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Welcome to country - announcement

I wish to acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Cadigal clan who are the Traditional Owners of the Sydney Region.

From following is a message from David King to the Conference on behalf of the Gundungurra Tribal Council and the Gundungurra People with full respect and acknowledgement to the Traditional Owners of this land.

Welcome to Country? (With a question mark)

It is unfortunate that I cannot be here to open the Fifth National Wilderness Conference as the meeting of tribes in Mungo National Park was moved to coincide with the

conference dates. We hope to bring a strength and unity within the Traditional Owners of our lands in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and I'm saddened that the Blue Mountains World Heritage meeting was moved forward one week, as I wanted to spend time at this conference.

Who will return first? Why the question mark in Welcome to Country? The beauty of my traditional landscape is breathtaking and nothing matches this in my opinion. Last Saturday I had the pleasure of visiting sites quite close to urbanisation but was saddened when I realised the areas I went to and viewed from peaks were waiting for its people to return. The artwork and tools were left there for when they returned but no-one came back.

We need to be first in ensuring that the land which could so easily be destroyed are kept as dwelling places for the safety of this planet and it's flora and fauna. We need to keep the paths of the planet open. We need to ensure we carry on and return first before others who will only view it as a path to development and destruction of the world as we know it.

I support keeping the remaining large natural areas intact for the earth needs its wild places. The indigenous people and conservationists should work together in a spirit of co-operation and understanding. We need to map our country to see how it works before it becomes more of a barren wasteland.

I wish you a successful conference and continued success in our struggle to preserve these areas. Please remember we may be the only ones who stand for the voices of my ancestors and the plants and animals of this country.

I hope we return first and that I will always have a Country to welcome people to. David King son of Aunty Mary Gundungurra Elder

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Opening Address for the Fifth National Wilderness Conference

Opening Address for the Fifth National Wilderness Conference presented by Graham West, MP Parliamentary Secretary, representing the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Bob Debus MP

Thank you for the opportunity to address this historic conference because next year, 2007, the NSW Wilderness Act will turn 20. I'm sure that some of you in this room were involved in getting that initial Act off the ground and been involved in making sure it continues to operate. It was Bob Carr, who was Minister for Environment and Planning, who introduced the legislation to the NSW Parliament on the 12 of November, 1987.

He said, “Today I offer this Parliament, this community, an historic choice. Will we as a nation, on the eve of the 200th year of European settlement, continue to destroy, piece by piece, the great natural areas of this country? Will we continue to be unmoved by the fact that many of this nation’s plants and animals are threatened with oblivion? Or do we resolve that the very fibre of this continent should be treated with greater respect, that our much diminished wilderness should be protected, and that our country should earn a reputation for excellence in its approach to conservation?”

I think it’s timely here tonight that we reflect on what’s been achieved since Bob Carr raised those questions with his fellow members some 20 years ago. It is entirely appropriate that we should celebrate the vast areas of wild country that this legislation has protected forever. Like everyone here when I think of wilderness, I think of some of the State’s most spectacular unspoiled areas, and for me one that’s etched into my mind is the Ettrema region. I can picture in my mind descending Bullfrog Creek into the Ettrema Gorge and some of the cleanest waters I’ve ever seen and similarly the Nattai which is close to where I grew up.

It's fair to say that wilderness has not always been seen is such a positive light. There is, of course, the old meaning of untamed places of beasts that we have to get in there and civilise it. I think that some members of the NSW Parliament still think that way. I can assure you that on my side of politics we remain committed to protecting vast areas of wilderness.

Since March 1995 the Carr and Iemma Governments have worked hard just to do that, we've more than tripled the area under wilderness protection from just over 652,000 hectares adding a further 1.2 million hectares. The proportion of the national park estate declared as wilderness has increased dramatically. In 1995, just 16 per cent of the reserve system was wilderness; today it's closer to 30 per cent. In other words close to one third of our State's great national park system is protected as wilderness.

This is an achievement of those of you who have fought long and hard, and indeed continue to fight long and hard, and you should be especially proud of that achievement. But of course wilderness is not just about numbers and statistics, despite the fact that we in Government try to use them. Wilderness plays a vital role in conserving our wild landscapes, our unique plants and animals, and allows natural evolutionary processes to continue unmolested.

Wilderness also provides unique opportunities for relaxation and solitude, although I think that is lost on a lot of the trail bike riders in the Nattai, but you will convince them eventually. The benefits that wilderness provide are as diverse as the areas' themselves and these benefits are now highly valued.

The first formal recognition of wilderness was the Gazettal in 1934 of the Tallowa Primitive Reserve, later incorporated into Morton National Park, one of the State's great parks. At that

time there was no comprehensive legislation to protect those areas, it was a dedicated group of people who ensured their protection.

The significant growth of wilderness came about by the enactment of the Wilderness Act in 1987. It is also appropriate here today that I acknowledge the growth of wilderness over the past eleven years was in large measure made possible by the Dunphy Wilderness Fund, set up in 1996 to honour the outstanding contribution made by the Dunphy family to conserve some of the State's most important natural areas. Up on the wall in my office I have one of Myles Dunphy's sketch maps and its great that we are getting involved in helping the Dunphy fund.

Back in 1934, Myles Dunphy wrote, in the Katoomba Daily Special Supplement, 'Now when mankind begins to envisage the complete urbanisation and subjugation of the remaining wild parks of this country, this prospect is wearisome and a worrying one. For where else can man go to escape civilisation?' The thought that the country can never go wild again is positively appalling and it sounds like it could have been said last week.

Now more than seventy years later that vision still resonates. That is why the NSW Government has contributed more than $10.6 million to the Dunphy Fund to acquire land with wilderness values. So far more than 75,000 hectares of land

has been acquired and protected and a total of 56 private properties have been purchased.

Our new Premier, Morris Iemma, is responsible for our most recent wilderness decision when he announced the protection of almost 11,000 hectares of wilderness in the heart of Chaelundi National Park. The Chaelundi Wilderness in northern NSW supports significant populations of some of Australia's best known tree dependant mammals, such as the Greater Glider and the Yellow-bellied Glider. It also secures the habitat of the Rufus Bettong, Koala and dozens of other rare and endangered species including the New Holland Mouse, the Glossy Black Cockatoo and the Stephens Banded Snake. All find sanctuary in this pocket of wilderness.

At least some here tonight would know from personal experience that Chaelundi contains 7,500 hectares of iconic old growth forests, including stands of Spotted Gum, Grassy New England Blackbutt Forest, Tallowwood and Blue Gum Forests.

It is also expected that the Mummel Gulf Wilderness, 10,790 hectares in the Mummel Gulf National Park south-east of Walcha, will be declared in the near future. Another significant area marked for wilderness declaration is the area known as Green Gully in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. This 13,000 hectare property was acquired by the Government in 2003, following a significant fund raising campaign by the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife. Green Gully will

consolidate the magnificent Macleay Gorges Wilderness, which includes over half of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. Today we have the Greater Blue Mountains National Parks because of the vision and inspiration of the great Myles Dunphy. We all know that his ideas of the 1930s are today a reality. The wilderness areas of the Wollemi, Grose, Kanangra-Boyd and Nattai now cover more than half the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

These areas are made of an amazing array of clifflines, pagoda rock formations and spectacular waterfalls. They contain some of the most pristine catchments in the State, such as the Wollemi Creek and the Kowmung River. They are home to 440 different animal species, including 34 frog species, 281 bird species, 65 mammal species and 59 reptile species, that have been discovered in these wilderness areas, which are on Sydney's doorstep.

The vast wilderness also boasts an incredible 1400 native plants species and the perhaps the highest diversity of Eucalypt plant species in the World with 75 recorded in the area. I add that my uncle, who is a botanist and who I bushwalk with, discovered a Hakea in the Kowmung area, and I'm not sure if they have named it yet but it will have 'Dohertii' at the end of it I imagine.

I commend you, the organisers and participants of the Fifth National Wilderness Conference, for your dedication to carry

on the work of Dunphy and others, and wish you all the best for this important conference.

Thank you.

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Fifth National Wilderness Conference summation and recommendations

FIFTH NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCE SUMMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (A WILDERNESS PLAN OF ACTION) by GEOFF MOSLEY (CONFERENCE DIRECTOR) and IAN BROWN (WORKSHOP COORDINATOR)

The Fifth National Wilderness Conference, held at the University of Technology Sydney on 8th to 10th September, 2006, was a worthwhile achievement in its own right because it brought together national defenders of wilderness for the first time in many years. Even more important was what came out of the conference in the form of the informative and inspirational papers of the speakers and the results of the lengthy workshop sessions and the plenary in terms of practical suggestions for future action.

The overarching aim of the wilderness movement remains the securing of a national wilderness system and the meeting demonstrated that the support for this is as strong as ever. The delegates, discussing how to achieve this as part of the move to a sustainable society, and, taking a multi-faceted approach, came forward with a wealth of closely connected ideas which in sum form a 'wilderness plan of action'.

Instead of setting up a group to do further work on the conference suggestions, as happened at the fourth national wilderness conference, there was general agreement that it was up to all with an interest in wilderness conservation to work on and promote the action plan. To facilitate this and obtain a wider audience the papers have been placed on the Colong Foundation website. A companion to the conference is the book Celebrating

SUMMATION

In Conference Session Four Geoff Mosley presented the following summation of the papers which had been given after which a report on the workshop recommendations was given.

On Friday evening, after acknowledging the traditional owners, the Gadigal Clan, and the sponsorship of the conference by Paddy Pallin, Pat Thompson (Chair of the Colong board) said the prime aim of the conference was to set the agenda for future action and that he sincerely hoped that

it would not be another 13 years between this conference and the next. He then read a prepared statement from indigenous representative David King who wished the conference well and exhorted the delegates to help with the preservation of his beloved Blue Mountains homeland before it became a barren wasteland.

Pat then introduced Graham West (Parliamentary Secretary to NSW Premier Morris Iemma) to open the conference. Saying he spoke from a personal experience of wilderness, Graham recalled the overall wilderness reservation achievements in the state, the success of the Dunphy Fund, and recent and forthcoming wilderness declarations. All this went to show, he said, that wilderness was alive and well in its place of origin in Australia. Keynote speaker Helen Gee began her address on the Friday evening by declaring her belief that wilderness is a resource for the human spirit which has so much to offer for those who make the connection. “You cannot spend too much time in the wild”, she said.

Helen then provided the audience with an insight into the Nuytsland Reserve in Western Australia where she had recently stayed. To illustrate that ecological attachment to country is essential she stressed the value of Aboriginal understanding. Helen then turned to speak about the threat of mass tourism. She said she had two main messages. First, we should value wilderness for its intrinsic values (for instance for the way it allows speciation rather than for mass tourism). Second, we should preserve wilderness for the fact

that, as Manning Clark had said speaking of South West Tasmania, it was in wilderness that we could solve 'the mystery at the heart of things'. Helen concluded her address by encouraging all true believers to hold on to their dreams. An essay by Helen on the defence of Tasmania's tall trees can be found in Celebrating Wilderness.

On Saturday morning, at the beginning of Conference Session One on 'The Values of Wilderness', Pat Thompson and Geoff Mosley explained the conference organisation and aims, saying that 'Celebrating Wilderness' had been chosen as the conference title to underline the positive approach but that the main aim was to develop a plan of action for enabling wilderness to make a bigger contribution to the necessary move to an environmentally conscious society. A large amount of the conference time had deliberately been allocated to workshops in order to make the maximum use of delegates' ideas.

