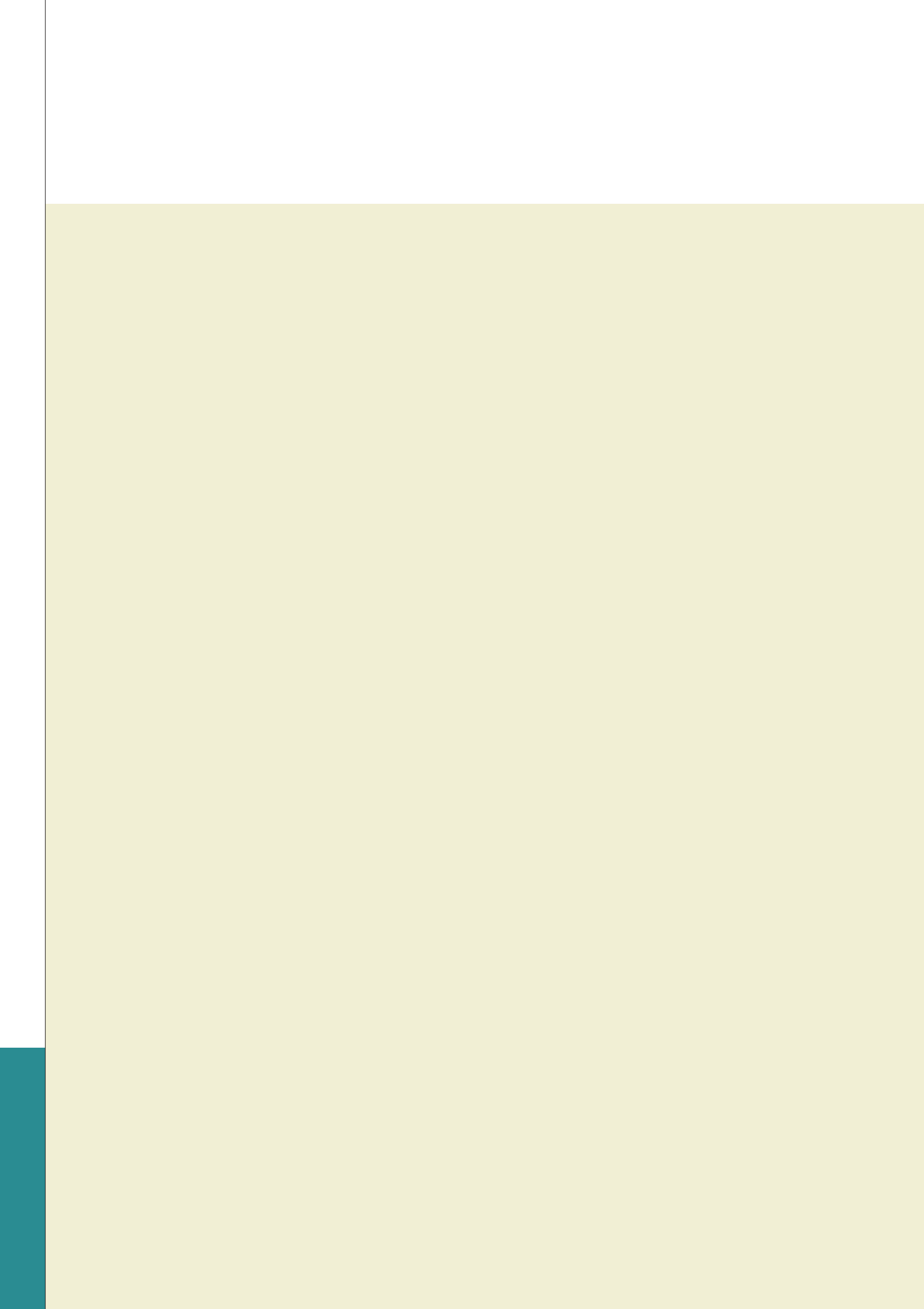


CHAPTER 4

Australia's World Heritage Record

- 4.1 Australia's World Heritage Properties
 - 4.2 Management and Funding
 - 4.3 Indigenous Involvement
 - 4.4 Multiple Land Use, Ecologically Sustainable Development
 - 4.5 Australia's role on the World Heritage Committee and Bureau
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CHAPTER FOUR: AUSTRALIA'S WORLD HERITAGE RECORD This chapter outlines and reaffirms Australia's support for the World Heritage Convention and its application. Australia takes its commitments to the Convention seriously and demonstrates this through its thirteen World Heritage properties, and its high standards of management, community involvement, and protection. In Kakadu, indigenous involvement in management is an integral and primary means of protecting the values of the Park, which is acknowledged as world class. The management of Kakadu National Park has become an exemplary example of Australia's excellent record.

4.1 AUSTRALIA'S WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES

Australia is rich in places of outstanding universal value, and the Australian community has long recognised the significance of those places to Australia and the world. The Australian Government, as one of the first to ratify the World Heritage Convention in 1974, has continued to promote the objectives of the Convention throughout the succeeding quarter of a century. Australia has taken an international leadership role in the promotion of the Convention and has set high standards as a State Party through its approach to meeting all of its obligations under the Convention.

