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## Planning, operating and reporting framework

This annual report is one of a number of documents in the planning, operating and reporting framework for the Director of National Parks. Parks Australia also produces several other key documents.

### Portfolio budget statements

These documents are prepared annually by the environment and heritage portfolio to inform the Parliament of the proposed allocation of resources to planned outputs and outcomes by agencies within the portfolio, including the Director of National Parks. They provide an explanation of appropriations and Budget initiatives, and are an important element in the process of parliamentary scrutiny and public accountability.

### Department of the Environment and Heritage strategic plan and corporate plan

The strategic plan outlines the key strategic issues for the Department. It identifies agency priorities for the current year to achieve the objectives outlined in the Department's corporate plan for 2001–05. Both documents provide the direction, context and purpose for the range of activities and programmes supported by the Department.

The strategies and objectives outlined in the strategic and corporate plans are elaborated in more detail in division, branch, work team and individual work plans. These planning documents reflect the outcome/output structure as outlined in the Portfolio Budget Statements for the environment and heritage portfolio.

### Parks Australia divisional plan

This plan includes the long-term outcomes and annual operating plans for sections of Parks Australia. It identifies specific objectives for the current year, strategies to achieve those objectives, and the performance indicators to be used to measure success. The plan is reviewed and revised annually.

### Management plans

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) requires the Director, or in the case of a jointly managed park, the Director and the board of management, to prepare a management plan for each Commonwealth reserve. The Director must then implement the plan.

Management plans provide for the protection and conservation of the reserve. They must state how the reserve is to be managed and how the features of the reserve are to be protected and conserved. The *Parks Australia Planning Manual* provides a systematic and rigorous guide to management planning.

### Implementation schedules

These schedules identify how and when each of the requirements of a management plan will be implemented, and collectively contribute to the annual work plans and priorities of the Director and the relevant sections of Parks Australia. Qualitative and quantitative reporting on the level of achievement against these plans will increasingly become central features of Parks Australia performance reporting.

### Director of National Parks Chief Executive Instructions

The Chief Executive Instructions were revised and reissued in 2002–03. They provide concise and comprehensive guidance to staff of Parks Australia in carrying out their responsibilities and roles in assisting the Director to meet his statutory functions.

A set of policies and procedures that sit under the Chief Executive Instructions have been prepared and are being progressively implemented.

### Director of National Parks Audit Committee

The primary objectives of the Audit Committee are to provide assurance to the Director that an appropriate control system is in place and working effectively. This includes the effective identification and management of risks, reliable financial and management reporting, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, maintenance of an effective and efficient audit service, and that there is appropriate fraud control in place. The Director extended the role of the committee to include scrutiny of the agency's broader management framework in early 2004.

### Risk management

Risk watch lists are regularly reviewed in accordance with the Director's Risk Management Policy.

### Outputs and outcomes

The Director is responsible for the management of Commonwealth reserves established under the EPBC Act over Australian Government land and marine areas, and over certain areas of Aboriginal land leased to the Director. The EPBC Act provides for the protection and management of the natural and cultural features of these reserves.

In meeting these responsibilities, the Director contributes to the achievement of Outcome 1 (Environment) as set down in the *Portfolio Budget Statements 2003–04: Environment and Heritage Portfolio*. Outcome 1 is:

*The environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environmental significance, is protected and conserved*

The Director contributes to meeting this outcome through the sub-outcome:

*Conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves*

There is one output identified under the sub-outcome:

*Output 1.1: Parks and reserves*

Tables 10 and 11 provide reports against performance information for the sub-outcome identified in the Portfolio Budget Statements.