Speaking on 'Wilderness and Inspiration', Bob Brown began by saying that what we need is wilderness inspiration not wilderness expiration because a healthy expanding wilderness was essential. Wilderness, Bob said, was an invaluable reference point for all of human activities. He then spoke of some worrying trends which were putting pressure on the survival of the pristine, remoteness and silence. The increasing use of headphones by the young, he said, was cutting people off from both silence and the sounds of nature.

He worried also that, as good as they were, TV nature programmes (such as 'Planet Earth' shown on ABC which featured mainly areas that are wilderness) have the downside of creating the illusion that all is well whereas the reality is, as suggested by Stephen Hawking, that the world and humanity are close to a 'tipping point'. To illustrate the power of vested interests Bob told a number of stories concerning the forces affecting the conservation of forests in Tasmania. One of them concerned how Mark Latham's visit to the Styx Valley to see the tall trees before the 2004 federal election was compromised by a prior breakfast he had with development interests in Hobart. The reality, said Bob, is that the planet is a battleground between marauders and defenders, with wilderness clearly being on the side of the latter.

Next, Jamie Kirkpatrick, began the presentation of his paper on 'The Value of Wilderness for Nature Conservation' by pointing out that wilderness is the antithesis of economic growth. As an overall term he preferred 'nature conservation' to 'biodiversity conservation', the latter being prolix and dysfunctional. Jamie then spelled out the benefits of remoteness and size inherent in wilderness (including resilience in the face of climate change), the problems for wilderness of streams flowing down from higher non wilderness areas, coastal plant invasions, mobile exotic animals and recreational pressures.

He outlined the need for some management interventions. Continuing with some remarks about the value of wilderness

for science he said that while wilderness imposed some costs on science the benefits were the unmodified benchmarks for the study of environmental change and for the understanding of ecological processes. Finally, discussing the conflict between scientific investigation and the maintenance of mystery, Jamie pointed out that research results were never more than provisional and that there was a good case for putting some places out of bounds to scientific investigation. Jamie's written paper appears both on the website and in Celebrating Wilderness.

After lunch Keith Muir (on behalf of himself and John Sinclair) and Geoff Law presented regional reports on the wilderness situation and wilderness developments in 'Northern Australia' and 'Southern Australia' since the last national wilderness conference.

For 'Northern Australia' Keith Muir presented a picture of 'progress' in terms of many types of development, including mines, proposed pipelines and advances in Aboriginal ownership and contrasted this with the minimal progress in wilderness conservation. The approach to wilderness of some in the Northern Territory bureaucracy was illustrated with a spiteful response he had received to a request for comment on a wilderness paper.

He then asked his audience why they thought there was this lack of wilderness progress. Taking up one suggestion, namely that national parks are considered adequate for all kinds of

nature conservation, Keith spelled out his views on the consequences of acceptance of a multiple use concept for parks, which he said involved the loss of wilderness and biodiversity. He characterised the end product of such an approach as “passive acceptance of global environmental decline”. A paper by Keith Muir on the Australia-wide situation which was originally presented at the World Wilderness Congress in Alaska appears in Celebrating Wilderness.

In his presentation on ‘Southern Australia’ Geoff Law began by giving the delegates a nation wide view of naturalness and wilderness. He then spoke about the threats posed by land clearing and mining in the southern region before reporting on useful wilderness developments in Western Australia and South Australia and the earlier solid achievements in New South Wales and Victoria. Geoff then turned to providing a more detailed account of the situation in Tasmania where alone amongst the Australian states there is no reference to wilderness in legislation. He said there were many ongoing losses.

One was the fact that 1,000 hectares of high grade wilderness was being lost each year through logging operations, some of it in previously untouched valleys. Geoff illustrated how clear felling is being phased out but is being replaced by another destructive approach known as ‘aggregated retention’. This was affecting such prime wilderness places as the Upper Florentine (which could well become a new rallying point for

the movement). Concluding, Geoff said we should let wilderness speak out to us; renewing both our spirit and our determination to save wilderness.

The Sunday morning conference session 'Going Forward 1' began with a presentation by Virginia Young on 'Keeping the Wild in Wilderness'. After showing a revised version of a TWS film on Australian wilderness originally shown at the Wilderness Congress in Alaska, Virginia provided the delegates with a well illustrated talk on the work of the TWS 'Wild Country Program'.

She said this project addresses two basic challenges: 1) keeping intact country intact; and 2) protecting wild nature in fragmented country.

Salient matters being addressed by the program are connectivity processes and biological regionalisation. Virginia then illustrated the application of the connectivity approach with details of the mega-linkage in the south west of WA before moving on to explain cooperative efforts on Cape York Peninsula. The latter program, said Virginia, involved in parallel the three components of land justice, indigenous rights (social justice) and conservation. Amongst the measures being furthered were conservation agreements and indigenous protected areas (IPAs). A problem with this type of IPA is that there is no provision for it in Queensland legislation. Finally, Virginia raised the question of whether

there was a need to revise wilderness legislation to accommodate indigenous interests.

In the second part of the morning session ('Going Forward 1') Haydn Washington, on the subject of 'Untying Any Wilderness Knots', said he believed there was a knot with many strands – philosophical, cultural, justice and exploitation. After outlining the eight key criticisms of wilderness he explained the methodology of his PhD research on the topic which, he said, had revealed the nature of the problems resulting from anthropocentricism and miscommunication. Telling the conference about his views on the way forward he said it would require persistence and better explanation of the meaning of wilderness. Haydn then recommended the use of the concept of 'lanais' standing for' large natural intact areas'. On wilderness management he said the ideal was 'minimum intervention management'. Concluding, he said there was no backing away from the term wilderness. It was a good word but it needed to be explained better. A full copy of Haydn's paper can be found in Celebrating Wilderness.

In his Sunday afternoon address ('Going Forward 2'), Peter Prineas concluded the addresses with his paper on 'A National Wilderness System'. In an analysis of developments relevant to this goal since the fourth wilderness conference he revisited the proposals of that conference and the task group it appointed, reviewed some of the criticisms of wilderness and their motivation, and then examined the main government and NGO actions on wilderness since1993. Peter restated the

need for a national wilderness network based on the existing wilderness reserves and suggested that the conference seek a number of actions by the Commonwealth, including wilderness inventorying, national wilderness standards and a code of management for wilderness areas and, perhaps, appropriate listings on the National Heritage List. Finally, he stressed the need to: maintain relevance; cooperate better; build bridges; and last, but not least, 'take a stand'.

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

After the summation of the speaker's papers Geoff Mosley (Conference Director) and Ian Brown (Workshops Coordinator) presented their report on the recommendations of the workshop groups. Eight groups had spent a total of six hours in three sessions developing proposals for action. They said it was inevitable that there had been some duplication of ideas. In the conference plenary chair Peter Thompson provided the delegates with a further opportunity for input by leading a participatory exercise involving an analytic strategic triangle framework with the three components of 'public purpose', 'capability' and 'authorising environment'.

Geoff Mosley and Ian Brown have combined the recommendations of the workshops and plenary to produce the following plan of action aimed at enabling a healthy wilderness system make an increased contribution to the move towards an environmentally conscious society. It is up to every person and group with an interest to see that the recommendations are acted on.

Plan of action

While the groups dealt with different questions in each of the three workshop sessions a number of broad thrusts became apparent. They were: a) Moves to increase the involvement of the young with nature and its conservation; b) More youth education in relation to wilderness; c) Enhanced public promotion of wilderness including the use of charismatic persons; d) Improve the linkage of wilderness with the other streams of conservation, growing public interest in the environment, with peoples' daily lives and with the achievement of sustainability; e) Support for the WildCountry initiatives as part of a landscape wide strategy; f) More engagement with indigenous people and programs; g) Overcoming political and bureaucratic shortcomings in campaigns to achieve expanded wilderness systems and better management; and h) More recruitment of wilderness activists to take advantage of latent public support.

1. WORKSHOP SESSION ONE - BETTER PROMOTION OF WILDERNESS

1A) REACHING THE YOUNG

a) Encourage research into the following: young attitudes and the media young people use; barriers to children experiencing nature, and successful examples of children venturing out into wilderness;

b) Improve opportunities for the young to experience and appreciate wilderness through the following actions: training in bushwalking skills; arranging exhibitions for young

wilderness photographers; celebrate the achievements of young people in the environmental field; encourage the production of more childrens' books, cartoons, films and poems (such as the one created by Dierk at the conference) on the wilderness theme; develop more wilderness and nature storylines to appeal to children (such as that demonstrated by Wyn at the conference); work for more wilderness in general literature (media students should note this need and should be given specific design briefs).

c) On the subject of expanding the opportunities for children to make contact with nature a wide range of suggestions were made including: graduated moves towards wilderness via backyard tents, involvement in gardening, visits to natural remnants on the urban fringe, involvement of the young in conservation issues, school based visits to natural areas and wilderness (eg sport and recreation camps and other school based nature experience programmes (such as 'Earth Journeys' being trialled in the Blue Mountains). Other suggestions included: subsidies for family nature holidays; the possible development of a new organisation for youth – 'the Green Guides' (similar to the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides but with a greater emphasis on contact with the wild); and influencing the school curriculum by giving wilderness a better presence in it (in a way which shows the connection between wilderness and sustainability).

1B) WINNING THE MASSES (THE MAINSTREAM COMMUNITY) – "the authorising authority is the whole community"

a) Developing means by which people can take the first step in becoming closer to nature such as: greater development of community gardens; encouragement of the growing of backyard fruit and vegetables; visits to the edge of wilderness areas (larger groups can visit such areas compared with the size of groups going into wilderness).

b) Pay more attention to explaining the link between wilderness, the wider environment and peoples' daily lives. Suggestions included: greater use of established institutions such as World Environment Day and Clean Up Australia Day (eg cleaning up areas on the edge of wilderness); more effort put into making the connection between such globally important environmental matters as climate change and the health and sustainability agendas and human survival, show what is involved, ie 'Fresh water begins in wilderness'; better use of media opportunities and political agendas including: workshops for activists (training in relation to media, political processes, and public relations/marketing); promotion of nature conservation writing (one possibility-a joint seminar between wilderness groups and the Association for Literature on the Environment); new TV programs (eg Wilderness Survival), more wilderness presentations, greater use of small time slots similar to Petty cartoons, utilising the particular enthusiasms of the time; make the bush as attractive as saving the whales; use wilderness photographs more (eg those of Henry Gold)); find and encourage new charismatic 'ambassadors for wilderness' as mentors; revitalise the term wilderness (establishing its position in the broad conservation spectrum); harness the resources of the baby boomer

generation (retirees); and talk to as many people as possible about wilderness (friends/relatives, etc) using the stories which brought us into the movement to illustrate the possibilities and the needs.

