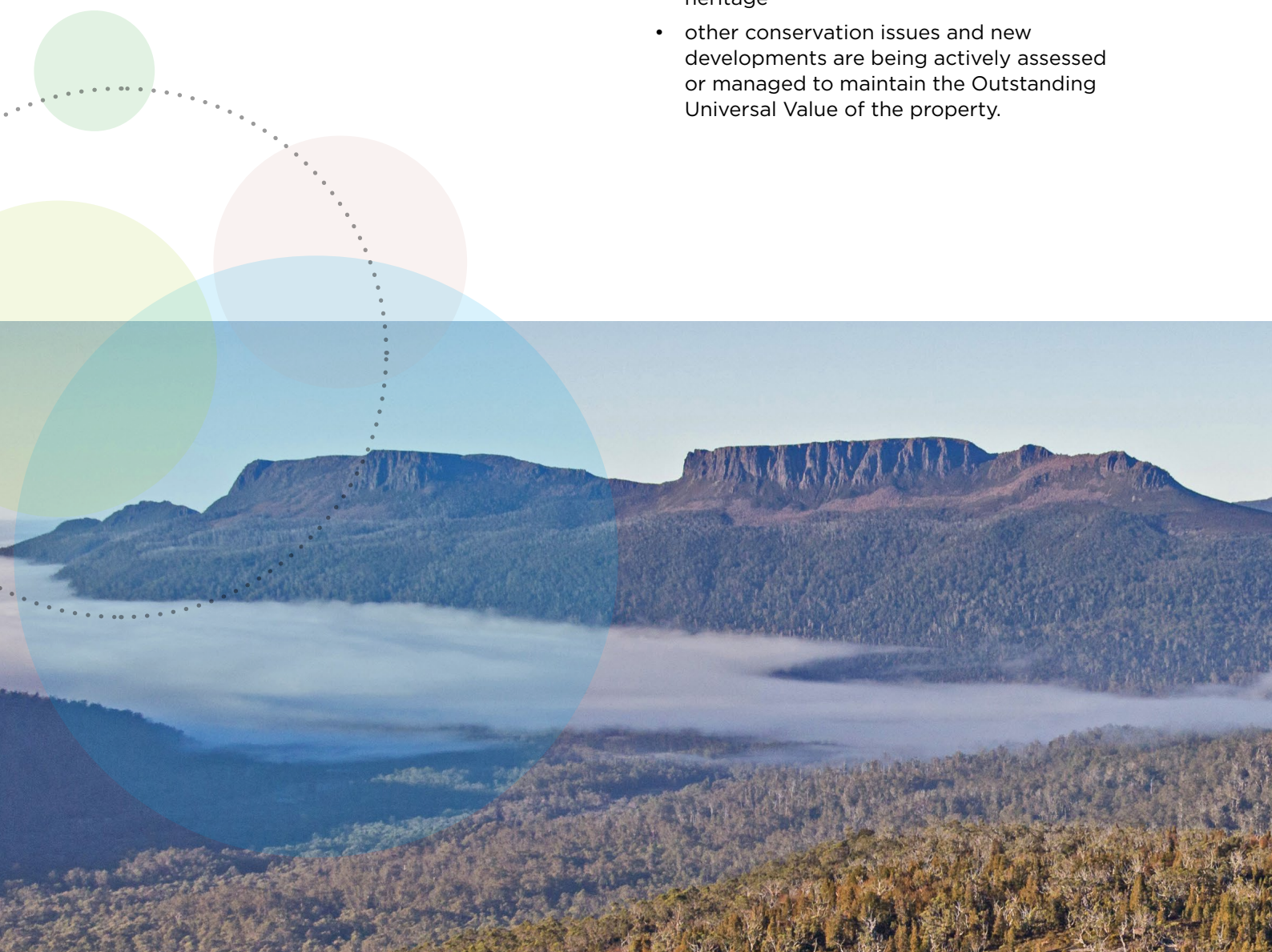
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to the 2021 Decision of the World Heritage Committee (44 COM 7B.75), which requests that Australia submit an updated report on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness (the property) to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2022.

The Tasmanian Wilderness is one of the world's largest temperate wilderness areas, and a precious cultural landscape for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, who have lived there for at least 35,000 years. The World Heritage property encompasses more than 1,580,000 hectares, covering almost a quarter of the island state of Tasmania in Australia.

This report highlights that:

- Australia has responded to all elements of the 2021 Decision of the World Heritage Committee, and fully implemented almost all recommendations of the 2015 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission to the property. The three remaining mission recommendations are substantially progressed
- the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is intact and rigorously maintained with strict systems of protection and management in place
- work continues across the property to better understand and ensure the continued protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage
- other conservation issues and new developments are being actively assessed or managed to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.



Mount Olympus (left) and Mount Byron (opposite, page 5) standing guard over a cloud-covered Lake St Clair, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, northern Tasmanian Wilderness. Photograph: Tim Rudman.

