

NATIONAL PARKS

Maintaining the Values of Australia's National Reserve System of Protected Areas

Summary

- Australia's National Reserve System comprises more than 10,000 protected areas covering almost 18% of Australia's landmass.
- Approximately 48% of the terrestrial protected area estate, also called the National Reserve System, is publicly owned and managed by the federal, state or territory governments.
- The Australian Government has international commitments to effectively and equitably manage protected areas. There is a role for the Australian Government to lead and leverage improved management.
- Inconsistent management across Australia does not provide systematic protection, consistent management or clear reporting frameworks at a national level.
- Standardising management of the National Reserve System has been repeatedly recommended and identified as a priority action by independent experts.
- Good management provides the foundation for building ecosystem resilience, buffering natural systems against pressures and threats, including climate change, and protects the overall integrity of our most important natural areas.

Context

Australia's National Reserve System of protected areas is the primary mechanism for conserving and preventing nature's decline as well as its associated ecosystem services and cultural values. However, the establishment of a protected area network is not enough to protect these values on its own. The National Reserve System also needs to be effectively and equitably managed.

All Australian governments have committed to the establishment of a terrestrial National Reserve System that is effectively and equitably managed, well connected and integrated into the wider landscape.

Issues

One of the priority actions recognised in Australia's strategy for the National Reserve System of protected areas is the development of a nationally-agreed management framework and standards that provide consistent management planning for the system. However, even though recommended by various experts and review processes over the past decade, there are still no national management standards for our reserve system.

The Australian Government has a pivotal role in progressing this. Importantly, it can provide national leadership and can coordinate a national approach to developing an efficient system of, and funding for, the management of the protected area estate, which is a significantly better option than the scattered approach currently in place.



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Further reading

See National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) Briefing Paper: National Parks - Maintaining the Values of Australia's National Reserve System of Protected Areas <http://www.npac.org.au/>.

Policy recommendation

Commit to the development of a nationally-agreed management framework and standards to provide for consistent management planning for all National Reserve System protected areas, which include:

- Application of adaptive management strategies that incorporate lessons learned into ongoing management to ensure flexible and effective responses to emerging threats.
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- Fund the National Reserve System program or similar to incentivise and leverage funding from a variety of sources to enhance protected area management capacity and meet National Reserve System standards.

ABOUT US

The National Parks Australia Council (NPAC) has a mission to protect, promote and extend national park systems within Australia. NPAC was formed in 1975. We are a national body that coordinates and represents the views of a range of State and Territory non-government organisations concerned with protecting the natural environment and furthering national parks. NPAC provides a forum for regular communication between State and Territory National Parks Associations and acts as a united voice supporting conservation of the National Reserve System across Australia.

Victorian National Parks Association
Visit www.vnpa.org.au

National Parks Association of Queensland
Visit www.npaq.org.au

Tasmanian National Parks Association
Visit www.tnpa.org.au

National Parks Association of NSW
Visit www.npansw.org.au

Nature Conservation Society of South Australia
Visit www.ncssa.asn.au

National Parks Association of the ACT
Visit www.npaact.org.au