1C) INFLUENCING THE INFLUENTIAL

a) Engage politicians with an approach involving focus, discipline, repetition and persistence. Organise to take them into wilderness (preferably overnight). Do not preach – let the wilderness tell its story. In New South Wales celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act, 1987.

b) As with other sectors link wilderness to the wider environmental issues bearing in mind that 'wilderness' is a strong and positive term in the Australian mind. We should not underestimate the problem but should be positive. We should stress the economic benefits ('ecosystem services') and establish the link with wilderness and iconic species.

c) Organise meetings for business leaders (breakfasts, lunches and dinners) similar to the Total Environment Centre's 'Green Capital. This could be a source of funds for the other wilderness initiatives.

d) Organise major special annual events involving influential people comparable with the Great Australian Bushwalk, Art Exhibitions and Photographic Exhibitions. Try to include spectacular displays to attract attention (the example given was the state wide tour of a giant tree stump to illustrate the logging of old growth forests).

2. WORKSHOP SESSION TWO - BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS (obstacles to/and opportunities for

better wilderness protection)

2A) The conference identified the following OBSTACLES:

- lack of government/political will, government inaction;
- language/semantics around the term, negative perceptions;-
- inadequate resources for hands on management on Aboriginal lands;
- climate change; - limited land acquisition funds;
- increasing demand for natural resources (eg coal under Blue Mountains wilderness);
- poor attitude in agencies (both regionally and at HQ) – not seeing wilderness as a priority;
- ignorance amongst politicians; - not enough activists;
- not enough young people involved;
- some negative rural attitudes;
- inadequate inclusion of wilderness and nature conservation in educational programmes/curricula (not targeted);
- lack of adequate media sympathy/awareness; and
- leaseback/joint management not always working well for wilderness.

2B) the conference identified the following OPPORTUNITIES:

- better working with traditional owners, Aboriginal co-management;
- elections; - issues of climate change and peak oil – wilderness providing bench marks (image opportunity);
- large areas still available for wilderness protection in northern and central Australia;
- opportunity for more wilderness protection in national parks;
- scope for more media efforts to penetrate the media run blockade on wilderness;
- opportunity to link wilderness to hope;

- better coordination of green groups including web communication, wilderness networks can be created;
- scope to develop more effective NGO recruitment programmes to bolster campaigns; and
- interest the Green Party in wilderness.

2C) RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AT REGIONAL/STATE LEVEL

a) Run an iconic campaign in each State and Territory with an influential figurehead which both celebrates what we have and outlines future needs;

b) Review wilderness legislation to include acknowledgement of Aboriginal connections and interests. This action to involve dialogue with the indigenous community;

c) Praise politicians and business leaders who do the right thing;

d) Develop a programme for taking politicians into wilderness;

e) Obtain grants for wilderness conservation and persuade prominent persons to bankroll campaigns. In New South Wales replenish the Dunphy Fund; and

f) Carry out recruitment programmes for wilderness groups to avoid loss of strength through ageing. As part of this, interest non wilderness community groups in wilderness by means of presentations.

2D) RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

a) Organise a national wilderness publicity campaign to include: 'myth busting', and the taking of heart from our achievements to date in a 'David and Goliath battle' (Note the Wilderness Conference demonstrated the amount of interest there was to build on). The campaign to include lobbying of individual MPs. Have an influential person as leader of the

campaign with NGO coordination;

b) Develop NGO support for the WildCountry program (get behind it and expand the support base);

c) Engage the Aboriginal community in effective dialogue concerning wilderness;

d) Update the Red Index and the National Wilderness Inventory;

e) Encourage the better identification of land for agricultural purposes;

f) Lobby more strongly for feral animal control;

g) Adopt as national priorities the Cape and the Kimberley in the north and the 'sea to snow' world heritage proposal in the south east.

3 WORKSHOP SESSION THREE – THOUGHT WORD AND DEED The conference delegates identified the following management and philosophical issues:

3A) MANAGEMENT ISSUES

a) wilderness boundaries need to be well placed;

b) wilderness policy narrows potential wilderness (eg narrow application to Crown lands in New South Wales);

c) lack of rigour and consistency in wilderness management;

d) ferals/weeds/fire/ catchment/roads/recreational uses (eg horse riding)/dingos are major issues – better understanding to articulate problems;

e) 'Ecotourism';

f) Aboriginal living areas in wilderness;

g) strongest possible protection for wilderness;

h) short term focus;

i) commodification of wilderness; j) lack of management resources.

3B PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES

a) priorities – local v national;

b) some negatives attitudes in Aboriginal community – especially northern Australia;

c) risk of compromises in alliances;

d) fear of bush;

e) opposition to wilderness from forestry and rural interests;

f) fitting wilderness into livelihoods;

g) human access;

h) greenwashing via ineffective environmental programmes.

3C RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS

a) Recognise that there are some negative connotations in the term 'wilderness' and deal with them to make it even stronger. Focus on what we want, avoiding semantics and overglossing. Suggestions: retain the use of the IUCN definition of the wilderness category; use personalities as part of these efforts; have better communication with educationists; and explain the notion of wilderness as 'large, intact, natural areas'.

b) Increase the connections/linkage of the community to wilderness in a variety of ways such as; links with artists (importance of place, telling of stories (tell the stories of the places where you belong/hold dear); greater involvement with the Aboriginal community (reconciliation and traditional knowledge); promotion of wilderness as part of a broad land use spectrum and the landscape-wide conservation programme;

c) Deliberate efforts to achieve better communication with kindred groups and organisations including with bodies concerned with sustainability/opposition to the growth agenda; develop imaginative new initiatives, eg wilderness research forum, promotion of native gardens and 'backyard buddies' for wilderness neighbours;

d) Update wilderness legislation across the country; and

e) Put more pressure on politicians.

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A Celebration o
Australia Keync
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A brief outline of the progre ness in recent years; the impact o s in Australia and the role of lar providing landscape connect personal wilderness experience at Eyre in W.A.; closing the gap between indigenous concepts of land and European concepts of wilderness; the need for courage and the crucial inspirational role wilderness is set to play in a sustainable world.

Introduction

I begin by acknowledging the Cadigal band as the Traditional Owners of the Sydney city region often referred to as "Eora Country" and appreciate that there are Eora people living around this very beautiful harbour whose ancestors have been here since ancient times.[1]

An awareness of history - together with an ability to learn from past mistakes and move forward - is crucial to our great wilderness cause. In 1851 Henry David Thoreau rescued the pariah word “wilderness” from the self-righteous pieties of industrial Europe, restoring the dignity and allure that wild lands possessed for all indigenous cultures on earth.
Thoreau’s immortal statement resonates in the 21 st century: *In wildness is the preservation of the world!*[2]

The Americans, notably Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Aldo Leopold and Thoreau, provided a catalyst for the growth of the wilderness idea in our country. Following the proclamation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 the concept spread rapidly to Australia where the World’s second national park, Royal National Park, just south of Sydney, was established in 1879. By the 1920s a handful of parks had been proclaimed and Myles Dunphy and his friends had formed the Mountain Trails Club. It was set a tradition with far-reaching consequences and was dedicated to the life of strenuous outdoor activity and comradeship. One of the objects was to establish a regard for the welfare and preservation of the wildlife and natural beauties of Australia.

Dunphy perceived the need for wilderness and the threats over 70 years ago, forming the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council in 1933.

This was Australia's first real wilderness movement. The steady number of reserves gazetted in NSW attest to his tireless campaigning. The formation of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, formed during the campaign to protect Mt Colong from limestone mining in the late 60s, signaled a new era in which Myles' son Milo Dunphy now led the equally successful fight for the Boyd Plateau. His forthright approach, his courage and tenacity, inspired the new environmentalists throughout Australia. I well recall Milo's inspirational visits to Tasmania, where major campaigns were looming. Wilderness conferences, instigated by the Australian Conservation Foundation (1977, 1979, 1983,) and the Colong Foundation for Wilderness (1993) have paralleled an upsurge in the popularity of wilderness across the country evidenced in a growing number of fine publications and films of increasingly general appeal.

1. Cause for celebration.

Over the past three decades the movement in Australia as a whole has succeeded, through incredible teamwork, in protecting millions of hectares of wild country. The political power of the wilderness lobby made an enormous leap forward when Bob Hawke vowed to save the Franklin River. It was as if the whole nation sat up and noticed our agenda. We

now have many victories under our belt; the Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, Kakadu, Ningarloo Reef and the Daintree, to name but a few. We are here to celebrate the tremendous leaps we have made in the past decade as the vision of Australians generally has broadened to encompass the future needs of our native biota and the priceless resource that wilderness is now for the human spirit.

It is because we need to turn dominant notions of progress and profit on their head, and create a new popularist concept of what constitutes the "good life", that it is timely to celebrate what we have achieved! Lake Pedder would never be flooded in today's more enlightened times! No-one in their right mind regards the Franklin as a river to dam, and many Australians understand that we are morally bound to transmit our natural and cultural treasures to the next generation in as good a condition as they were when we arrived on the scene. In NSW Milo Dunphy continued to lead politicians and other influential leaders on well organized trips into the wilderness for many years, inspiring past Premier Bob Carr who in 1987 introduced the first Wilderness Act in Australia. His Government secured over a million hectares of threatened forested wilderness. I have personally visited many of the new parks. NSW has earned a reputation as a centre for wilderness protection in Australia. I salute all those responsible for the enlightened past decade in which wilderness protection became a priority in NSW.

This we celebrate!

In Queensland a Nature Conservation Act was proclaimed in 1992. Two massive national parks have been created. This state now has over 7million hectares of protected areas. The Cape York land tenure resolution is imminent. This is unique wild country, diverse and largely unspoiled. The Wilderness Society (TWS) and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) have worked to see land rights on an equal footing with park reservation. In July we welcomed the announcement that the Queensland Government is to protect the first six wild rivers nominated under the Wild Rivers Act 2005; "the first significant conservation initiative in the Gulf region since the creation of the Lawn Hill (Boodjamulla) National Park in 1985," said Alec Marr, National Campaign Director for The Wilderness Society.[3]

Many traditional lands have been returned to Aboriginal ownership by the Queensland Government, and the Territory Government has been progressive in its attitude towards joint management of national parks with traditional Aboriginal owners. A management plan for Kakadu is well underway. Australia's indigenous peoples now own and manage large parts of the continent, in fact, half of northern Australia is in their hands. In 2004 the Northern Territory Government decided that Traditional owners would jointly manage all of the Territory's reserves in cooperation with the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Land rights and park reservation are increasingly being seen as dual objectives by the environment movement.[4]

This we celebrate!

In WA, with its mega department of conservation and Land Management (CALM), wilderness protection has been a hard fight and The Wilderness Society has put in a huge effort, particularly with regard to the outcome for the SouthWest forests. Gondwana Link is a co-operative effort to restore ecological integrity to one thousand kilometers of WildCountry from the Goldfields to the south-west tip of W.A. Three States (NSW, South Australia, and Victoria) have enacted special wilderness 1egislation. The mining lobby in SA gained major concessions; but in August 2005 the Yellabinna Wilderness, a desert park, was proclaimed and protected from mining. Worth celebrating!

Victoria now has a statewide plan for the future of native forest tenure. In the lead up to the State Election in November 2006 the old growth and high conservation forest of Eastern Victoria received particular focus. Where governments have failed, individuals have been putting their hands up, contributing directly with donations of time and money to conserve large tracts of this great country and protect natural and cultural values. We celebrate their great personal commitment. I pay tribute to Steve Urwin who died

in early September, for the passion that motivated private land acquisitions for the protection of wildlife.