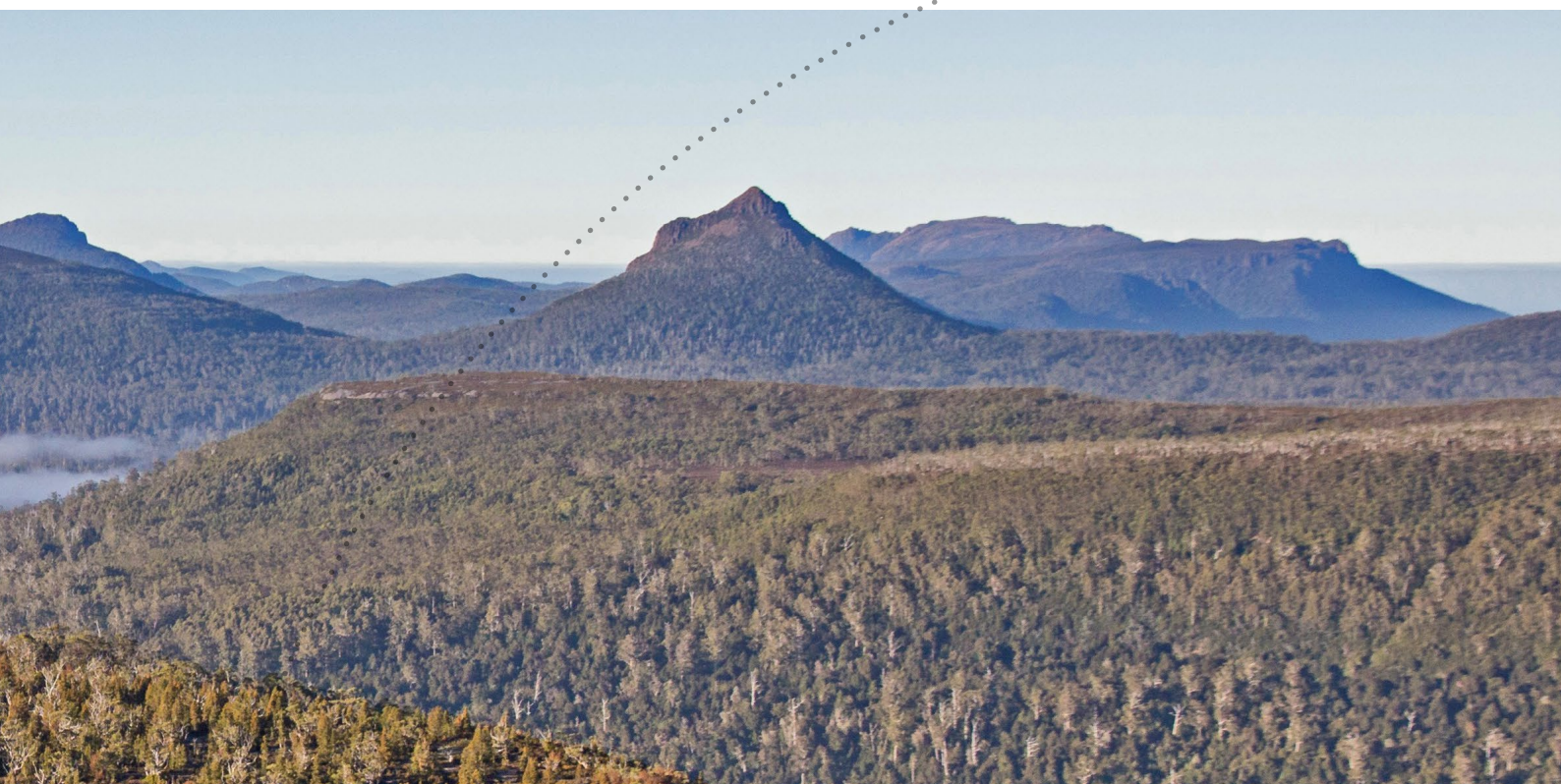
RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport répondre à la décision du Comité du patrimoine mondial de 2021 (44 COM 7B.75) qui demande que l'Australie soumette un rapport actualisé sur l'état de conservation de la Zone de nature sauvage de Tasmanie (le bien) au Centre du patrimoine mondial avant le 1er février 2022.

La Zone de nature sauvage de Tasmanie est l'une des plus vastes zones de nature sauvage tempérées au monde et un paysage culturel précieux pour les peuples Aborigènes de Tasmanie, qui y vivent depuis au moins 35 000 ans. Le bien du Patrimoine mondial s'étend sur plus de 1 580 000 hectares, couvrant près d'un quart de l'État insulaire de Tasmanie en Australie.

Ce rapport souligne que:

- L'Australie a répondu à tous les points de la décision du Comité du patrimoine mondial de 2021 et a entièrement mis en œuvre presque toutes les recommandations de la mission conjointe de suivi réactif ICOMOS/UICN de 2015 sur le bien. Les trois recommandations restantes de la mission ont substantiellement progressé
- la valeur universelle exceptionnelle du bien est intacte et rigoureusement maintenue avec des systèmes stricts de protection et de gestion en place
- le travail se poursuit sur l'ensemble du bien pour mieux comprendre et assurer la protection continue du patrimoine culturel aborigène
- d'autres problèmes de conservation et de nouveaux développements sont activement évalués ou gérés pour maintenir la valeur universelle exceptionnelle du bien.





Map 1 Location of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (red outline).
Source: Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Decision of the World Heritage Committee

Australia has provided numerous reports on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness to the World Heritage Committee. These were submitted in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. Two updates to the 2019 report were provided in February 2021. In addition, there have been two reactive monitoring missions to the property, in 2008 and 2015.

This State Party Report, prepared in cooperation with the Tasmanian Government, responds to the 2021 Decision of the World Heritage Committee (44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 8) on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness (Appendix 1). An update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring Mission is also included in this report.

A draft Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was finalised in 2020. It has been further revised, as requested by the Advisory Bodies, IUCN and ICOMOS, and will be resubmitted to the World Heritage Centre for decision by the World Heritage Committee at 45 COM in 2022.

1.2 The Tasmanian Wilderness

The Tasmanian Wilderness was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982 and extended in 1989, 2010, 2012 and 2013. It is inscribed on the basis of seven World Heritage criteria – three cultural ((iii), (iv) and (vi)) and four natural ((vii), (viii), (ix) and (x)).

The property is one of the world's largest temperate wilderness areas and is a precious cultural landscape for Tasmanian Aboriginal people who have lived there for at least 35,000 years. Tasmanian Aboriginal people adapted to changes in climate and the natural environment through a full glacial-interglacial climatic cycle and were the southernmost people in the world during the last ice age. The intangible and tangible evidence of their continuing culture is of outstanding universal significance. The ecosystems within the extensive wilderness areas of western Tasmania are of outstanding significance for their exceptional natural beauty, distinctive landforms, palaeoendemic species and communities, unusual threatened plants and animals, and ecological processes that result in some of the tallest vegetation in the world. The alpine ecosystems, with their hard green cushion plants; the moorland ecosystems, with their burrowing crayfish; the estuarine ecosystems, with their dark surface waters; and the alkaline wetland systems, with their freshwater stromatolites, are without analogue.

The property covers approximately 1.58 million hectares, or around 23 per cent of the island State of Tasmania (see Map 1). Day-to-day management is primarily undertaken by the Tasmanian Government. A small number of private or vested landholders (for example Bush Heritage Australia, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Hydro Tasmania, and others) also manage land within the property.



