

The background of the page features a photograph of Uluru, a large sandstone rock formation in Australia. The top portion of the image is a dark, solid black horizontal band. Below this band, the rock formation is visible against a light sky. The bottom half of the page is a large, abstract graphic consisting of numerous thin, parallel lines radiating from a central point at the top, creating a sunburst or lens flare effect in shades of light brown and beige.

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The Minister



The Hon Dr David Kemp MP, Minister for the Environment and Heritage inspects operations at Twin Falls in Kakadu National Park.

Ministerial responsibility for Australian Government protected areas rested with the Hon Dr David Kemp MP, Minister for the Environment and Heritage until 18 July 2004. He was succeeded by Senator the Hon Ian Campbell.

The Minister's responsibilities in relation to the Director of National Parks include the approval of proposals for establishment of Commonwealth reserves and

conservation zones under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), approval of management plans for Commonwealth reserves, establishment and appointment of members of boards of management for Commonwealth reserves jointly managed with Aboriginal owners, resolution of disputes between the Director and boards of management, and the approval of Commonwealth reserve use fees and other charges.

The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks is a corporation sole under the EPBC Act, and a Commonwealth authority for the purposes of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*. The corporation has a single director – the person appointed to the office of the Director of National Parks under the EPBC Act. The current office holder is Peter Cochrane.

The Director is responsible to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, and the EPBC Act requires the Director to perform functions and exercise powers in accordance with any directions given by the Minister, unless the EPBC Act provides otherwise.

The EPBC Act provides for the proclamation and management of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones. The term 'Commonwealth reserves' includes all the areas proclaimed under the EPBC Act with names such as national parks, marine parks, national nature reserves, marine national nature reserves, marine reserves, and

botanic gardens. Thus this report generally uses the term 'reserves' to encompass all parks and reserves under the EPBC Act.

The Director of National Parks is responsible under the EPBC Act for the administration, management and control of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones. The locations of the Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones are shown at Figure 1.

The Director of National Parks is assisted by staff of Parks Australia, a division of the Department of the Environment and Heritage. For 2003–04, staff of the Australian Antarctic Division of the Department, under delegation from the Director, undertook management of the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve. From 10 May 2004, staff of the Land, Water and Coasts Division, under delegation from the Director, have undertaken management of the remaining Commonwealth reserves established in Commonwealth marine areas.

In this report, reference to Parks Australia refers to the Director of National Parks and Parks Australia staff.

Our mission

Our mission is to assist the Minister and the Department of the Environment and Heritage in the conservation and appreciation of Australia's biological diversity and associated cultural heritage through leadership and cooperation in the management of the Australian Government's protected areas.

Our values and approaches

As part of the Environment and Heritage portfolio, Parks Australia commits to professionalism as a major public service institution serving the Government and our Minister in accordance with the values of the Australian Public Service and specific departmental values:

- caring for the environment
- respecting and responding to the values of Indigenous land owners and other partners
- engaging with and responding to stakeholders
- providing leadership and being active team contributors
- being personally committed to learning and development
- committing to excellence
- accepting responsibility and being accountable
- acting with integrity and achieving results.

We will achieve our objectives by:

- valuing and investing in people to develop our capabilities
- basing our work on the best available information
- developing high quality policies and programmes based on high quality analysis
- working in partnerships to improve environmental, cultural and heritage outcomes
- monitoring and managing our performance to ensure cost effective outcomes are delivered
- effectively managing risks
- managing change in a strategic and flexible manner
- communicating and influencing effectively.

Functions

The Director is responsible for the administration of divisions 4 and 5 of part 15 of the EPBC Act (Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones) and regulations made for the purposes of those divisions. The functions of the Director of National Parks as set out in subsection 514B(1) of the EPBC Act are:

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

Other responsibilities

The holder of the office of Director of National Parks, Peter Cochrane, has been delegated functions and powers by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Secretary of the Department of the Environment and Heritage for programmes that complement the functions of the Director. Parks Australia staff administer these programmes.

Under these delegations, the Director administers the National Reserve System Programme – a programme of the Natural Heritage Trust that includes the Indigenous Protected Areas Programme. Outputs of the National Reserve System Programme are reported in the annual reports of the Natural Heritage Trust and the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Under section 45 of the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997*, the Director has been delegated the power to approve proposals to spend moneys within the meaning of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, in relation to the Natural Heritage Trust Reserve, to the limit of programme funds approved by the Minister.

The Director also manages the Australian Biological Resources Study, a programme of the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Outputs of the Australian Biological Resources Study are reported in the Department's annual report.