Tasmania is exemplary in this regard. Governments there have failed spectacularly and individuals have stepped in again and again, founding organizations, trusts and funds, and standing up to be counted. Perhaps the finest example is the non-government, not-for-profit Tasmanian Land Conservancy, that, through the supreme generosity of philanthropist Dick Smith and others, purchased historic Recherche Bay, protecting it from imminent logging, early in 2006.

This we celebrate!

At the Fourth National Wilderness Conference in 1993, Geoff Mosley announced the new campaign for the restoration of Lake Pedder. A Geophysical Study of the lake had just been undertaken by Professor Peter Tyler. Three years later a Federal Inquiry reported that the draining is technically feasible. All that is now required is the politically opportune moment to show the world we can undo the mistakes of the past. That moment may come sooner than we all expect.[5]

Tasmania has a greater proportion of its land area protected as parks and reserves than any other state - its Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) stretches across one fifth of the island. However, in Tasmania we are witnessing a national tragedy as ancient forests and precious habitats are being

decimated for plantation establishment. International concern continues to escalate. In 2004, eminent scientists called for the reserve system to be significantly extended to include all high conservation value forests. A comparison of the 2004 Federal election promises and the outcomes underscores the intense frustrations many of us feel: Less than half of the promised area was properly reserved. The Governments claimed to have enlarged the reserve system by 148,000 hectares, but in fact, Formal Reserves totalled only 58,184 hectares. The rest of the promised reserves are informal with little security of tenure or long-term viability. The Howard Government totally failed to fulfill its promise to protect 17,800 hectares of forest in the Styx and Florentine valleys and other areas adjacent to the Wilderness World Heritage Area. Boundary; areas such as the Weld Valley, were excluded on the basis of the "high-productivity forest". [6]

2. What is climate change going to mean - in the near future - for Australia's wilderness areas?

Life on earth is facing a major crisis. The world's most eminent biodiversity specialists have called on governments to establish a political framework to save the planet as we lose species faster than at any time in the last 65 million years! This is the biggest moral challenge facing our civilisation! Virtually all aspects of biodiversity are in steep decline and a large number of populations and species are likely to become

extinct this century. That is why land clearing simply must end.

Despite this evidence, and despite a significant shift in views in recent months, biodiversity is still consistently undervalued. Because biodiversity loss is essentially irreversible, it poses serious threats to sustainable development and the quality of life of future generations. We are on the brink of losing the very process that drives speciation; evolution has been disrupted. What is imperative is not a national but a global initiative.[7]

Governments are supposed to lead but our Federal Govt has been sidelined by the Business Leaders Roundtable on Climate Change which – thanks to the ACF's leadership - has transformed the debate: Business is putting forward solutions, demonstrating the high price of sitting on our hands. In this exciting climate wilderness advocacy is getting a real leg up as part of the solution for a sustainable Australia. Ian Lowe: "an ecological deficit is a worse legacy for future generations than an economic deficit".[8]

Nothing is more certain in predictive climate science than the extinction of many of the world's mountain dwelling species. The effect of rising temperatures on mountain habitat is calculable…past adjustments to change are well documented and climate change scientist Tim Flannery tells us we can

actually calculate the time to extinction for most mountain dwelling species.[9]

Flannery tells us in his recent book The Weathermakers, that the rainforest-clad mountains of north-east Queensland centred on the Atherton tablelands are home to an archaic assemblage of plants and animals, survivors from the cooler moister Australia of 20 million years ago. (Its significance was recognised in 1988 when the rainforests were listed as one of Australia's first WHAs.) The surrounding lowlands have temperatures of 30 degrees or more almost daily and such temperatures would kill the region's living fossils – the greater glider, lemuroids and ringtail possums. There are 65 species of birds mammals and frogs and reptiles, all unique to these forests, including kangaroos that inhabit the treetops (Lumholtzs tree kangaroo). Their fossils have been found as far south as Victoria where they lived before the ice ages devastated the southern forests and they sought refuge in the northeast of Queensland.

With a 2-degree increase the wet tropics ecosystem will in Flannery's words, "begin to unravel". Half the species will have vanished when we reach a 3.5- degree increase including the native pines that have been around since the Jurassic 230 million years ago. Many sub-tropical pines are clinging to the summits of just a few mountain ranges, like the bunya pine in southern Queensland and the native cypress pine (Callitris monte cola) I saw clinging to life on the moist rim of the

Border ranges last year. There could still be an entirely new genus of rainforest tree still to discover – like the 1994 discovery on Mt Bartle Frere. We have a biological disaster on the horizon. The generation held responsible, ours, will be cursed by those who come after. Our increasingly large homes and 4WDs and our refusal to ratify Kyoto will cost us the nation's greatest jewels. We are talking about last refuges for species of remarkable beauty and diversity from orchids and lichens to worms and beetles and bats.

As the world's resources run down our precious wild lands will be on the front line, intrinsically interconnected as they are with energy and greenhouse policy. Our imaginations dwell in vanishing eras and vanishing landscapes. Perhaps that is why our response to the threat of climate change seems so non-sensical. The scale and urgency of the problem is slow to come home to us. Why else can conservative folk ignore the threat while so jealously protecting their freedom? Humans have come a very long way in so brief a time. "Our imaginations", says Tim Flannery, "are mired in the past. Perhaps they are trapped in the last Great War or in colonial Australia, or in obsolete national identities or ideologies."[10]

As if climate change was not enough of an assault on already rare and threatened species, the Tasmanian parliament voted in November 2001 to exempt forestry from a key provision of the Threatened Species Protection Act 1995. Tasmania is losing habitat for rare species in a massive give-away of public

resources and the profits largely leave the state. Those who have spoken out have been sued for simply caring.[11]

The case Bob Brown v. Forestry Tasmania, is surely a landmark case. It is so important that both the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments intervened to back the loggers. At stake is whether Australia's endangered species law can protect three of our most vulnerable animals and their Wielangta Forest home, and ultimately the power of the federal government to look after threatened plants and animals everywhere.

The EPBC Act implements the Biodiversity Convention 1992 but we must uphold and continue to fight for the full force of this convention as we seek to protect this country's great natural values including a growing list of endangered species from those who, with extraordinary arrogance, would merely pay it lip service. Tasmania's migratory Swift Parrot, iconic Wedge-tailed Eagle and ancient Wielangta Stag Beetle are federally listed endangered species. Bob Brown v. Forestry Tasmania is Senator Bob Brown's personal bid to save them and the judgement will be handed down soon, probably by Christmas.[12]

Bob's action is not just for Tasmania's creatures; it carries the same argument we should apply to protecting all of Australia's native forests and woodlands that harbour rare wildlife or ecosystems. WildCountry, The Wilderness Society's long-term

vision to revolutionise conservation, is going to be a critical tool to aid the survival of many species across the continent..

3. A personal experience of wilderness:

Nuytsland Reserve on the Great Australian Bight I spent two months, just recently, together with my husband, caretaking a remote Bird Observatory at Wonundra or Eyre's Sandpatch or Eyre depending on which of the last three centuries you care to live in. I choose to call the place by its ancient name. Wonundra was inhabited by the Wonunda Mirning people until the 1930s.[13]

I pay respect to these people who were living there since ancient times, until so recently, and who are remembered by many features in the landscape. Their country was the mallee along the scarp and the Roe Plain below it, in what is now protected inside the 600,000 ha Nuytsland Nature Reserve, 50km south-east of Cocklebiddy. On the coast is the sandpatch where Edward John Eyre found water during his tortuous coastal journey in 1841. This is a wild Southern Ocean coastline extending some hundreds of kilometers along the western side of the Great Australian Bight. We explored old telegraph lines and tracks, once trodden by the telegraph maintenance crews, surveyors, prospectors and other travellers who frequented the old homesteads and wells. Perhaps it is the old Aboriginal rock holes on the scarp, with their mysterious rock piles, that caused me greatest reflection.

The tribal people for whom the rock holes here were very special meeting places, were to me hauntingly absent. The landscape seemed empty and without its real custodians, those who knew how to live here. I returned to my little time capsule at the Bird Observatory, to the solar panels, the satellite dish and the Norseman supermarket stores. And I often thought, as we sipped our gin and tonics at sunset on the dunes, about Edward John Eyre's desperate little party, shooting an eagle, spearing octopi and wallabies, drying strips of horse flesh; and spared by the local Aborigines who saw him as a ghost.

In 1841, this ghost was a driven 25 year-old Englishman, shivering at night with cold and hunger, by no means certain to reach King George's Sound and write himself into our history books.

There is today, at first glance, only the scarp, the vast mallee, the sand track to the great dunes, the waves rolling in, the ribbed sky lighting up at sunset and casting the dunes in a soft pink and mauve light. But that's the Eyre of the Wonunda Mirning people who only left the area in the 1930s when the Protector of Aborigines and his rations moved to Eucla. The emptiness is there despite the bird song. A sadness deeper than the 40ft well at Burnabbie below the scarp, or the caves of the Nullarbor above it. It is felt at the rockholes where rock piles are being gradually covered by salt bush and lichen. It is felt in the sunset when the land lies at your feet and you feel

sick of the language we have inherited with its emphasis on owning and claiming and dominating and possessing. Those who truly belong to the A class Reserve are not there. The thought hangs on the air. A stroll through the sand mallee to the grave of the Headless Traveller, following the line of the old telegraph...set me thinking of the value of all this space – a veritable wilderness - to me. This mysterious grave became allegorical. Four rusted 1877 telegraph pole bases create, with old telegraph wire, a fenced off rectangle with a rough unmarked cross wired together at one end. No head, no words, no story. Till I chanced upon a 1977 journal entry in the Observatory's library: "he called at Eyre in the late 20's", I read, "about a week later his headless corpse was found in the bush. It was buried but there was no explanation. Bill recovered the cooking utensils." That was all.[14]

I like the notion of the headless traveller. This place, and others as remote, are places we can travel "without our head", or at least without our left brain and techno-fixes. We can leave mental baggage behind, and start to look at the world afresh. I had learnt from scratch a whole lot of new things. About birds, about whales, about weather recording, about Pleistocene sand dunes – and then – as if it was all meant to be, just on the eve of my departure, a man of Mirning descent called Michael Laing drove into the Observatory with his family and over the next twenty-four hours he spoke to me of the long-scattered Mirning tribe, their history on the pastoral stations, the atrocities committed, the diseases and the routine

poisoning of flour and rock holes. He told me his own story and how important it was to bring his children here, and to be able to walk the land, to visit the sandhills where his ancestors camped and where many are buried and what it felt like travelling through this, his country. And how he felt just driving through the desert country to get here, the deep recognition that this was special and part of him, part of his story.

Land rights for him, he said, meant not ownership of the land but the right to experience it and revisit it and keep in touch with the land. It's not a western possessive concept, not at all, he told me, and yet how we, as a nation, have resisted land rights out of misunderstanding, based on fear. This man simply asks can he return to Wonundra with his children and climb the dunes with us to watch the sun come up?

Together we decided to write down the story of his people, as much of it as we can, the story of Wonundra, to inform and revise the history; a written English history that virtually starts with a young white man's desperate coastal walk in 1841. What a wonderful thing to share, this simple acknowledgement and determination to work together.