Australia now has thirteen properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, the most recent of which were listed in 1997. Australia's involvement in the practice of World Heritage identification and management extends throughout the life of the World Heritage Convention, and includes many pioneering developments, some which are unique among States Parties to the Convention. For example, Australia is the only State Party to have put in place domestic legislation specifically addressing its obligations under the World Heritage Convention. New legislation currently before the Australian Parliament will further improve the Australia's ability to meet our obligations under the World Heritage Convention.

Apart from Australia's unique domestic legislation, there have been many achievements in Australian World Heritage management. Of particular note are the:

- implementation of best practice management frameworks in each of Australia's World Heritage properties, including the development of strategic plans which aim to protect World Heritage values;
- enhanced mechanisms for consulting and involving local communities and interested stakeholders in the management of properties;

- 13 World Heritage areas
- 18 years experience in nomination, planning and management of World Heritage in Australia
- Legislation to protect World Heritage in Australia
- A greater area under World Heritage protection than any other State Party

Australia is very proud of its World Heritage management:

- World's Best Practice Management
- Management plans
- Consultation and public involvement
- UNESCO Picasso Gold Medal to Uluru's Board of Management in 1995
- UNESCO Einstein medal to Great Barrier Reef Marine Protected Area
- * "exemplary management operation at the Park", WHC on Kakadu in 1992

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- cooperative management and administration arrangements developed with State governments responsible for managing World Heritage properties.

These efforts have been recognised at the international level on several occasions, including:

- in April 1995, the Board of Management of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency were awarded the UNESCO Picasso Gold Medal for World Heritage management;
- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was awarded the UNESCO Einstein Medal for the quality of its planning and management processes;
- Dr Jim Thorsell as IUCN Senior Advisor, noted that "Australia has done more to implement the World Heritage Convention than any other single country"; and
- when approving the renomination of Kakadu National Park in December 1992, the World Heritage Committee commended Australia on its "exemplary management operation at the Park".

**\$50 million a year in
Federal funding
Australia's World Heritage
properties plus money
from the States**

4.2 MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING

Environment Australia (part of the Commonwealth Department for the Environment) is the federal agency responsible for ensuring Australia meets its obligations under the World Heritage Convention. The agency incorporates a specialist World Heritage Unit which provides advice to the Australian Government in relation to the Convention, manages national programs relating to World Heritage, is responsible for liaising with international bodies, State governments, and on-ground

managers of Australia's World Heritage properties. Environment Australia also administers the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983*.

While responsibility for on-ground management varies from property to property, the Commonwealth Government has pursued the development of best practice management arrangements across all World

Heritage properties with the aim of ensuring Australia's obligations under the Convention are met and that all the properties are managed to a consistently high standard. To further achieve these aims, the Commonwealth also provides funding of more than \$50 million per annum towards the management of World Heritage properties.

Australia has placed a high priority on ensuring that each World Heritage property has an up-to-date management plan, prepared to best-practice standards and providing comprehensive and specific protection of World Heritage values. These management plans are prepared in consultation with the relevant State management agencies, local communities,

*Tourists are
a major user
of Kakadu
National Park*



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and interested stakeholders. In the case of Kakadu, the National Park Plan of Management is prepared in consultation with traditional owners, then approved by the Board of Management and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, and subsequently tabled in the Australian Parliament.

Where properties are managed by a State government, arrangements are in place for effective coordination and communication between the State and Commonwealth governments. Typically, this occurs at the highest levels of government through a Ministerial Council, comprising Ministers from both Commonwealth and State governments, which is supported by a committee of Commonwealth and State officials.

Australia gives a high priority to providing World Heritage "...a function in the life of the community..." (Article 5 of the Convention) and, in so doing, has tapped into the wealth of relevant expertise found in the community. Community advisory committees are in place or being established for each property, which include representatives of local communities, industry groups, tourism operators, environmental organisations and recreational user groups. These committees are complemented by a scientific advisory committee which provides expert and technical input to management decision making. Within this framework, the interchange of ideas between scientific and community based groups is encouraged and facilitated.

4.3 INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT

From the earliest World Heritage property inscriptions in Australia, the culture of Australia's indigenous people has been celebrated as representing outstanding universal value. Accordingly, indigenous people have been consistently involved in the development and implementation of World Heritage policies and programs in Australia.

In the particular cases of Kakadu National Park and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, indigenous people are effectively engaged in joint management of these properties. Traditional owners form a majority on the Parks' Boards of Management, which are responsible for determining policy for managing the Parks and preparing plans of management.

In April 1995, the Board of Management of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency were awarded the UNESCO Picasso Gold Medal for World Heritage management. The medal recognised Australia's efforts in setting new international standards for World Heritage management by indigenous people through the arrangements put in place at the Park.