The beautiful Eastern pygmyfly (*Nannophya dalei*). Photograph: Mike Driessen.

1.3 Strong Legislative Protection

Where an action that is likely to have a significant impact is proposed to be undertaken within, or outside, a World Heritage property, the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) (EPBC Act) ensures that Outstanding Universal Value is protected. Under this legislation, a proposed action of this type is determined to be a 'controlled action' and must undergo assessment and a decision as to whether or not it can proceed.

This process allows the Australian Minister for the Environment to grant or refuse approval to take an action, and to impose conditions on the taking of an action. The EPBC Act imposes substantial civil and criminal penalties on a person who takes an unlawful action.

The component collective of reserves that form the Tasmanian Wilderness are declared under Tasmania's [Nature Conservation Act 2002](#) which sets out the values and purposes of each reserve class. The reserves are actively managed under Tasmania's [National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002](#) according to management objectives for each reserve class.

1.4 Quarterly Reporting

The Australian Government continues to provide quarterly reports to the World Heritage Centre to respond to the requirements set out in Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines. These reports provide details of any project that may have a significant impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value. They are available at environment.gov.au/heritage/about/world/notification-development-proposals.

Recent project proposals in the Tasmanian Wilderness that have, or are, being assessed under the EPBC Act are detailed under Section 4 of this report.



Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*).
Photograph: Save the Tasmanian Devil Program.

1.5 Effective Management and Planning

The recommendations of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring Mission and the 2016 and 2018 decisions of the World Heritage Committee are implemented through the *2016 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan*¹ (*2016 Management Plan*), the Strategic Management Statement and other statutory measures, as well as the *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Business Strategy (2018 - 2022)* and Annual Plans for the property. The 2016 Management Plan applies to 97% of the property. The Strategic Management Statement applies to the remaining 3% which does not have Tasmania's Director of National Parks and Wildlife as the managing authority, because it is in private or vested ownership.

The 2016 Management Plan demonstrates the Tasmanian Government's strong commitment to protecting the property's Outstanding Universal Value, while allowing opportunities for sensitive and appropriate tourism experiences to present the property for current and future generations (see also section 2.1.3 of this report on the Tourism Master Plan).

1.6 Significant Funding

The management of the Tasmanian Wilderness is jointly funded by the Australian and Tasmanian governments. The total annual budget is AUD \$10.2 million, for management and presentation of the property. This is base-level funding, above which additional funding is provided for things such as bush-fire and threatened species recovery, infrastructure spending, and heritage grants.

For example, in May 2021 the Australian Government delivered AUD \$4.8 million in relief and recovery funds for two projects within the property - the redevelopment of huts on the Overland Track (a well-established walking trail) and the development of a new camping area and amenities in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, to support the presentation and appreciation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The Tasmanian Government provides additional funds each year for management activities. Some examples include:

- A considerable annual planned burning program of approximately AUD \$500,000 per year to mitigate against the loss of particularly important heritage values and support threatened species recovery.
- An annual infrastructure program of around AUD \$10 million per year ensure the safety and sustainability of visitor use.
- A wilderness ranger program of AUD \$335,000 in 2021/22 is delivering remote "leave no trace" educational programs.

The Tasmanian Government contributes in excess of AUD \$10 million each year, in addition to the \$5.1 million of Australian Government funding provided annually to the World Heritage property.

¹ The 2016 Management Plan is published on the Tasmanian Government's website at [http://dpiptwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-\(twwha\)/twwha-management-plan](http://dpiptwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-(twwha)/twwha-management-plan).



trumpeter islet

Trumpeter Islet near Port Davey.
Photograph: Tim Rudman.

2. RESPONSE FROM THE STATE PARTY TO THE 2021 DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

2.1 Implementation of Decision 44.COM 7B.75

The full text of the 2021 World Heritage Committee decision is provided at Appendix 1. Relevant paragraphs from the decision are quoted below, and a State Party response is provided for each.

2.1.1 Recommendations of the 2015 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission

2021 Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 3:

Welcomes the State Party's further progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, but notes that some of these recommendations remain to be fully implemented, and reiterates its request to the State Party to finalize, as a matter of priority, the on-going process to designate Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) and Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) within the property as reserves.



The endangered Ptunarra brown butterfly (*Oreixenica ptunarra*), found only in Tasmania. Photograph: Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania.

State Party's response

The Australian and Tasmanian governments have responded to all twenty recommendations of the 2015 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission. Implementation of only 3 of the recommendations remain in progress as described below:

Recommendation 8:

The term “wilderness” should be retained in the property name, while future dual naming is strongly encouraged to reflect both the Aboriginal heritage and the relationship of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community with the property.

The property's name will remain the “Tasmanian Wilderness”.

The 2016 Management Plan indicates that the State Party will seek the endorsement of the World Heritage Committee for a dual name for the property. A dual name would reflect the Aboriginal heritage of the property, and the relationship of Tasmanian Aboriginal people to the area. The Tasmanian Government developed an Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy in 2019 and convened a Dual Naming Reference Group in November 2020, and is currently consulting with the Aboriginal community on implementation of dual naming.

Recommendation 11:

Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) within the property should not be convertible to Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) and should be granted status as national park.

The Tasmanian Government is implementing a two-stage process for proclamation of Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) and Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) as reserved land. This will implement the World Heritage Committee's request to the State Party (44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 3) to finalise, as a matter of priority, the on-going process to designate PTPZL and FPPFL within the property as reserves.

Stage 1

A stakeholder consultation process for areas zoned as FPPFL (unallocated Crown land) has been completed. In September 2021, the Tasmanian Minister for Parks announced that the Mole Creek Karst National Park would be expanded through the reservation of an additional 2,850 hectares of land currently classified as FPPFL. The Minister also announced a proposal for a further 22,550 hectares of FPPFL in the Tasmanian Wilderness to be formally reserved as either conservation area, or regional reserve (see Map 2).

The proposal will now go through the required statutory processes, including the approval of both Tasmanian Houses of Parliament.