4. Wilderness, Indigenous peoples and sustainability

We could not survive there, at Eyre, without water; we do not know how to depend on the roots of the mallee or the dew spangles for water; we do not have the tracking skills to

sustain ourselves in this arid land. The fact remains, we still do not belong and we banished so many of those who did. When their descendents are ready to return, we must simply listen. When we finally do listen, remembering that the confusion they suffer leads to miscommunication, it must be with mutual respect for the ancient wisdom of the elders. Then and only then will true self determination be possible. For the self-sufficiency that we now need to learn so urgently was given up by so very many indigenous Australians for a debilitating dependency, which led to inaction, loss of self-esteem, confusion and ultimately, death. Their dreams have been lost not so much when they fought the pastoralists, as they were forced to do across the Nullarbor as elsewhere, simply for survival, but, as Richard Trudgen says, "their dreams have been lost in the myriad of well-meaning welfare programs of the last two to three decades."[15]

We who are of European descent are only at the beginning of a very long journey towards being indigenous. While we use precious water to maintain European lawns and ornamental European gardens, we are not even starting out on that path. While we have our food and services brought to us from a global market and care little where our wastes end up, we are not even starting down that track. While we have no connection with land in the sense of its nourishing qualities, both spiritual and physical, we are not even starting that journey.

Although there may be no permanent habitation, traditional Indigenous connections and activities continue today in many areas that might be termed wilderness and our constant use of the word that has become so precious to us, with its connotations of a pristine landscape, behoves us to communicate more fully with indigenous people with whom we share a common future.

When reading the summary of the Finding Common Ground workshop convened by the Blue Mountains' Wilderness Network back in May 2006, I was struck by the number of times the words "we share" were used. We share similar feelings about natural country, we share a concern for the future, a love for the land, an idea of continuity… we understand that we hear different things when we use the word wilderness and that the way forward is to accommodate each other more freely, by finding a common language for the management of large intact natural areas. This term management is a harsh Western concept based on Western knowledge systems. One suggestion at the Seminar was that we ought broaden the meaning of wilderness under the Wilderness Act to incorporate Aboriginal values into the management of wild areas.[16]

There are few if any true wilderness areas left and we could argue a long time over what is/is not perfectly 'natural', but we would all agree we must protect the best we have left and that large areas – extent - are required to sustain the natural

processes and plant and animal populations for long-term survival. Only extent of country will ensure the survival of diverse ecosystems. We, in the environment movement, are united against a common enemy: greed. As I left the arid lands I heard an interview with WA's Premier, Allan Carpenter on ABC Goldfields Radio. He was talking about the approvals issues in the mining industry: "Unless we look after mining exploration the good times won't go on", he said.[17]

Our society has the GT's, the GRAB TODAY illness. How we need to redefine "good times"! There are so many deep seated myths. To challenge growth is tantamount to heresy but we are approaching critical thresholds and we need to stabilize consumption and to do this we need nothing short of a revolution! We must turn progress as a notion on its head; we must live simply that others may simply live. We must think about food miles and support local markets. We must look to our health and take full responsibility for our choices.

Ian Lowe: "We've got to tell them about a better party down the road –one that is sustainable, one that doesn't give you a hangover the next day".[18]

WildCountry, the bold and farsighted vision spearheaded by the Wilderness Society has implications for the way we work together. OUR WILDERNESS AREAS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO BECOME ISLANDS IN A SEA OF DESTRUCTION. Global warming is unleashing massive changes and the widespread

awareness of the impacts means there is a fresh impetus there in the community. This conference is well timed; a new broad-based community activism is required.

5. Doing. Standing up for Wilderness, Free speech and species that don't have it.

Milo Dunphy was such a passionate voice for wilderness. I still remember him in the Hobart Town Hall in early 1972; "Chuck the HEC and all their damn roads right out of the South West!" he cried as he took the stage. I hear few such voices and imagine the power of the wilderness movement if we all spoke out like Tasmanian gardening guru, Peter Cundall: "If the people don't want a pulp mill they won't have a pulp mill. !" Or Bob Brown: "Wilderness, no compromise!"[19]

Australia can boast the world's best national park system with substantially increased protection for our forests, rivers, wetlands, tropical savannah and oceans. Australia CAN properly protect the great world-class landscapes of northern Australia, including the Kimberley and Cape York, working hand-inhand with the traditional owners. We CAN help our neighbours in the AsiaPacific region to protect their magnificent forests and coral reefs. We CAN work more effectively together to produce a sustainable way of life that will be better for all future Australians.

Utopian vision? Only forty years ago, Indigenous people did not count as Australian citizens. Twenty years ago it was still utopian to dream of Berlin without the Wall, or South Africa without apartheid. Determined people worked for a better world and won. Vote for no one who says "it can't be done. Vote for those who declare it shall be done"[20]

We live beyond our means at the expense of our grandchildren. Al Gore's compelling new film, An Inconvenient Truth, released in Australia this week, is set to convince millions.

It is essentially the capacity to hold to our dreams that we celebrate - the noncompromising stance that became the hallmark of the Wilderness Society – it was there in its aims at the outset - and it has gained huge respect and growing support for doing so. I am immensely proud to be a founding member of this courageous organisation that continues the hard line, tackles overwhelming odds and has become a legend in our time, with over 50,000 members.

Tasmanian writer Martin Hawes has written in his declaration of freedom: "We share responsibility for the world, with its conflicts and its promise of freedom. Inquire deeply, so that through self-awareness you end the confusion from which conflict arises. Question the way you are living now, and have the courage to follow your heart."[21]

However, we play a whole new ball game now; as we must be ready to lead with our ideas and aspirations carefully articulated. It worries me that the wilderness movement has continued to promote tourism when it seems clear from climate change calculations alone (not factoring in peak oil) that the present government and industry promoted tourism may have no long-term future.

It is now dishonest to hold out as a solution something which we all know to be inconsistent with environmental sustainability. One of the fastest areas of growth in Greenhouse gas emissions is from air travel and international tourism.

We who have the great benefit of health and energy have work to do, for there is now a crisis of the human spirit and we must stay very focused, for the number and complexity of environmental issues escalates almost daily. We now have an alarming information over-load. We can collate vast amounts of information, share it and access it in an instant. But what we need, perhaps even more than information technology is articulate and passionate proponents – role models - of life values and ecological sustainability in the face of increasing complexity and confusion.

Wildness is essential for true freedom and, for a child, experiencing the joy of nature at first hand is the most valuable education of all. Only when you have an emotional connection with something do you really care what happens

to it. There has been a shift in the nature of the wilderness experience away from basic to a reliance on high tech gadgetry and material clutter to provide speed, comfort and security. But, we have come a long way from the sugar bag of cold spuds "expect me when you see me" of the barefoot bushwalker (Dot Butler).[22]

Wild places still hold the key to the passion and energy and inspiration that is the key to self determination for all Australians – a chance to go back to experience a level of self sufficiency, self dependency and self worth. Health cannot be purchased from a supermarket. The word integrity means wholeness and that is what we have seen progressively taken away from ordinary Australians. We came from wilderness, just 7 million years ago, it's our distant ancestral home and we need to rekindle a connection with its life force. You see "human beings are the nervous system of the planet."[23]

I plead for simplicity and the freedom of honest exertion, for we are becoming a nation of couch potatoes, watching movies instead of moving. Prof Manning Clark could have been talking about any of our great wild lands when he said in Hobart, in 1980: "Keep this treasure and hand it on to posterity so that those who come after will learn about beauty, about awe, about wonder, because it is in the south-west of T [24]

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Colong Foundation for Wilderness

Protecting Wilderness and National Parks

A course for Wilderı Future by Geoff Mos

The Fifth National Wilderness Conference, hosted by the Technology Sydney from the 8 th to 10 th September iss wilderness and its future. Attended by conservationists f together the national defenders of wilderness for the first time in many years (the Fourth National Conference was held in 1993).

The overarching aim of the wilderness movement remains the securing of an expanded national wilderness system and the presentations and discussions demonstrated that the support for this is as strong as ever. The other dominant theme of the Conference dialogue concerned the contribution wilderness can make to the imperative goal of a move to a truly sustainable society.

By design, half of the Conference was given over to discussions in workshops and the plenary session considered the following topics: how best to promote the benefits of wilderness in the

wider community; the priority actions needed to overcome obstacles and take advantage of opportunities in advancing wilderness protection across Australia; and actions for overcoming management and philosophical difficulties concerning wilderness.

The Chair of the Colong Foundation Board, Pat Thompson , opened the Conference and read a Welcome to Country and a message from David King to the Conference on behalf of the Gundungurra Tribal Council and the Gundungurra People with full respect and acknowledgement to the Cadigal clan who are Traditional Owners of the Sydney Region. The Conference got off to a good start on the Friday evening with a welcome from Graham West, representing the state government who presented a stirring speech in support of wilderness. An inspirational keynote address followed by Helen Gee . Helen set the tone for the remainder of the meeting by imploring wilderness conservationists to hold fast to their dreams.

She was followed on the Saturday by two more Tasmanians, Bob Brown and Jamie Kirkpatrick, speaking about the values of wilderness. Then the current situation with wilderness protection in Northern and Southern Australia was described by Keith Muir and Geoff Law respectively. On Sunday Virginia Young explained the TWS ‘Wild Country Program' and Haydn Washington presented the results of his ground breaking research. Into untying the philosophical, cultural, justice and exploitation knots which act as a barrier to progress in wilderness conservation. Finally, Peter Prineas presented a paper on progress and prospects for ‘A National Wilderness System'.

In the plenary after a summation of the outcome of the workshop recommendations the Chair, Peter Thompson, led the delegates through a participatory exercise which drew out some final thoughts of the delegates on future actions. The Conference recommendations arising from the workshops and the plenary were combined by Geoff Mosley and Ian Brown into a ‘Wilderness

Plan of Action'. It was agreed that it was up to all with an interest in wilderness to play a part in implementing this plan.

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A National Wilderness Protection System - By Peter Prineas

A National Wilderness Protection System - Peter Prineas Paper presented to Australia's Fifth National Wilderness Conference, Sydney, 10 September, 2006.

"The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be." - Paul Valery.

In recent years some scientists have been heard describing national parks, as "mammal death traps" (Archer: 2003) and "beautiful lies" (Flannery: 2003). Such criticisms are not new. I recall reading an article in the Australian Museum Magazine in the 1970s dismissing national parks as "a nineteenth century concept" although at the time it was not a view that got much attention. There were of course responses to Dr. Flannery and his "Beautiful Lies" thesis. Andrew Cox of the National Parks Association of NSW said:

> "Flannery argues it's a 'fallacy' to think that creating more reserves such as Royal National Park will help 'very much to preserve Australian wildlife'. The alternative to the protection of this precious bushland adjacent to Australia's largest city would have been wall-to-wall housing, ovals and shopping centres devoid of most wildlife, including the many threatened species that still hang on there" (Cox: 2003).

Dr Flannery expressed an even lower opinion of the worth of wilderness reservations. When he gave the first "Milo Dunphy Memorial Lecture" in 1998, he declared – although it had been said before – that "the wilderness areas we have today are the product of smallpox and settlers' bullets." He also said "there is no wilderness in Australia" a point he made earlier in his book "The Future Eaters", but briefly and without throwing much light on the subject. Elsewhere, another critic of wilderness, Dr Harry Recher, said:

> "It's a bushwalkers' concept. Wilderness as it's practised in Australia has nothing to do with conservation. I would say it's about providing recreation areas for them and for them exclusively" (Woodford: 2003).