## Performance information and level of achievement for 2003–04

**Table 10: Overall achievement of the sub-outcome – conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves**

Performance measures	Results
<p>The extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Director's statutory responsibilities under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act</i> are met</li> </ul>	<p>Management of all Commonwealth reserves was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the EPBC Act and the Director's statutory responsibilities were met.</p> <p>During the year, most reserves had current management plans. However, there were some exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The management plan for Pulu Keeling National Park expired on 8 March 2004 and a new plan came into effect on 28 April 2004</li> <li>Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve was proclaimed on 16 October 2002. A draft plan is in preparation for this reserve</li> <li>The management plan for Kakadu National Park expired on 8 March 2004. A new plan is in preparation</li> <li>The management plan for the Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve expired on 23 March 2004. A new plan is in preparation.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth reserves are managed according to national and international best practice</li> </ul>	<p>The Director and Parks Australia continued to strive to meet best practice standards in the management of Commonwealth reserves.</p> <p>The performance assessment approach to annual reporting introduced last year has been continued and provides a consistent approach to planning and performance throughout the agency.</p> <p>Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu national parks regularly hosted visits for country and agency delegations acknowledging the parks' experience in working with their Indigenous owners.</p> <p>The Director continued to provide opportunities for world class collaboration with research institutions.</p> <p>Parks Australia was awarded a three star rating under the Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking.</p> <p>The Australian National Botanic Gardens won the ecotourism category at the Canberra and Capital Region Tourism Awards 2003.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the conservation of the natural and associated cultural heritage of Australia's Indigenous people is actively promoted through joint management arrangements</li> </ul>	<p>The Director, boards of management and Parks Australia staff worked closely with traditional owners to increase traditional owner participation in the control and administration of jointly managed parks.</p> <p>At Booderee National Park, an active programme of contracting out to Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd (the enterprise arm of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council) was pursued. During the year, contracts worth \$1.4 million, representing 18 per cent of the park's total expenses budget, were secured by Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective working arrangements are fostered through consultative and advisory forums to implement conventions and national strategies concerned with the management of national parks and other reserves</li> </ul>	<p>Effective working relationships have been established with areas of government dealing with the World Heritage, Ramsar and Biological Diversity Conventions, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere programme.</p> <p>The Director meets twice a year with his state/territory counterparts to discuss and collaborate on park management issues.</p> <p>Marine Protected Area staff worked in partnership with the National Oceans Office to develop a representative system of marine protected areas in Australia's south-east.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth participation in key protected area forums, both national and international, is effective</li> </ul>	<p>The Director and staff of Parks Australia represented the Australian Government in international and national forums through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a major leadership role in the organisation of the World Parks Congress in September 2003 and in the negotiations for the Protected Area Programme of Work agreed at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Partners to the Convention on Biodiversity in February 2004</li> <li>• the World Protected Areas Leadership Forum</li> <li>• the Working Group on National Parks and Protected Area Management</li> <li>• the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens and Council of Heads of Australian Herbaria</li> <li>• the support and hosting of the secretariats of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation, the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority and the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens</li> <li>• secretariat support to the Northern Territory World Heritage Areas Ministerial Council</li> <li>• chairing the Australian Government Marine Protected Areas Committee</li> <li>• participation in the Tourism and Protected Areas Forum and joint meetings between the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism and the Heads of Parks agencies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a better understanding and appreciation of Australia's protected areas and their natural and cultural heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Parks Australia continued to develop and update interpretive and educational materials and programmes for visitors to Australian Government parks and reserves. These materials and programmes, and the information available through the Parks Australia web site, provide a wealth of detail on the natural and cultural heritage values of each park and reserve, and on Australia's protected area system.</p> <p>Local Aboriginal guides were trained and employed to provide cultural interpretation of the Twin Falls area in Kakadu National Park. This new experience has been popular with visitors to the area.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is cooperative community participation in the management of national parks and other reserves.</li> </ul>	<p>Direct community engagement in the management of Australian Government parks and reserves is encouraged through the development of 'Friends' groups and other volunteer organisations.</p> <p>Volunteers provided significant support in several reserves. For example, 370 volunteers at Calperum and Taylorville stations provided the equivalent labour of 4.5 full-time staff in a range of management activities, including revegetation, and weed and feral animal control. Volunteers ran monitoring efforts for birds, turtles, sea snakes and dugong at Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve and Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve.</p> <p>Community participation in the development of management plans for Australian Government parks and reserves is actively promoted and encouraged. In all cases where plans are being prepared, the arrangements made to encourage and facilitate community input have significantly exceeded the statutory consultation requirements specified in the EPBC Act.</p> <p>Strong formal and informal relationships with park neighbours and key stakeholders continued.</p>
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**Table 11: Performance information for output 1.1 – parks and reserves – managing protected areas**