Stage 2

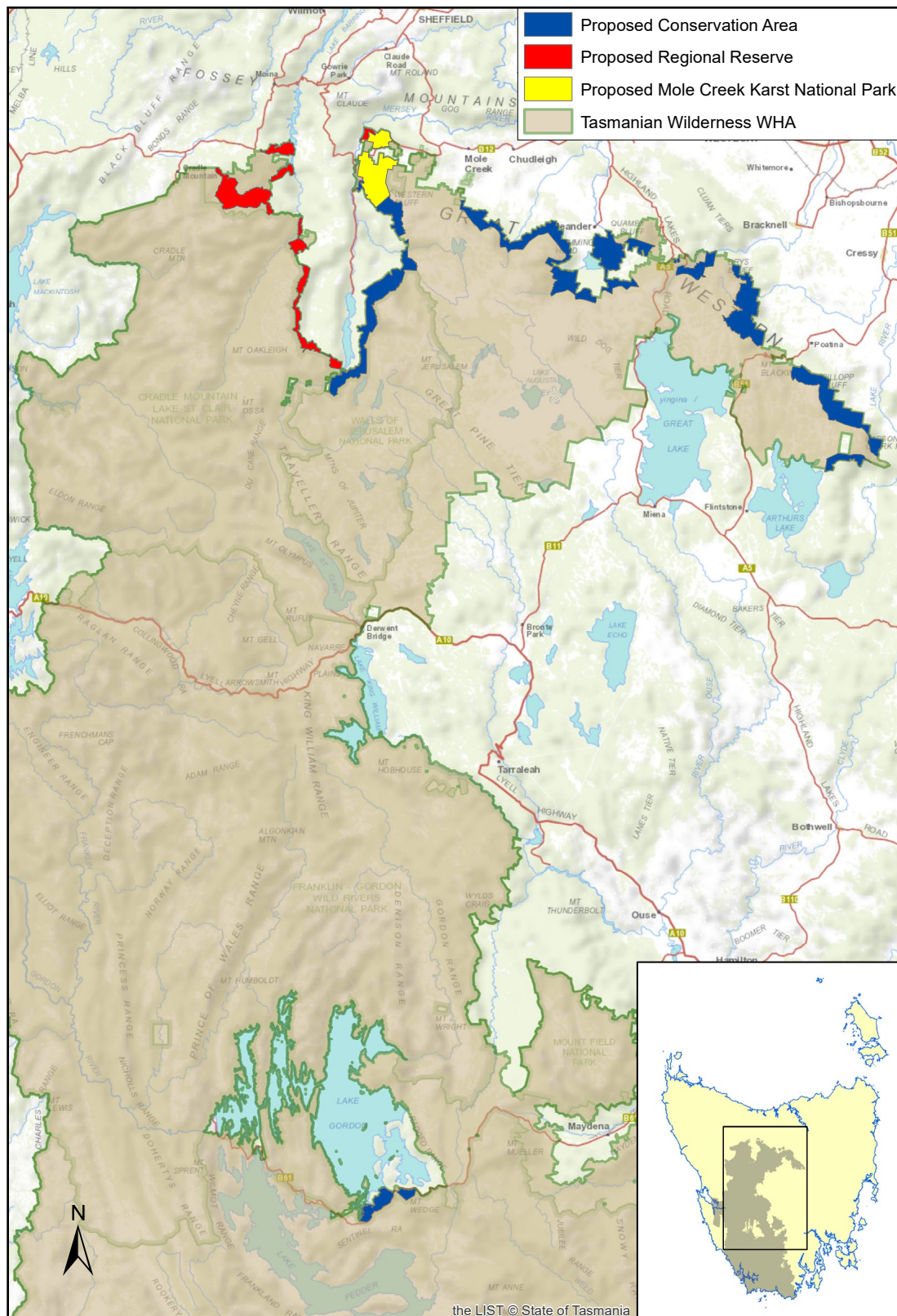
Stage 2 involves the reservation of 942 hectares of PTPZL, and will commence once plantation forests within the areas of PTPZL have been regenerated to native forest. This process is expected to occur over the next 12 to 24 months. When completed, proclamation as reserved land will occur. The World Heritage Centre will be advised when the reservation process is complete.

Recommendation 20:

State Party should support and consolidate the emerging joint management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

A key desired outcome of the 2016 Management Plan is that management of Aboriginal cultural values will be undertaken through a joint management governance arrangement. Accordingly, the following have been established: a Cultural Management Group (CMG) within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania to oversee implementation of the cultural management outcomes of the 2016 Management Plan.

The CMG is currently delivering nine projects in collaboration with Aboriginal people, that are associated with the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). The CMG also supports management of the Aboriginal cultural values in the Tasmanian Wilderness.



Map 2 Proposed reservation classes for areas zoned as FPPFL (unallocated Crown land).
Source: Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

2.1.2 Assessing and protecting cultural heritage assets

2021 Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 4:

Commends the State Party for the completion of the 'Cultural Values Assessment of the 2013 Extension Area to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area' that more than doubles the number of registered Aboriginal sites in the extension area, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre details of how the cultural values of the additional areas relate to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property.

State Party's response

The project 'Cultural Values Assessment of the 2013 Extension Area of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, (Cultural Heritage Management Australia 2019), involved community consultation and cultural heritage surveys within the areas added to the World Heritage property in 2013.

The project led to the re-discovery of 132 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites within the areas added to the Tasmanian Wilderness in 2013. These sites, and the surrounding landscapes, help us understand the management, cultural tradition, and life of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and strengthen the ongoing connections to Country for their descendants, the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal people, a point strongly emphasised by Aboriginal people who were involved in this project. The findings provide further context for the property's listing under World Heritage cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi), detailed as follows.



Digital recording of a rock marking site in the Tasmanian Wilderness.
Photograph: Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Criterion (iii) - bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.

Rock shelter sites in the Great Western Tiers area, and the surrounding landscapes are invaluable and rare resources that contribute to an understanding of the ongoing cultural tradition and lifeways of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. The landscape is still largely unexplored and there is potential for further cultural finds.

Criterion (iv) - be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

The record of Pleistocene occupation in the property is supplemented by extensive and diverse Holocene Aboriginal sites including rock shelters and artefact scatters in the Great Western Tiers.