Sydney Plant Ecologist John Benson, in a response to Flannery's "Beautiful Lies" thesis, wrote in the correspondence columns of "Quarterly Essay":

> "The national conservation reserve system and wilderness areas are the prime means of ensuring the survival of species simply because it is unlikely they will be grossly changed by humans. This contrasts with bushland on private land that is being cleared or over-grazed, and some state forests that are being felled at unsustainable rates. At least our national parks are being professionally managed, albeit on limited budgets, by well-trained people who are dedicated to maintaining biodiversity. To downplay the importance of the national reserve system is foolhardy, yet this is what Flannery does in Beautiful Lies" (Benson: 2004).

It is important to understand that the scientists criticising national park and wilderness reservations are not doing it without reason. Their motivation is to get more effective protection of biodiversity. Scientists like Flannery, and Michael Archer and Harry Recher argue for an integrated, whole of landscape, approach. They say that a limited and static system of national parks and wilderness reserves will not address land clearing, climate change and other threats to biodiversity, and stem a wave of extinctions that is looming over the Australian continent.

However, as John Benson observed:

> "... most biologists (me included) agree with Flannery's call to improve the sustainable management of the

> ecosystems across rural landscapes as this is the matrix between the conservation reserves" (Benson: 2004).

He could have added that there is really not much difference of opinion on this point between biologists and the community environment movement.

What was once was called "off-park" conservation, and a secondary concern compared with the reserve system, has for a number of years now been a primary concern of the state conservation councils and the national environmental organisations, who now direct most of their efforts not to adding areas to the reserve system, but to dealing with the challenges of maintaining biodiversity, water conservation and the causes of climate change.

Other scientists who have given considerable thought to the role that national parks and wilderness can play as "core areas" in a wider approach to landscape conservation, agree with John Benson. In their report "The role of Wilderness in Nature Conservation," B.G. Mackey, R.G. Lesslie, D.B. Lindenmayer, H.A. Nix and R.D. Incoll said:

> "Many of the disturbances associated with modern technological society cause fragmentation, degrade the native vegetation and elevate extinction risk. It follows, that wilderness areas and places with high wilderness quality, all other things being equal, will provide for larger reserves, support larger or better connected

> metapopulations, reduce extinction risk, be less fragmented, and possess greater resilience" (Mackey et al: 1998, p.3).

They also said that characteristics desired in dedicated reserves are:

> "likely to be found in, or promoted by, wilderness areas. Hence they should where possible form the core of a dedicated reserve network" (Mackey et al : 1998, p.4).

They went on to say:

> "all other factors being equal, a landscape of high wilderness quality will better promote nature conservation objectives than one with low wilderness quality" (Mackey et al: 1998, p.5).

And:

> "An integrated landscape conservation strategy will have wilderness as the core, complemented with 'the best of what is left'" (Mackey et al: 1998, p. 6).

It is one thing to aspire to the conservation of nature across a whole landscape but it is another thing to achieve it. Those who decry the efforts of the community environmental organisations should at least acknowledge the political, legal and other obstacles to achieving nature conservation on someone else's land, particularly when that other person has different priorities. As a comment on political party agendas,

the criticisms carry more weight. The promise of a few new national parks at State elections is no longer acceptable and environment groups should not be satisfied with these hand-outs.

Of course, scientists are not the only ones who have weighed into the wilderness debate. A departing Director-General of National Parks in NSW, told the press in 2003 that “he had been "frustrated" by green groups who thwarted plans to licence tour operators in wilderness areas:

> "In its most extreme form you have people potentially wandering off into a wilderness area of Kosciuszko and putting their lives at risk and the lives of rescuers at risk … If we had the capacity to license tour operators within wilderness areas, they could take those people on a properly organised and conducted tour. The impact on cultural and natural values would be significantly reduced and public safety would be protected” (Peatling: 2003).

These comments bring into focus the human side – the social and psychological benefits – of wilderness areas, which many people value precisely because they are places that offer some respite from the pervasive commercialism and constraints of modern life.

Another barb came from columnist George Monbiot who in an attack aimed primarily at television naturalist David

Attenborough, wrote in England's Guardian Newspaper:

> "The construction of wilderness has always been a key component of the colonial project. Almost everywhere that European settlers went, they either proclaimed the land they seized to be terra nullius or, by expelling its people, ensured that it became so" (Monbiot: 2003).

This echoed a concern in the debate in Australia following the High Court's decision in the Mabo case in 1992, crystallised in a memorable indictment of wilderness published in the Wilderness Society's magazine in 1995:

> "The popular definition of wilderness excludes all human interaction within allegedly pristine natural areas even though they are and have been inhabited and used by indigenous people for thousands of years. Like the legal fiction of terra nullius which imagined us out of existence until the High Court decision in the Mabo case, popular culture also imagines us out of existence … National parks can be understood as a part of the colonial repertoire when they are understood as the further delineation, naming and categorising of Terra Nullius Incognito. It is a further conquest" (Langton: 1995).

These are understandable sentiments and more needs to be done to accommodate Aboriginal cultural perspectives in the reserve system. If the ideas expressed in the Malimup Communique are an indication of how Aboriginal

communities will seek involvement in the management of wilderness areas, then there is reason to hope that the process can be positive. I think we now need to move this debate forward and focus on specific wilderness area proposals, as little will be resolved by continuing to argue about generalities.

An article in the Sydney Morning Herald about the Wollemi Wilderness Area north west of Sydney – the largest wilderness area in NSW – said in 2003:

> "For decades, the accepted, uncontroversial wisdom was that Wollemi is, and has always been, as close to a people-free wilderness as any place in Australia. It is rugged and difficult country and yet, in the past year, it has proved to be, archaeologically, one of the richest areas uncovered" (Woodford: 2003).

I don't think anyone has suggested that Wollemi was historically peoplefree, and the existence of Aboriginal art sites in Wollemi has long been known. The Aboriginal and European history of the area and some of the Aboriginal art were acknowledged in wilderness literature (see Prineas and Gold: 1978; Prineas and Gold: 1983). In Pre-European times, the rugged sandstone ridges and gorges now within the Wollemi National Park were a border land separating the territories of six different language groups. Small numbers of Aboriginal people may have lived in – or more likely visited – the area, but this does not affect its standing as a wilderness area, as

wilderness has never been defined as a place devoid of culture and history. The challenge seems to be to accommodate Aboriginal cultural interest in wilderness areas while allowing these areas to remain wilderness. This may not be so difficult as one of the advantages of a wilderness is that it carries the marks of humanity lightly and so it can reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.

Outcomes of the Fourth National Wilderness Conference

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference was held in 1993 at a high point in the progress of wilderness conservation in Australia. The 1980s had built on earlier work by Myles Dunphy, Dr Geoff Mosley and Milo Dunphy. A first attempt to identify wilderness areas across the entire continent had been made (Prineas, Lembit and Fisher: 1986); efforts had been made to establish a national wilderness policy and program (Sinclair: 1987); there was also the enactment in NSW of Australia's first wilderness Act in 1987, and the commencement of a National Wilderness Inventory.

In 1992, a year before the Fourth National Wilderness Conference, the Commonwealth discussion paper "Wilderness In Australia" (Robertson, Vang and Brown: 1992) suggested the need for a National Wilderness Protection Program with, at its most basic level, the following elements:

- a comprehensive inventory of Australia's wilderness areas
- systematic development and maintenance of a register of Australia's wilderness areas; and

- a mechanism for the comprehensive protection and proper management of identified wilderness areas throughout Australia and its external territories.

"Wilderness In Australia" also presented further options for action by the Commonwealth. They included Option 4 which scoped the field for executive action by the Commonwealth using then existing powers. Option 5 called for the enactment of Commonwealth wilderness legislation, and Option 6 suggested amending the Constitution to give the Commonwealth Parliament full powers to enact laws with respect to the environment.

If some of the options presented in "Wilderness in Australia" looked ambitious in 1992, today they seem even more so. The advent of a different Government in Canberra has shown, too, that giving the Commonwealth more power will not necessarily lead to the policy outcomes that are hoped for.

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference established a "Task Group" to develop a campaign proposal for a 'National Wilderness Protection System' (NWPS). The group produced a report in the year following the Conference outlining the main elements of the NWPS (see the Appendices to Mosley, J. G.: 2006, which contain the resolutions of the 1993 conference and the Task Group report).

The report suggested the NWPS could be established without any requirement to change reserve jurisdiction or

administration. It recommended a staged approach, the first step being the establishment of a "wilderness unit" at Commonwealth level to oversee national wilderness policy and develop the NWPS. The Task Group also called for the National Wilderness Inventory to be maintained.

It was suggested that national groups – like the ACF and The Wilderness Society – were best placed to lobby for and promote a National Wilderness Protection System and suggested that these groups should reaffirm their commitment to wilderness protection and reservation and adopt policies in support of a NWPS, publicise the policy; contribute to campaigns to protect and reserve wilderness areas in different regions (especially tropical and arid zones, and adequately resource these efforts.

The report summarised obstacles, difficulties and threats. These included

- opposing forces (mining, logging, pastoral interests, tourism developers, economic rationalism, hostile bureaucracy;
- weakness in the conservation movement - uncertainty about what wilderness is and where wilderness protection sits in the scheme of things;
- issues with Aboriginal people;
- erosion of support due to attacks on the wilderness concept from some scientists and academics; and
- weaknesses in state and territory systems - uneven standards, management issues such as fire.

The report also identified positive factors: wilderness had survived in Australia. Wilderness reserves existed in most states and territories under either statutory and or administrative arrangements and wilderness conservation had been accepted as policy by all governments. Three states had enacted special wilderness legislation. Wilderness was supported in a number of other countries. At the international level, the IUCN supported wilderness as a sub-category of one of five categories of protected area. Among other things, the Task Group's report called on interested groups around Australia to liaise with Aboriginal communities and find common ground.

Developments since the Fourth National Wilderness Conference

When we look around Australia today we can take some satisfaction from what has been achieved in gaining recognition of the values of wilderness, identifying wilderness areas and protecting them in reserves. However we must also recognise that recent years have not been sympathetic to the wilderness idea. We have seen some retreat by the Commonwealth Government from policies and programs supportive of wilderness. The trend has been apparent also, although perhaps for different reasons, in the Northern Territory. In other jurisdictions the position of wilderness has not been eroded very much, if at all, although it can equally be said that not many advances have been made.

Despite the calls from the last wilderness conference, the national environmental NGOs have not put their efforts into wilderness campaigning at a national level, choosing to pursue other priorities.

Wilderness at the international level

Although wilderness conservation may be going through a period of soulsearching in Australia, wilderness still has a place within the categories of protected area recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The IUCN has defined a series of six protected area management categories, based on their primary management objectives.

Wilderness sits within Category I as "Category Ib … a large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition."

Wilderness is immediately beneath "Category Ia: Strict Nature Reserve … managed mainly for science … possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring."

Wilderness is also immediately above "Category II National Park … managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation."