Performance measures	Results
<p>The extent to which the Commonwealth's reserves are being managed as required by the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act</i>, relevant leases and other contractual arrangements</p>	<p>Management of all Commonwealth reserves was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the EPBC Act. In the three national parks on Aboriginal land, the provisions of the relevant leases were adhered to and lease obligations were met. Management services provided by contractors in Commonwealth reserves were generally of a high standard. Continued efforts were made to contract the delivery of a range of park services to local Aboriginal-owned enterprises.</p> <p>Species inventories for Commonwealth terrestrial reserves were reviewed and major gaps addressed.</p>

<p>The extent to which best practice management is demonstrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of parks with current management plans</li> </ul>	<p>At 30 June 2004, 17 of the 20 parks and reserves proclaimed under the EPBC Act had management plans in effect. The management plan for Pulu Keeling National Park was completed and approved during the year. Work continued on management plans for the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve, Kakadu National Park, and Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of parks with implementation plans</li> </ul>	<p>At 30 June 2004, implementation schedules had been completed for 17 of the 20 parks and reserves.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress on development of a park management effectiveness programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress continued in developing the Parks Australia Strategic Planning and Performance Assessment Framework. Implementation and reporting systems have been further improved against the seven key result areas for Parks Australia. These systems assist with the orderly execution and reporting of prescriptions contained in management plans.</p> <p>Strategies are being developed for research and monitoring in existing and proposed marine protected areas. Major monitoring efforts were conducted during the year in five of the marine protected areas.</p>
<p>The extent to which the Director meets his obligations under park leases through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased traditional owner participation in delivery of park management</li> </ul>	<p>At 30 June 2004, Aboriginal employment levels at the three jointly managed parks were 46 per cent of the staff complement at Booderee; 39 per cent at Kakadu; and 34 per cent at Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa.</p> <p>Approximately 90 per cent of seasonal ranger activities in Kakadu National Park include participation by local Aboriginal people.</p> <p>At Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa and Kakadu national parks, traditional owner involvement in the delivery of contractual services, such as construction and maintenance of park assets, was reviewed. This included employment of traditional owners by contractors.</p> <p>Capacity building initiatives started in the Muṯitjulu community in Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park to assist traditional owners to access building contracts in the park. During the year Muṯitjulu community members became increasingly involved in park construction projects.</p> <p>A policy was adopted in Kakadu National Park to recognise traditional knowledge and skills in recruitment.</p> <p>At Booderee National Park, an active programme of contracting out to Wreck Bay Enterprises Ltd (the enterprise arm of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council) was pursued.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support to boards of management to assist in their effective operation</li> </ul>	<p>The boards of management at Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta were supported by secretariat services and training for board members.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• management of the cultural heritage of the parks</li> </ul>	<p>At Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the Aṛa Irititja cultural heritage archive project continued. The database of cultural sites, and the associated knowledge using archival management of films, tapes and photographs was expanded. A rock art management consultancy was undertaken and supported by ongoing assessment of the condition of rock art and patrols.</p> <p>A variety of approaches were adopted to protect, record and transmit oral cultural heritage at Kakadu National Park.</p> <p>A community cultural heritage reference group was formed to help develop the cultural heritage strategy for Booderee. Work towards the establishment of a cultural centre in the park continued. A pre-design study identified relevant cultural/ environmental/business issues in 2003. Twenty-two new cultural sites and/or extensions of old sites were uncovered due to a wildfire. These sites were assessed and recorded.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timely payment of moneys due under the leases.</li> </ul>	<p>Payments of most moneys due to traditional owners under the provisions of the leases at Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta were made on time. Issues with the fire and insurance claims have affected payments at Booderee National Park.</p>

## Implementation of management plans

Section 366 of the EPBC Act requires that for each Commonwealth reserve the Director (or, in the case of a jointly managed reserve, the Director and the board of management) must prepare a management plan as soon as practicable after the reserve is declared. Management plans must state how the reserve is to be managed and how the features of the reserve are to be protected and conserved.