Criterion (vi) - be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

The Riveaux site, located in the south-east of the World Heritage property, contains ochre hand stencils which are in excellent condition. These markings are of immense significance, both culturally and scientifically, providing an extraordinary connection to Aboriginal people who inhabited the Tasmanian Wilderness.



*Aboriginal
heritage*

2.1.3 Finalisation of the Tourism Master Plan

2021 Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 5:

Also takes note of the finalization and release of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Tourism Master Plan and requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to review this Plan in light of their earlier comments, and in particular to verify whether this Tourism Master Plan:

- a) Is fully aligned with the 2016 Management Plan for the property,*
- b) Includes more specific guidance regarding the protection of the OUV of the property, including more details on how the wilderness values of the property should be considered in decision-making processes related to tourism management,*
- c) Considered the parallel Expression of Interest process for tourism development projects and how the latter may be affected by the Plan, and*
- d) Advances the implementation of the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment in order to be able to take into account all relevant expressions of cultural heritage, including those not yet identified.*

State Party's response

The [Tourism Master Plan](#) (TMP) (Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment 2021) was finalised and released in June 2021. The TMP is the result of over three years of consultation, engagement and policy consideration, including technical review of the draft by the Advisory Bodies and consultation with the tourism industry, Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and key stakeholders. It was provided to the World Heritage Centre in June 2021 and is available at [dpipwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-\(twwha\)/twwha-tourism-master-plan](https://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-(twwha)/twwha-tourism-master-plan)

The aspects of the TMP that the World Heritage Committee has highlighted for review are addressed below. This information may be of assistance to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in their review.

a) Is fully aligned with the 2016 Management Plan for the property

The [2016 Management Plan](#) required that a tourism master plan be developed as a subsidiary plan, in order to ensure a strategic approach to the property's presentation.

The TMP provides additional guidance, context and policy direction for tourism and recreation, within the planning framework provided by the 2016 Management Plan. It upholds two key principles:

- The protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Tasmanian Wilderness
- Determination by Tasmanian Aboriginal people

The TMP has three secondary principles:

- Conscious, meaningful, and authentic experiences
- Supporting regional communities
- Valuing the role of tourism

These principles provide high level direction for the presentation of the Tasmanian Wilderness and allow the TMP to fully align with the 2016 Management Plan.



Eastern pygmy possum (*Cercartetus nanus*).
Photograph: Mike Driessen, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

b) Includes more specific guidance regarding the protection of the OUV of the property, including more details on how the wilderness values of the property should be considered in decision-making processes related to tourism management

The TMP provides a strategic planning framework to guide the placement of tourism activities and products. It also provides guidance on mitigations, as well as policy development necessary to assist in decision-making by the property managers. By way of example, the Tourism Master Plan focusses development at the edge of the Tasmanian Wilderness, so as to protect and maintain the cultural and wilderness values and characteristics that make the property universally significant.

A key priority in the Master Plan is the review of the use of aircraft across the entire Tasmanian Wilderness, including the development of an Air Access Policy. This policy will intersect with established Wilderness Values and Management Zones (as mapped in the 2016 Management Plan), as well as a Recreational Standards Framework (in development) to minimise aircraft impacts on wilderness experience. The Policy will include a new Fly Neighbourly Agreement, approved by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and a commercial operator Code of Practice.

The TMP sets out guidelines for sustainable construction around the principle of smaller is better. The use of recycled material, water and energy efficient systems, and waste minimisation practices are also encouraged. It also ensures the use of guidelines on lighting, huts, standing camps, fire protection, visual impact, and social impact assessments for all tourism development proposals.



Overland Track, day one. Photograph: Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service.

c) considers the parallel Expression of Interest (EOI) process for tourism development projects and how the latter may be affected by the Plan

The TMP notes that the Tasmanian Government has sought private sector innovation through a tourism expression of interest (EOI) process. This process is open to all Tasmanian national parks, reserves and Crown land, not just those within the Tasmanian Wilderness.

Commercial tourism proposals in the Tasmanian Wilderness undergo rigorous assessment and must meet the requirements as described in the 2016 Management Plan. The Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process, detailed in the plan, requires thorough assessment of proposals including that they demonstrate compatibility with the protection and conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

If an impact on the property's World Heritage values (or Outstanding Universal Value) was likely, further assessment under the Australian Government's EPBC Act, would be required. Such proposals are included in quarterly notification reports to the World Heritage Centre.

In September 2021, the Tasmanian Government also announced that the RAA process will be made a statutory process, with decision-making led by an independent assessment panel and all decisions able to be appealed. These reforms will improve the rigor of assessment, noting that the vast majority of the Tasmanian Wilderness is not available for commercial tourism leases.



Top: Early morning reflections of Cradle Mountain from Dove Lake boat shed. Photograph: Bruce Cooper. **Bottom:** Staff from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania undertake the Needwoonee Walk at Melaleuca to facilitate exposure to Aboriginal cultural heritage. Photograph: Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Since applications opened in December 2016, only three EOI proposals in the Tasmanian Wilderness have successfully received all necessary approvals and are operational. These are Project Point Adventure (a remote trekking and water transport adventure tourism experience); Maydena Bike Park (a world class mountain bike trail centre) and Tasmania Boat Charters (a guided boat charter experience at Port Davey). A proposal at Lake Malbena, which has attracted significant public attention, remains the subject of ongoing assessment by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments.

A further 11 proposals under the EOI process are under consideration in the Tasmanian Wilderness. None have been issued with leases or licences to operate and all will require public consultation processes and be subject to the highest level of environmental impact assessment under the RAA process. Of note, 7 proposals have been rejected.

d) Advances the implementation of the *Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA)* in order to be able to take into account all relevant expressions of cultural heritage, including those not yet identified.

The TMP reflects the intention of the 2016 Management Plan by recognising Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners and custodians of the cultural heritage values of the Tasmanian Wilderness. The importance of Tasmanian Aboriginal people's self-determination in the presentation, interpretation and protection of their cultural values is a key principle of the TMP.