The IUCN protected area categories demonstrate the logic of keeping wilderness as a reserve category. The step between national park and strict nature reserve is, both in practical and political terms, too great. Wilderness fills the gap. This is an appropriate point to remind ourselves of the reasons why wilderness reserves were sought by early conservationists and why they were not content just to have national parks. Marie Byles made the case in the 1930s:

> "When New South Wales does wake up to the growing need for wild park lands, it will be able to benefit by the mistakes made by America. The initial mistake made there was to regard it sufficient to dedicate lands as parks. It was thought that to dedicate them thus would be the same thing as keeping them in a primitive or natural state. But it was seen then that hotels, motor roads and wide advertisement caused tourists to flock there by the thousands... It was soon realised that, though it was desirable to have parks for tourists, this was not enough. There must also be wildernesses which will stay wildernesses for all time." (Prineas and Gold: 1997)

Experience has shown that Byles' reasoning was sound. Natural conditions in some Australian national parks are under great pressure from recreational use and associated development. In NSW's Kosciuszko National Park, land within ski resort lease areas is traded and developed in a manner comparable with towns outside the Park. The Kosciuszko

National Park also has several wilderness areas managed under the provisions of the NSW Wilderness Act. At least in the Park's wilderness areas, natural conditions are protected from the pressures of commercial and recreational development.

The Commonwealth

When the Fourth National Wilderness Conference was held in 1993, there was a Commonwealth Wilderness Program. The Commonwealth had funded the National Wilderness Inventory for the previous seven years. The Australian Heritage Commission had listed national parks and reserved wilderness areas on the Register of the National Estate.

Identification of wilderness areas at Commonwealth level was then continuing under a variety of initiatives. They included the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) in the early 1990s which carried out assessments of the Southwest, southeast and east coast forests, including the identification of wilderness areas; the Regional Forest Agreement process implemented from about 1996 to 2001; and the National Forest Policy with its Comprehensive Regional Assessments and vision of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve system. The National Wilderness Inventory was discontinued in 1997 even though in the previous year a poll commissioned by the Australian Heritage Commission indicated 99% public support for wilderness and 98% support for wild rivers (Roy Morgan Pty Ltd: 1996). Nevertheless, the

Commonwealth Wilderness Program continued on and identified and mapped wilderness areas throughout Australia up to about 1999. In that year also, the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act came into force; this legislation includes section 346 which requires Commonwealth reserves to be assigned to a particular IUCN category, including wilderness, and section 360 which prohibits inappropriate activities in wilderness reserves or any wilderness zone within a reserve.

However, by 2001 the Commonwealth Department (now it is called the Department of Environment and Heritage) seems to have turned away from wilderness. It seems that wilderness was not seen as sufficiently "scientific" and there were concerns that wilderness was the cause of arguments among some NGOs. The Department continued the "National Reserve System" policy.

Although there was a change in policy, some elements of the Commonwealth Wilderness Program still exist. For example, the National Wilderness Inventory can still be accessed on the internet under the name "Australian Land Disturbance database," although I am uncertain how up-todate or usable this database is. Various aspects of landscape which incidentally may be used to assess wilderness quality are still monitored, updated and presented in databases maintained by the Bureau of Rural Sciences, another Commonwealth agency. Such information can be used to assist in wilderness planning and monitoring. I believe there are also some

thousands of maps of wilderness areas from the former Commonwealth Wilderness Program kept in the public access section of the Department of Environment and Heritage library. However I believe the Department is dispensing with the library. The maps will then go to a Fyshwick Store where further access might be problematical.

Regrettably, the Australian Heritage Commission, an organisation which did so much valuable work in documenting and helping to protect Australia's natural heritage, including wilderness, is gone. It has been replaced by the Australian Heritage Council, a body that shows little interest in the nation's natural heritage. Of 33 listings on the National Heritage List, only two – Queensland's Glasshouse Mountains, and the Dinosaur Stampede National Monument – appear to have been listed primarily for their natural heritage values.

The States and Territories

New South Wales

New South Wales currently has 6.5 million hectares of national parks including almost 2 million hectares of wilderness protected under the NSW Wilderness Act.

However wilderness in western NSW is not as well served as the east. Also, there is now no central wilderness unit in the State Department of Environment and Conservation and

regional differences are emerging in the way wilderness is being assessed and administered.

The NSW IFOA process, put in place in 1999, has limited the lands to which wilderness nominations and assessments can apply. Much forested public land outside national parks has been excluded. This has compromised the operation of the NSW Wilderness Act.

More recently a further limitation has been placed on the application of the Wilderness Act. The NSW Government brought in the Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act in 2005 which had the effect of establishing special "community" reserves in this vast woodland region in northwestern NSW. These new reserves were provided with a new form of governance in which the Director of National Parks and Wildlife has to share control with other State agencies. A nomination made by the Colong Foundation for a 22,000 hectare 'Bebo' Wilderness in these northwestern woodlands was stopped by the enactment of the Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area Act. The Minister for the Environment advised the Colong Foundation that the provision in the new Act excluding the operation of the Wilderness Act was made "as it was considered that any wilderness declaration would exclude general public use and community participation in the planning and management of a large part of the CCA" (the Community Conservation Area). The most recent addition to the wilderness system was in November 1995 when, in a

formal presentation to environmental groups by Premier Morris Iemma, the Government announced the declaration of the 11,000 hectare Chaelundi Wilderness Area in the northeast of the State, an area of old growth forest including rainforest and the scene of conservation disputes over many years. The Premier suggested that more wilderness declarations would follow in 2006.

On the same occasion the NSW Government announced that it would also proclaim the State's first wild rivers and nominated the Washpool, Upper Brogo, Upper Hastings, Forbes and Kowmung Rivers. It was suggested that more Wild Rivers declarations could follow, with mention of the Paroo, Macdonald, Grose and Colo Rivers. Although these wild river declarations would affect river courses already protected within national parks, they may help to prevent the further exploitation of these streams' water resources.

Victoria

Since the early 1990s Victoria has had a reasonably comprehensive wilderness protection system established under legislation. The position of wilderness in Victoria is largely unchanged since the last wilderness conference.

Tasmania

In Tasmania there continues to be no provision in State legislation in for the identification or protection of wilderness areas. However large wilderness areas within the State's World Heritage national parks are identified and protected under the WHA plans of management. The position of wilderness in

Tasmania is largely unchanged since the last wilderness conference.

Australian Capital Territory

Namadgi National Park contains a wilderness zone made under the ACT Nature Conservation Ordinance. This was proposed in the 1980s Plan of Management and still exists. A representative Board for the Namadgi National Park has recently produced a report criticising the wilderness zone within the Park on the basis that wilderness is a concept that is offensive to Aboriginal people. A new draft for Namadgi National Park was released late in 2005 which proposes numbered zones, corresponding to descriptions such as "remote", "semi remote" etc. In management terms, the wilderness zone would not be eliminated but the zoning categories would not use the word.

South Australia

South Australia has had statutory provision for wilderness for some time but had established only a limited number of small wilderness reserves. However, since 2004 the situation has improved markedly with the establishment of the 500,000 hectare Yellabinna Wilderness protection area north of Ceduna.

Queensland

Queensland was the second state after NSW to provide for wilderness areas in legislation. They were referred to in the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975 as "primitive areas". However, no primitive areas were ever gazetted. Provision was

made for the declaration of “wilderness areas” in the Nature Conservation Act 1992 but none has ever been declared.

Wilderness areas in Queensland do nevertheless receive some recognition and appropriate management under plans of management for national parks, including Mount Barney, Hinchinbrook Island, Currawinya and Carnarvon. In the case of Carnarvon and Hinchinbrook Island – national parks with high wilderness values – the plans of management designate remote-natural zones over most of the park with minimal or no visitor facilities and excluding motor vehicle access other than for management purposes.

Northern Territory

Wilderness zones may be created within national parks under the provisions of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act, but no wilderness zones have been gazetted. Many national parks in the Northern Territory are now on Aboriginal-owned land. There exists a zone (Zone 4) in the Kakadu National Park, created under the park’s management plan, which is described in terms which equate with wilderness management, however the term “wildness” is used rather than “wilderness”. Zone 4 is in the southeast of Kakadu National Park and covers the Arnhem land escarpment within the park or, as it is known to local Aboriginal people, the “Sickness Country”. However the new draft Kakadu National Park plan of management (yet to be adopted) would dispense with Zone 4. Indeed, the new plan would, if adopted, abandon any form of zoning within the Park.

Western Australia

Western Australia is a late starter in wilderness protection but took a step forward in 2004 when the State Government adopted a policy to protect wilderness areas. Western Australia's wilderness policy was at the time described as an integral part of the State's policy to protect old growth forests and would be applied within a new and extensive forest conservation area badged as the Walpole Wilderness Area (WWA). Situated in the forests between Walpole and Denmark in the State's southwest, most of the WWA consists of half a dozen national parks (some created only recently) formed from former State forest. Because much of the area has a history of logging disturbance with many logging tracks, little of it strictly qualifies as "wilderness" at the present time. Under a management plan currently being developed, two formal wilderness zones are to be designated. Recovery of disturbed areas over time should allow more of the WWA to be designated as wilderness in the future. Under Western Australia's new wilderness policy, criteria for wilderness include remoteness from settlement and access, with the minimum size of a designated wilderness area being 8,000 hectares in the agricultural and forested southwest region of the State and about 20,000 hectares in the semi-arid, arid and tropical regions. Wilderness management under the new policy is generally in accordance with practice in other states.

Non Government Environment Organisations

The Australian Conservation Foundation

In 1999 the ACF approved a policy statement entitled "Wilderness and Indigenous cultural landscape in Australia". This was approved after about two years of discussion. The policy did not replace the ACF's earlier position paper on wilderness, mainly the work of Dr Geoff Mosley, which continues to apply.

The 1999 policy statement included the following provision: 5.5 The Commonwealth should:

- establish a leading role in wilderness conservation;
- actively promote the establishment of a national wilderness protection system; and
- maintain an inventory of areas in a wilderness condition As discussed, the Commonwealth has not taken these actions and the ACF has not given priority to pursuing them.

The Wilderness Society

TWS's WildCountry program is "based on the way the continent works as a whole and the connections between wildlife, habitat, climate change and people and how these change over time". TWS is working with long term objectives to set up large-scale connections across the continent. The focus is said to be both protecting the best of what is left of Australia's natural environment, and maintaining and/or restoring ecological connections in the landscape. The program is said to be based on "cutting-edge science" and on "landscape-scale conservation initiatives". There are currently five of these initiatives underway around the country:

(a) Gondwana Link (South-west Western Australia);

(b) Northern Australia (from the Kimberley to Cape York Peninsula);

(c) Far North Queensland (which is a component of the broader Northern Australia project -focused on the Gulf of Carpentaria & Cape York Peninsula)

(d) Mallee to the coast (Tri-state Project, which captures South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales);

(e) The Western Corridor (South Australia).

WildCountry is based on the 'Rewilding" concept developed in North America by Reed Noss and Michael Soule (Foreman: 2004). The TWS's first WildCountry co-ordinator, Virginia Young said in an interview:

> "We had heard about the Wildlands Project initiative in the US which aims to stem the disappearance of wildlife and wilderness across every region of North America … (in Australia we saw) … the major issue was rebuilding linkages and connectivity in the landscape for a range of ecological processes … an interesting dialogue began with a group of scientists, leading to the first meeting of scientists in April 2000 and the formation of the WildCountry Science Council in 2001 …" (McDonald: 2004).