Ministerial Council and
Community and Scientific
Advisory Committee's
established for most Australian
World Heritage Areas

Effective day to day
management arrangements to
protect World Heritage values

Federal legislation to protect
World Heritage values

Australia a driving force behind
cultural landscape criteria in
World Heritage assessment

Cultural and geographic diversity
extended since cultural
landscape criteria adopted.

This criteria enabled the rich,
living traditions of indigenous
people to be recognised
internationally.

Indigenous involvement on the
Boards of Management at
Kakadu and Uluru

Indigenous involvement in
management and planning in
Wet Tropics and Tasmanian
Wilderness World Heritage Areas

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4.4 MULTIPLE LAND USE, ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As is the case for all World Heritage properties, Australia's World Heritage properties must be managed in a way which provides for a variety of different land uses. Australia has in place management plans to ensure that the variety of land uses, such as tourism, conservation, research and extractive industries, do not adversely impact on identified World Heritage values.

Multiple land uses managed in World Heritage areas to protect values.

A guiding principle of the 1992 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, agreed by all Australian Governments, is that decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term environmental, economic and social considerations. The principle of multiple land use is embodied in the National Strategy and is common to protected area management throughout Australia.

Australia recognises that there is a range of different land uses that must be managed, both strategically and on a day-to-day basis. Further, in the context of progressing ecologically sustainable

development, multiple land use is supported in World Heritage areas where those uses do not impact on the World Heritage values.

For example, within Australian World Heritage properties, such as the Wet Tropics of Queensland, Shark Bay, the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park, there are a number of different and ongoing uses of land and other resources. These include tourism, recreation, fishing, apiary, agriculture, mining, and provision of general infrastructure for transport, communications and electricity supplies. Consistent with the management of all Australian World Heritage properties, the primary objective for management is the protection of World Heritage values.

4.5 AUSTRALIA'S ROLE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE AND BUREAU

Australia has been an active and constructive member of the World Heritage Committee and Bureau since the earliest days of the Convention. As a member of the first Committee established under the Convention, Australia has since been re-elected to the Committee on two further occasions, and is a current member of the Committee presently sitting.

In recent years, Australia has advanced its international role in promoting the objectives of the Convention and protecting World Heritage. In particular, we have encouraged other nations, especially those in the Asia/Pacific Region, to become signatories to and be active participants in the World Heritage Convention.

Australia an active and constructive member of the WHC

Australia has encouraged other Asian/Pacific nations to sign the World Heritage Convention

Throughout the Asia-Pacific region, Australia has actively promoted best practice management through facilitating and supporting workshops for World Heritage managers in the region. Australia hosted the 1996 regional workshop in Ravenshoe, Queensland, which successfully established a network of regional World Heritage managers in South-East Asia, the West Pacific, Australia and New Zealand.

Australia intends to continue its active involvement in and contribution to the advancement of World Heritage management and protection.

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4.6 COMMITMENT TO RIGHTS OF STATE PARTIES

Australia recognises and respects the important role of the World Heritage Committee, provided to it under the World Heritage Convention, in promoting the protection of World Heritage values.

It is however important to note that, while the Convention recognises the value of World Heritage to the international community as a whole, it also clearly recognises the primacy of State sovereignty and the principal role of the State Party in protecting World Heritage properties situated within its territory. Under the Convention, it is the territorial State which:

- nominates properties for inclusion on the List;
- is responsible for the protection of the property; and
- seeks assistance in the protection of one of its properties which may be under threat.

An inscription of Kakadu National Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger without the request and the consent of the State Party, and against the express wishes of the State Party, could place at risk some of the fundamental principles that underpin the Convention. In particular, the principles of respect for the sovereignty of the State Party, the safeguarding of the property rights provided for in its national legislation, and the primacy of the role of the State Party in the protection of the natural and cultural heritage. Such action would also, in Australia's view, be at odds with the terms of both the Convention and those relevant parts of the Operational Guidelines which are consistent with the Convention. It would represent a significant change to the basis upon which states took the serious step of becoming a party to the Convention and may deter other states from taking that step in the future.

**Cooperative spirit
between the World
Heritage Committee and
State Parties**

**Convention "fully
respects the sovereignty
of the State"**

**Protection of World
Heritage values
paramount**

CONCLUSION

When the UNESCO World Heritage Committee sent its Mission to Kakadu National Park in 1998 to investigate claims that the proposed uranium mine at Jabiluka threatened the World Heritage values of the Park it did so knowing the record of the State Party. Australia has worked closely and cooperatively with indigenous owners on the establishment and management of Kakadu National Park. Australia will take every necessary step to ensure those values are protected. The IUCN has said that "Australia has done more to implement the World Heritage Convention than any other single country". The World Heritage Committee in 1992 was aware of the Jabiluka project when it commended Australia on the "exemplary management operation at the Park". Our intensive, stringent and accountable process for managing the project development at Jabiluka confirms that that record is worthy and will continue into the future.