The TMP acknowledges that the Tasmanian Wilderness continues to provide for the ongoing cultural tradition of Tasmania's Aboriginal people: *to be on country like their ancestors and to pass on their practices, culture, and stories to the next generation.* The TMP states that *for an immersive experience of cultural values, it must be recognised that Tasmanian Aboriginal people are the custodians. It is therefore crucial that they direct and lead the presentation and interpretation of those values, and are provided with the opportunity to directly participate, not be bystanders.*

The TMP recognises the importance of Tasmanian Aboriginal people's direct involvement in decision-making, through initiatives including:

- the establishment of a Cultural Heritage Decision Protocol for the presentation and interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage,
- Aboriginal employment and business opportunities,
- cultural presentation hubs, and
- cultural heritage awareness training to continue the emphasis on the management and acknowledgment of Aboriginal cultural landscapes and values that has been established through the 2016 Management Plan.



2.1.4 A comprehensive Fire Management Plan

2021 Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 6:

Notes with serious concern the impacts of the 2018-2019 fires at the property, including localized losses of some vegetation types, and urges the State Party to develop, in line with its commitment, a comprehensive Fire Management Plan for the property as a matter of priority.

State Party's response

The UNESCO report *World Heritage forests: Carbon sinks under pressure* (UNESCO et al 2021) identifies the Tasmanian Wilderness as providing the greatest net carbon sink of any World Heritage property (21 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year). The Tasmanian Wilderness is also one of the greatest carbon sinks per unit area within the World Heritage system (14 tonnes CO₂ equivalent per hectare per year).

In protecting the property's Outstanding Universal Value from fire, this store of carbon is also protected. The Tasmanian Government is finalising a Fire Management Plan for the World Heritage property to provide a strategic framework for fire management and mitigation.

The Fire Management Plan will identify World Heritage values and prioritise active fire management for their preservation. This includes training staff to understand how World Heritage values interact with fire and which management responses can be implemented to limit impact on World Heritage values. The introduction of property wide, three-year, planned burning programs will integrate the separate burning objectives of Aboriginal burning, burning for asset protection, strategic fuel reduction burning and ecological management burning.

A draft Fire Management Plan was released for 6 weeks of public consultation in September 2021 (parks.tas.gov.au/be-involved/have-your-say/fire-management-plan-for-twwha). The Plan is being finalised by the Tasmanian Government for release in the first quarter of 2022.



Top: Planned burn, March 2020. Photograph: Jen Styger. **Bottom:** Gell River fire, 2019. Photograph: Warren Frey.

2.1.5 Implementation of the *Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment and impact assessments*

2021 Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 7:

Also urges the State Party to avoid any development at the property before the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment is implemented, reminds the State Party of the importance of carrying out impact assessments, and to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies, details of any project that may affect the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

State Party's response

The *Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA)* (Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, 2017) (the Detailed Plan) was provided to the World Heritage Centre in December 2017 (see environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/cultural-assessment-twwha). The Detailed Plan outlines a decade-long comprehensive cultural assessment of the property, which commenced in 2018.

Tasmanian Aboriginal community organisations and individuals were engaged and consulted throughout the preparation of the Detailed Plan, and it was guided and supported by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Council.

Significant projects are being implemented by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (part of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania) under the Detailed Plan including:

- *Rock Art in the landscape and seascape of the Tasmanian Wilderness: recording, conservation and risk management.* A multi-year field work program has commenced which has included the digital recording of 17 sites. This has contributed to and strengthened existing baseline data, in turn supporting the ongoing effective management and monitoring of sites and landscapes.

- *Post-contact Aboriginal heritage and shared values of the Tasmanian Wilderness.* The Project focuses on development of *Healthy Country Plans* with the first developed for the Recherche Bay area. These *Plans* recognise and incorporate Aboriginal people's perspectives and provide collaborative management opportunities for the protection of Aboriginal cultural values within the World Heritage property. To date, over 50 Aboriginal people have been involved in the development of the *Healthy Country Plan* for Recherche Bay with seven Aboriginal staff members from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania trained in the *Healthy Country Plan* process.
- *Reviewing, building and integrating robust systems for the management of cultural values in the Tasmanian Wilderness.* A series of workshops and engagement sessions have commenced to identify key knowledge gaps and requirements to strengthen existing systems and processes.
- *Training for Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian Wilderness – managing cultural values.* The Project provides training, education and employment for four Aboriginal people over four years, to gain the knowledge, experience and skills required to support the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage values. The four people will complete cultural heritage training within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and will complete a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management at TasTAFE.
- *Cultural heritage training for the management of cultural heritage values in the TWWHA.* The training aims to increase the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Aboriginal cultural values of the World Heritage property and to support the effective management, protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural values by Tasmanian government staff. The project has involved the development and implementation of two high quality Aboriginal cultural and heritage training products including face to face sessions and an online module, in partnership with Aboriginal people.

Decision 44 COM 7B.75 Paragraph 7 *urges the State Party to avoid any development at the property before the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment is implemented.*

On 6 October 2021 the World Heritage Centre confirmed Australia's intended approach to implementation of Paragraph 7, to the effect that the mention of 'any development' is to be understood in the spirit of Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, i.e., 'major restorations or new constructions' along with any project 'which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property'. Therefore, any essential maintenance or activities that are consistent with the 2016 Management Plan and support the property's Outstanding Universal Value can be considered acceptable, as long as they are in line with the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines.

All development proposals in the Tasmanian Wilderness are subject to requirements of the 2016 Management Plan, which was developed to meet Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. This Management Plan requires that any development proposed within the property is subject to an environmental impact assessment process. Development proposals that may affect the property's Outstanding Universal Value are assessed through statutory assessment processes, in accordance with both Tasmanian and Australian government environment protection legislation.



Aboriginal shell midden, Towterer Beach. Photograph: Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

3. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES

3.1 Orange-bellied parrot

The migratory Orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) is identified as one of the World Heritage values that contribute to the property's Outstanding Universal Value. This species is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act and endangered under Tasmania's *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. There has been considerable investment in recovery efforts in recent years, and a recent increase in the wild population, however, the wild population size is still very small, and the species remains critically endangered. Ongoing efforts are being directed at preventing functional extinction in the wild.

The species is only known to breed at Melaleuca in the south-west of the property. Breeding occurs in the months between October and April, after which the birds migrate to the southern coastline of mainland Australia.

A National Recovery Plan for the Orange-bellied parrot (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. 2016) provides a coordinated approach for efforts to ensure the long-term survival of the species in the wild. Implementation of the Recovery Plan is overseen by the National Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Team, an inter-jurisdictional and multidisciplinary group. The group includes representatives from the Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian governments, breeding institutions, researchers and other species experts, veterinary experts and community group members involved in monitoring. Under the Recovery Plan, the wild and captive populations of Orange-bellied parrots are intensively managed.

The wild population consists of wild born and captive bred birds. In the 2021/22 season, 70 birds returned as of 15 December 2021. Of the 70 returns, 36 birds were female and 34 male. Twenty two of the 70 returns are captive-bred birds released in previous seasons, with the remaining 48 having been born at Melaleuca. This a large increase in birds returning from the Australian mainland to Melaleuca from the historical low that occurred in 2016, when only 17 birds returned from migration: 4 females and 13 males. Plans are underway to release 50 captive-bred juveniles at Melaleuca to further boost the wild population.

A captive population has been established to supplement the size of the wild population. There are approximately 580 adult birds in the captive population in five institutions involved in the captive breeding program, all of which are accredited by the Zoo and Aquarium Association. There are two captive release strategies in Tasmania: the release of captive bred adult birds in spring to increase the number of breeding pairs and wild born young; and the release of captive bred juveniles in late summer/early autumn to increase the size of the migrating flock and improve the survival rates of migrating birds.

Ongoing management of the wild population includes the release of captive birds, supplemental feeding, and management of threats such as diseases and predators. The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service undertakes planned ecological burns during autumn to help regenerate important habitat areas for the Orange-bellied parrot.

The Australian and Tasmanian governments are committed to the survival of the Orange-bellied parrot. In May 2017, the Tasmanian Government announced funding of AUD \$2.5 million to construct a new captive breeding facility with an increased capacity to breed birds to assist the recovery of the population in the wild. This facility was completed in the 2019-20 breeding season and the breeding capacity at the new facility has doubled compared to the previous facility. In addition to the capital funds to build the new facility, the Tasmanian Government also committed annual recurrent funding of AUD \$170,000. This additional investment has supported actions including the care and release into the wild of additional birds, in collaboration with partner organisations. Most notably, the increased breeding capacity has allowed larger releases of captive juveniles, who migrate at a similar rate to wild born juveniles and seem to be facilitating population growth.

The Tasmanian Government is also working with the Australian and Victorian governments and researchers from a range of universities to trial novel intervention strategies and contribute to research that aims to assist in recovering the wild population.

3.2 Maugean Skate, Macquarie Harbour

Macquarie Harbour, in the west of the property, supports the only known population of the Maugean skate (*Zearaja maugeana*). Approximately one third of Macquarie Harbour (at the south western end) is included in the property. This cartilaginous fish is listed as endangered under both the EPBC Act and Tasmania's *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.

To manage environmental pressures, the Environment Protection Authority Tasmania issues orders for management actions to companies involved in salmon farming. This has included setting the Biomass Limit for Macquarie Harbour and approving waste capture treatment and disposal. The maximum permissible biomass for aquaculture in Macquarie Harbour has been lowered from 21,500 tonnes in January 2017, to 9,500 tonnes in May 2018. This limit will continue to be in place until until 31 May 2022.

The Australian Government is funding eDNA research to determine the presence or absence of the Maugean skate in Bathurst Harbour, to the south of Macquarie Harbour (and also within the Tasmanian Wilderness). Results are expected to be delivered by April 2022. Review of the 2008 EPBC Act Conservation Advice for the species has been prioritised, to ensure that the results of this new research are included.



Top: Orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) hatchling and nest box. Photograph: Dr Dejan Stojanovic.

Bottom: Falling Mountain, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Photograph: Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service.

4. POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

intended within the property, the buffer zones and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the outstanding Universal value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

4.1 Proposed Tourism Development - Halls Island, Lake Malbena

A proposal to develop a small tourism operation on Halls Island in Lake Malbena was referred under the EPBC Act on 28 March 2018. This proposal seeks to establish a 'standing camp' to accommodate a maximum of six visitors and two guides for four-day stays.

The proposal was referred to the Australian Government for assessment under the EPBC Act.

The Australian Minister for the Environment decided that the proposal is a 'controlled action' in November 2020 and, as such, requires assessment and approval under the EPBC Act. The proponent is currently preparing additional Preliminary Documentation to inform the detailed assessment process.

4.2 Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience Master Plan

Cradle Mountain (in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park), received approximately 280,000 tourists in 2017-18, falling to 219,000 in 2019-20 and to 170,000 in 2020-21, as a result of the pandemic. If visitor numbers return to pre-pandemic levels, annual tourism growth of approximately 9.5 per cent is expected. This expected growth necessitates considerable investment in new infrastructure to ensure a quality visitor experience is provided and the Outstanding Universal Value is protected.

Over the past few years, the Tasmanian Government has invested more than AUD \$57 million in the implementation of the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience program, which is being guided by the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience Master Plan.

A new Visitor Centre located outside the boundary of the property was officially opened in June 2020. Construction is also well advanced for a new Dove Lake Viewing Shelter located within the Visitor Services Zone of the Tasmanian Wilderness (refer to **Section 4.3** for additional information). The *Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience Master Plan* (Cradle Coast Authority 2016) identified that a cableway at Cradle Mountain would provide an improved access in all-weather and year-round, with reduced use of fossil fuels. This proposal has since been independently identified as the optimal primary transport option to connect the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre with Dove Lake. It would provide a safe, scalable, high quality visitor experience which is low impact and disability compliant, within an iconic area of the Tasmanian Wilderness.

Detailed analysis of potential cableway routes based on what is technically possible, with the lowest environmental and visual impact, is being undertaken to inform a business case. Any proposal to proceed will require significant additional environmental investigations and engineering assessments. Tasmanian and Australian Government environmental approvals would be required.

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service is constructing a new viewing shelter and associated infrastructure at Dove Lake.