As at 30 June 2004, the Director was responsible for the management of 20 Commonwealth reserves, 17 of which had management plans in place. Work continued on preparing draft plans for the three remaining reserves for release for public comment.

## Implementation schedules

Parks Australia now routinely prepares management plan implementation schedules to identify how and when each of the prescriptions in a management plan will be implemented. At 30 June 2004, 17 such schedules were in effect.

The utility of the template being used for implementation schedules was further developed and refined during the year. The template now includes information that will assist in the allocation of financial and other resources to individual parks, and consequently improve longer-term planning and performance assessment.

During the life of a management plan it becomes clear that some of its prescriptions cannot be implemented because, for example, they have become redundant or impractical. One such prescription that will not be put into operation during the period of the present management plan was identified for the Norfolk Island National Park (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Management plan prescriptions that will not be implemented**

Reserve	Prescription	Explanation
Norfolk Island National Park	Aquatic flora from the territory will be gradually incorporated into the collection	The collection will require facilities which are unlikely to be funded and the action is a low priority

## Compliance and enforcement

**Table 13: Compliance and enforcement activities for the terrestrial parks and reserves during 2003–04**

Number	Members of the public	Tourism operators	Other commercial operators
EPBC Act incidents detected	115	34	6
Offenders unknown	26	1	2
Verbal cautions issued	45	13	0
Warning letters issued	30	15	4
Continuing investigations	5	0	1

Permit suspensions	0	0	0
Court cases pending	2	0	2
Cases taken to court	1	0	2
Convictions	1	0	2

### Major enforcement issues

- 23 October 2003 – Darwin man convicted in Darwin Magistrates Court for contravening EPBC regulation 12.19 (bringing a dog into Kakadu National Park) and r12.41 (using a vehicle on a restricted road in Kakadu National Park). Fined \$400 plus \$1012 costs.
- 14 October 2003 – Indonesian fisherman convicted in Darwin Magistrates Court for EPBC r12.23 (two counts of entering a prohibited area of Ashmore Reef). Fined \$1250.
- 10 March 2004 – Darwin commercial fisherman convicted in Darwin Magistrates Court for EPBC r12.34 (commercial fishing on East Alligator River in Kakadu National Park) and r12.18 (one count of using, and one count of possessing, a gill net in Kakadu National Park). Fined \$3120 (including costs). Nets, anchors and buoys ordered by Magistrate to be forfeited.
- Two fishermen located within vessel closure area on the South Alligator River. Prosecution hearing set for 23 August 2004.
- 16 January 2004 – Commercial fisherman fined \$12 500 for illegal fishing and entry to prohibited area of Great Australian Bight Marine Park.
- 11 December 2003 – Commercial fisherman fined \$25 000 (plus court costs) for illegal fishing and entry to prohibited area of Great Australian Bight Marine Park.

Rangers and wardens are appointed under the EPBC Act to undertake compliance and enforcement activities. All appointed officers are required to hold nationally accredited qualifications for Australian Government law enforcement officers.

Whole-of-government approaches have been adopted for compliance and enforcement within the marine protected areas. Officers of the Australian Federal Police are ex-officio wardens. Arrangements have also been made for officers from other agencies, including the Australian Customs Service, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, various state and territory police, and fisheries and conservation agencies to be appointed, after the required training, as wardens under the EPBC Act. These arrangements greatly improve the ability of the Director to enforce the provisions of the EPBC legislation in remote and infrequently visited Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones.