



Australian Government

Department of the Environment

THE SENATE

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
COMMUNICATIONS: REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

INQUIRY INTO THE TASMANIAN WILDERNESS
WORLD HERITAGE AREA

FOR SUBMISSION BY

7 MARCH 2014

The Department of the Environment thanks the References Committee for the opportunity to provide information that will assist the Committee in preparing its report by 15 May 2014.

The Australian Government made a pre-election commitment to seek removal of the 2013 extension to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area as part of [‘The Coalition’s Economic Growth Plan for Tasmania’](#).

The 2013 extension added about 172,000 hectares to the property, taking the total area of the property to about 1.6 million hectares or around 23% of the State of Tasmania.

To assist the Government meet its election commitment, a proposal seeking a further minor boundary modification of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area to remove parts of the 2013 extension was prepared. More information about the Government’s 2014 minor boundary modification proposal is on the Department’s website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/34177>.

The Department’s submission to the Senate Inquiry is presented against each of the terms of reference.

a) the natural world heritage values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area minor boundary extension passed by the World Heritage Committee in June 2013;

In June 2013 the World Heritage Committee (the Committee) approved the minor boundary modification of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (the property) (refer Decision 37 COM 8B.44 attached and available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5174/>)¹. In approving the modification, the Committee noted that the extension appears to contain significant cultural attributes that relate to those located within the property and requested the State Party to address a number of concerns in relation to the cultural values. The State Party has committed to report progress in 2015.

The natural world heritage values of the areas in the 2013 request for a minor boundary modification are outlined in the dossier on the Department’s website at <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/34177>.

The decision of the Committee was informed by a technical evaluation of the request by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (the [IUCN](#)), the advisory body to the Committee in relation to natural values.

The IUCN technical evaluation is available on the UNESCO World Heritage website at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2013/whc13-37com-8B2inf-Add-en.pdf>.

¹ A minor boundary modification is one that does not alter the World Heritage Criteria for which a property is listed and so does not affect what the Convention defines as its Outstanding Universal Value. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been listed for 7 criteria since 1982. Boundary modifications should serve better identification of World Heritage properties and enhance protection of their Outstanding Universal Value ([Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#), Annex 11 p158). Therefore agreement to the 2013 infers that the Committee accepted the nomination documentation.

A proposal for a minor boundary modification **is** justified by explaining how it improves the conservation and/or protection of the property. As well as the attributes that contribute to the Criteria for the assessment of the Outstanding Universal Value, decisions take into account considerations of integrity and/or authenticity; and aspects of protection and management including effective boundaries and management systems. State Party’s are however, asked, inter alia, to explain how the proposed change will contribute to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value and this may include information on the inclusion within the boundaries of the property additional elements that add to the natural and cultural heritage that already make up its Outstanding Universal Value. The inclusion of additional such elements is one way to improve conditions of integrity.

b. the interaction between the Department of the Environment and the Prime Minister and other ministers' offices, and the process followed in the department's review of the 2013 extension that led to a lesser minor boundary extension being submitted for consideration at the 2014 World Heritage Committee meeting;

The Department provided advice to the Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment, on the condition and values of the 2013 extension and *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* which contain criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List including the procedures for boundary modifications.

At the request of the Minister, the Department prepared documentation for the submission of a minor boundary modification to meet the deadline of 31 January 2014. The formal submission requesting the minor boundary modification and the maps included with that submission are on the Department's website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/34177>.

In the process of preparing the draft submission, the Department undertook normal consultative processes with other relevant Commonwealth agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture and the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Department did not interact with the Prime Minister's office or any other ministers' offices.

The Department advised Australia's Ambassador to UNESCO of the Government's intention to lodge the submission.

The Department was asked to undertake a review of the 2013 extension after the Minister wrote to Her Excellency Mrs Sheika Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Al-Thani Chair of the World Heritage Committee on 18 December 2013, conveying the Australian Government's intention to undertake a reassessment of the extension and to request a further minor boundary modification in 2014.

The Minister requested the Department to prepare a minor boundary modification of the property for submission to the World Heritage Centre by 31 January 2014 for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee at its June 2014 meeting.

The Department consulted with the Department of Agriculture in relation to data. The Department and the Department of Agriculture also sought information from the Tasmanian Government. Beyond this, the review was largely informed by information that the Department already had access to including composite aerial photographs and other remotely sensed imagery, and data publicly available from the Tasmanian Government.

The Department provided information to the Minister for his review and decision.

A range of factors were considered in preparing the minor boundary modification proposal to meet the Government's election commitment. This included

1. Review of the world heritage values contained within the June 2013 extension;
2. Use of available maps and data to identify areas within the extension that clearly show signs of previous disturbance from forestry activities;
3. Identification of larger zones that contained these individual patches of logged or disturbed forest while creating a coherent and sensible management boundary.
4. Ensuring proposed areas for excision did not lead to a loss of connectivity between the property and national parks or other formal reserves that existed prior to June 2013;

5. Seeking to retain as much tall wet eucalypt forest, giant trees and habitat for nationally listed threatened species as possible while also providing access for improved economic returns for Tasmania.
 - The minor boundary modification retains about 73% of tall wet eucalypt forest (trees >40 m) in the property and all but one of the Giant Trees.
 - Important values such as Riveaux Cave with its Pleistocene Art and areas connecting Mt Field National Park to the Tasmanian Wilderness are retained.

A draft request for a minor boundary modification was provided to the Minister on 28 January 2014. The Australian Government's proposal was lodged on 31 January 2014.

c. any action the Department of the Environment has funded, directed and overseen to rehabilitate any degraded areas within the World Heritage Area identified in the department's 2013 review, as per the requirements of the World Heritage Convention;

Under the *National Partnerships Agreement on the Implementation of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement 2013* (NPA), the Australian Government funded:

- \$7,000,000 in December 2013, for the conservation management of additional reserves under the *Tasmanian Forest Agreement Act 2013*, which include areas within the World Heritage Area; and
- \$1,500,000 in 2012-13, for the development of a contemporary management plan for the World Heritage Area, including the areas added in the 2013 extension.

Environment Tasmania Inc. received Australian Government funding of \$1,237,500 over two years (from the Biodiversity Fund) in July 2013 "to restore former plantation land adjacent to and within new reserve and [as then] World Heritage nominated land back to native forests".

d. the extent and description of any areas of degraded forest included in the 2013 boundary adjustment and the World Heritage Committee's rationale for including them;

The Senate Committee is invited to refer to the information provided by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre (see a. above), including the Dossier for the 2013 extension and the Government's 2014 minor boundary modification proposal (both of which are available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/34177>).

In regard to the rationale of the World Heritage Committee the Senate Committee is invited to review:

1. the IUCN technical evaluation of the 2013 minor boundary modification request available on the UNESCO website at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2013/whc13-37com-8B2inf-Add-en.pdf>;
2. the summary record of WHC 37, including comments by Committee members, available on the UNESCO website at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/125835> Refer to pages 175-176; and
3. Information on other documents that record the context of the decision provided in the background to this submission.

e. implications for the World Heritage status of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area of the Government's request to withdraw the 74,000 hectares for logging;

The current boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area remains in place and the values of the property continue to be protected under national environment law until a decision on a new boundary is adopted by the World Heritage Committee, in which case any areas that the Committee agreed to remove would no longer have World Heritage status.

BACKGROUND

TASMANIAN WILDERNESS WORLD HERITAGE AREA LINKS

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was inscribed in 1982 for all four natural criteria and for three cultural criteria. Information about the listing is available on the UNESCO and the Department's website at the following links:

UNESCO – World Heritage Centre - The List - Tasmanian Wilderness Property ID 181
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/181>.

Australia's World Heritage Places – Tasmanian Wilderness
<http://www.environment.gov.au/node/19816>.

COMMITTEE DECISION ON THE 2013 EXTENSION

Refer to: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5174/>

 [WHC-13/37.COM/8B.Add](http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5174/) refer p7

FACTUAL CORRECTIONS

See: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2013/whc13-37com-8B4inf-en.pdf> , p45.

ADVISORY BODY EVALUATIONS

IUCN Evaluations of Nominations of Natural and Mixed Properties to the World Heritage List IUCN Report for the World Heritage Committee, 37th Session Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 16 - 27 June 2013 is available for download from:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/123035> and WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B2.Add.

ICOMOS Evaluations of Nominations of Cultural and Mixed Properties to the World Heritage List are available for download in English from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/123034/> and WHC-13/37.COM/INF.8B1.Add.

MEETING SUMMARY

A summary of WHC 37 is available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/125835>

Refer to pages: 175-176.