The Dove Lake Shelter proposal was referred under the EPBC Act in March 2019. The Australian Government determined in May 2019, that the project was unlikely to have a significant impact on any protected matters, including the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, and could proceed without further assessment under the EPBC Act.

Construction of the Dove Lake viewing shelter is well underway, with completion expected in March 2022.

4.3 Overland Track hut replacement

The Australian and Tasmanian governments have jointly funded the replacement of two public huts on the Overland Track. The replacement huts were individually assessed through a Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA), including public consultation. The RAA process is described on page 13 of this report. The RAA determined that the hut replacements was consistent with the 2016 Management Plan and would not have any impact on Outstanding Universal Value. In addition, the local government authority assessed the proposed replacement huts and issued planning and building permits under the local planning scheme and building code. Construction of the two huts has commenced.

4.4 Walls of Jerusalem National Park camping infrastructure

The Australian and Tasmanian governments have jointly funded new toilets and camping platforms at Wild Dog Creek and Dixon's Kingdom. This infrastructure is necessary to address the demand for additional camping and to mitigate against any risk of environmental harm arising from toileting. The works were assessed through a Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA), including public consultation. The RAA determined the proposed camping improvements were consistent with the 2016 Management Plan and would have no impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Works have commenced.



The new Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre. Photograph: Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service.

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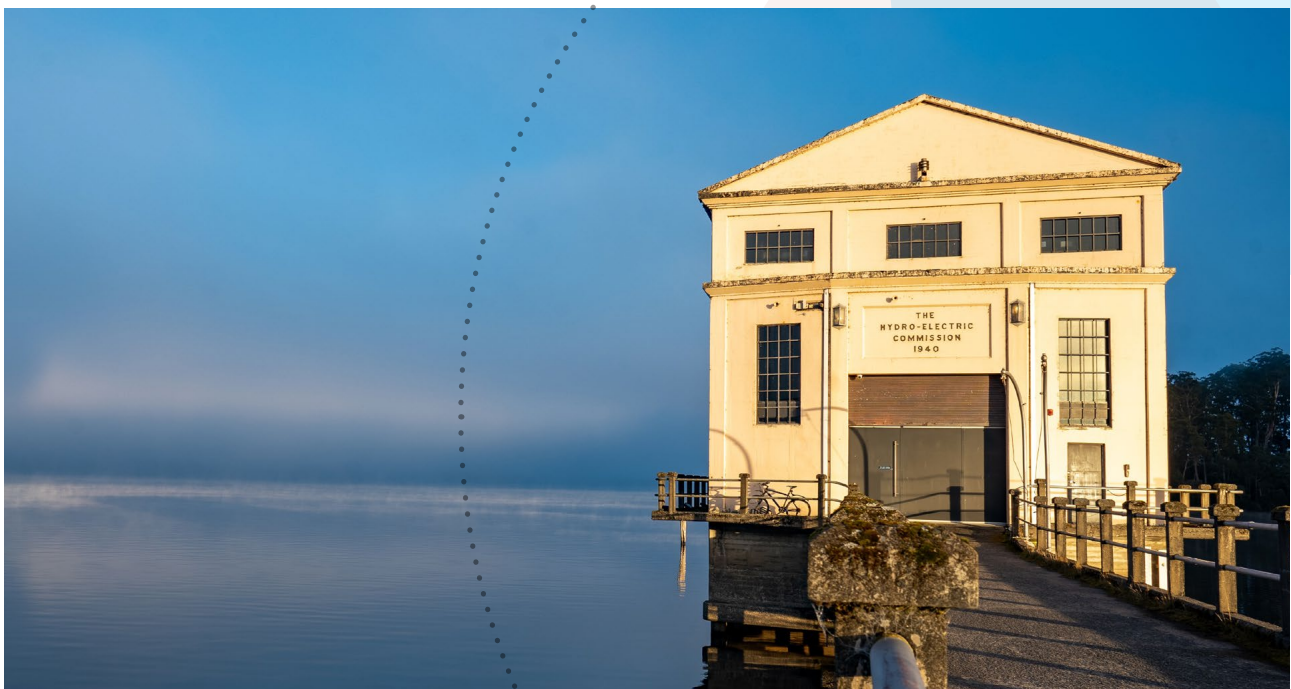
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The historic pumphouse at Lake St Clair (now tourist accommodation), Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Photograph: Bruce Cooper.

APPENDIX 1:

Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia) (C/N 181 quinquies) Decision: 44 COM 7B.75 (2021)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. **Having examined** Document WHC/21/44. COM/7B. Add,
2. **Recalling** Decision 42 COM 7B.61, adopted at its 42nd session (Manama, 2018),
3. **Welcomes** the State Party's further progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission, but notes that some of these recommendations remain to be fully implemented, and reiterates its request to the State Party to finalize, as a matter of priority, the on-going process to designate Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) and Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) within the property as reserves;
4. **Commends** the State Party for the completion of the 'Cultural Values Assessment of the 2013 Extension Area to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area' that more than doubles the number of registered Aboriginal sites in the extension area, and also reiterates its request to the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre details of how the cultural values of the additional areas relate to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;
5. **Also takes note** of the finalization and release of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Tourism Master Plan and requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to review this Plan in light of their earlier comments, and in particular to verify whether this Tourism Master Plan:
 - a) Is fully aligned with the 2016 Management Plan for the property,
 - b) Includes more specific guidance regarding the protection of the OUV of the property, including more details on how the wilderness values of the property should be considered in decision-making processes related to tourism management,
 - c) Considered the parallel Expression of Interest process for tourism development projects and how the latter may be affected by the Plan, and
 - d) Advances the implementation of the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment in order to be able to take into account all relevant expressions of cultural heritage, including those not yet identified;
6. **Notes with serious concern** *the impacts of the 2018-2019 fires at the property, including localized losses of some vegetation types, and urges the State Party to develop, in line with its commitment, a comprehensive Fire Management Plan for the property as a matter of priority;*
7. **Also urges** *the State Party to avoid any development at the property before the Detailed Plan for a Comprehensive Cultural Assessment is implemented, reminds the State Party of the importance of carrying out impact assessments, and to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies, details of any project that may affect the property's OUV, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;*
8. **Also requests** *the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2022, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for review by the Advisory Bodies.*