Does the WildCountry/Rewilding approach mean that we must abandon wilderness areas and national parks? There is little reason to think so. Dave Foreman in his book, "Rewilding North America," addresses this point, and the differences that have sometimes emerged there between the community environment movement and some conservation biologists:

> "In general, wilderness critics, including some conservation biologists, have failed to acknowledge the tremendous successes of traditional American conservation and national parks. Some claim that an ecological approach doesn't fit with a traditional conservation approach. Many of these critics just don't know what they are talking about. Others have overstated their case in typical human fashion to make their point. … wilderness areas and national parks are the bedrock underlying protection of biodiversity and rewilding … Far from tossing aside existing protected areas and the wilderness and park systems, we conservationists must expand such areas and reconnect them" (Foreman: 2004 pp 168-169).

Indigenous Issues

The Mabo Decision

In 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark "Mabo" decision which rewrote Australia's common law. The Court found that Indigenous people have native title rights that existed before colonisation and which still exist where

not extinguished by inconsistent acts of the Crown. Within national parks some native title rights might exist where consistent with the national park.

Native Title Act

In 1993, the Native Title Act codified Native Title law and put in place machinery for native title claims. It validated titles granted after 1975 which were invalid in law by operation of the Racial Discrimination Act. Indigenous people were given the right to negotiate, but not veto, developments on native title lands.

Wik Decision

In 1996 the Wik case was decided by the High Court of Australia. The case concerned Aboriginal rights to land which were, or had been, subject to a pastoral lease. Pastoral leases are a form of land tenure created by the British Colonial Office in the nineteenth century and were a response to concerns at the unlawful occupation of vast areas of Australia by squatter pastoralists in the 1830s and 1840s. The British Government intended that these leases would not give squatters exclusive rights to the land to the detriment of the native people. Substantial areas of Australia – some 42% of the continent – are under pastoral leases and are especially significant in the north. The High Court held that native title rights could exist alongside the rights of pastoralists on pastoral leases. It held that when pastoralists and Aboriginal

rights were in conflict, the pastoralists' rights would prevail and give pastoralists certainty to continue with grazing and related activities. However pastoralists and conservative political leaders demanded that these native title rights be extinguished.

1998 – "Buckets of Extinguishment" – the Native Title Act Amendment

Following the High Court's 1996 Wik decision the Howard Government brought forward a Native Title Amendment Bill, based on a "Ten Point Plan". The Government delivered what was described at the time as "buckets of extinguishment" not only on pastoral leases, but on a range of other land tenures, depriving Aboriginal people in the north of Australia of potential access to much land. In the southern regions of Australia the significant "available" categories of public land (in a political if not a legal sense) were the national parks and the remaining – usually small areas – of vacant crown lands.

1998 Malimup Communique

In May 1998 a communique was issued from a meeting at Malimup Spring, Western Australia, of indigenous representatives, staff of government land management agencies and representatives of non-government environmental groups. The communique is concerned with indigenous people and the management of areas reserved or zoned as wilderness and puts forward a set of principles as to how such areas should be managed to meet the needs of indigenous people with a traditional connection to these areas.

Conflicts surrounding "Malimup" and wilderness seem likely to arise from issues such as vehicular access, hunting with firearms, and the establishment of living areas, although the economic and commercial aspirations of Indigenous people may also lead to tensions. Rather than continue to generalise, however, it would be better if we applied "Malimup" to proposed wilderness areas with definite boundaries and see what conflicts, if any, arise.

It is encouraging that the "Malimup" principles include the aim that indigenous use of wilderness should be undertaken in ways that ensure that "all natural and cultural values are protected in the long term" and that, where possible, technology used should be "low impact to minimise detrimental effects" (TWS: 1999).

A National Wilderness Protection System

- Cut it down to the essentials.

This Fifth National Wilderness Conference in Australia should not end – like the last one – with a call for a National Wilderness Protection System, and a hope that national NGOs and the Commonwealth will do something about it.

The Conference should plan for the probability that the only national wilderness protection system that we are likely to see in the near future is an unofficial one based around the existing State and Territory wilderness designations. There is an obvious need for a national network to advance the

management and extension of the wilderness protection system. However, if it is to make any headway in central and northen Australia, it needs to include representation from those regions.

The Conference should seek action from the Commonwealth but be realistic about it. This might involve the establishment of a small administrative unit within DEH to drive the process. It should continue the "Australian Land Disturbance Database" (renaming it the "Wilderness Inventory") drawing perhaps on the databases of other Commonwealth agencies which incidentally contribute to the mapping and monitoring of wilderness conditions. It should issue and promote national standards and a national code of management for wilderness areas, and perhaps seek appropriate entries on the National Heritage List. There need not be any changes in reserve jurisdiction or administration.

- Keep it relevant

Over the years the motivation for wilderness conservation has changed. Years ago recreation was the driver. Later, nature conservation became important, and more recently biological science has influenced the selection and design of reserves.

Today, wilderness areas in North America continue to be relevant as core areas within an integrated approach to landscape conservation at a continental scale (Foreman: 2004). As discussed, this approach has been taken up in Australia, notably in the Wilderness Society's WildCountry Project.

Proposals for new wilderness reservations that are distant from large cities, located in the arid zone or in the north, will, I think, have fewer prospects of being realised unless they are seen as helping to stem development pressures on biodiversity and the looming extinction crisis, or issues of water management or climate change. New wilderness proposals should have the potential to fit into a landscape matrix with appropriate linkages. Another point of relevance is in the management of natural areas.

Wilderness is a useful management regime offering greater protection than national parks alone, but with less restrictions on public use than a strict nature reserve. Opportunities should be sought to show the management advantages of wilderness in national parks, water catchments and other suitable areas.

- Co-operate

Environmental problems are getting bigger and more complex. To make progress, NGOs interested in wilderness conservation must co-operate. There needs to be more sharing of information, and better integration of activities and campaigns.

- Build bridges

There should be more engagement with Aboriginal people and a better understanding of the implications of the Malimup Communique. This will more useful if the dialogue can progress to the discussion of the Malimup principles in reference to specific wilderness areas (existing or proposed).

- Keep the word “wilderness”

Wilderness is a word that is widely understood and powerfully communicates the concerns of those interested in wilderness conservation. No corporation would ever think of giving up such an effective “brand”. Use of the word “wilderness” should therefore be retained. I reject the tendency of some people to ascribe to this one word all the historical injustices done to the Aboriginal people of Australia, but if the use of the term “wilderness” is an issue in achieving a particular proposal for wilderness protection on land owned by Aboriginal people, another term should be sought that is acceptable for that situation.

- Be specific

Much of the debate involving Aboriginal interests has revolved around the general idea of wilderness. This debate has been interesting and, up to a point, useful, but we should now try to move forward. We need to examine the implications of specific wilderness reservations and see what issues, if any, they raise.

- Take a stand

Although protecting wilderness is strongly supported in the community, wilderness reserves and their management have not shaken off their traditional opposition of farming and pastoral interests, recreational fourwheel-drivers, horse-riders, various resource and commercial interests, and a few bureaucrats. More recently criticism has come from some Aboriginal interests, and some biologists. A few in the

community environment movement have wavered in the face of this opposition. But wilderness deserves better. We should not lose sight of the values of wilderness or lack the courage to defend it.

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Action towards wilderness protection in Northern Australia by Keith Muir and John Sinclair

Action towards wilderness protection in Northern Australia by Keith Muir[1] and John Sinclair [2] Abstract

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The determination of those who live in Northern Australia to exploit and populate that half of the continent, at whatever the cost, has frustrated all efforts to protect wilderness in the region over the last ten years. This paradigm is being to a large extent adopted by the first Australians in order to embrace the benefits of western lifestyles. The

infrastructure being installed to service both remote communities and mining operations is threatening some of the best wilderness in Northern Australia.

Without further measures to protect wilderness within, and outside, protected areas, the relatively sparse population of Northern Australia will have a disproportionate impact on wilderness. Introduction In 1993 the paper *"Wilderness Threats and Progress in Northern Australia"*[1] began by stating *"The north of Australia presents the greatest challenge for wilderness preservation in Australia and probably the world since it contains the most significant unprotected pristine wilderness outside Antarctica".* Since then there have been a number of inroads into the identified areas of wilderness across the northern half of Australia. In 2006 the challenges to retain the remaining wilderness in the north are even greater and more daunting.

The challenges arise, in part, from the need to counter the 'frontier' mindset that ignores the concept of wilderness. Their advocates possessed with an almost evangelical fervour to "tame" the wilderness by planting developments across it. The other great challenge is the increasing aspiration of Aboriginal communities, who must live in this political environment. Aboriginal communities are of course spread right across northern Australia and quite naturally have developed a wide range of infrastructure and modern amenities in the last decade.

Remote communities of northern Australia have growing ecological footprints that are impacting on wilderness areas, particularly in Arnhemland. For example, every community must have telephone communication and associated infrastructure. All are linked to the

major townships of the area through an ever-expanding network of roads and growing fleets of motor vehicles. Most communities also have a remote area power supply and the spread of mains power is seeing more powerlines strung across what were previously remote landscapes, often of high wilderness quality. These facilities, naturally enough, are provided to facilitate economic development of the region.

Like everyone else subjected to the mass media and the insatiable demands of the 'global economy', Aborigines crave as much for Nike apparel, fast food and electronic entertainments as do other Australians. Four wheel drive vehicles and high-powered boats are being acquired to overcome the vast distances between communities. While spiritual and ethical values sustain difference, the material values of Aborigines, under this pressure, are almost identical with the overwhelming majority

Consumerism and the drive for economic growth, in the remotest parts of Northern Australia, are now contributing to the erosion of wilderness at ever increasing rates. These are the realities of Northern Australia. As one flies across the Kimberley region, Arnhemland or Cape York Peninsula, the spreading ecological footprints of these once almost invisible communities are now disproportionate to the population of the region.

An overlay of remote communities and associated infrastructure draped over a map showing the areas of potential identified wilderness in Northern Australia would indicate the significance of this issue. Remote communities are eroding wilderness areas. The challenge for wilderness supporters is how to address these issues.

In addition a 'frontier' mentality is the other widespread threat to wilderness that has seen the politicians welcoming almost any idea for economic exploitation in northern Australia. A mentality that translates into another widespread threat to wilderness. This attitude applies to politicians of almost every political persuasion and generates largely uncritical support for almost any development venture proposed in the region. This booster mentality may be tempered a little in Western Australia, however, following the defeat of a proposal to feed water from the Fitzroy River in the Kimberley to Perth, which resulted in an electoral backlash against the proponents.

Northern Australia's water supplies were covetously-eyed by politicians from southern population centres who were oblivious to the reality that, for most of the region, evaporation rate exceeds rainfall, and that their constituents want to see this wild river protected. This water transfer scheme was the second serious proposal to dam the Fitzroy, Western Australia's largest river in the last decade. The first detailed proposal to create a mega-dam was to irrigate cotton and was thwarted in 1996 by the efforts of an Aboriginal led group supported by conservationists, including Bob Brown and John Sinclair.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory, perhaps, has more wilderness than anywhere else in Australia. The Territory has no formally protected wilderness areas, except for an area of Kakadu National Park; a park managed by the Commonwealth Government. Even here there is a proposal to remove the wilderness status previously allotted to the "stone country" of the Arnhemland escarpment within the park [2] Fortunately the indefatigable Geoff Mosley has stepped in to defend the wilderness,

but his efforts need to be reinforced if the status of the only protected wilderness in the whole of the Northern Territory is not to be lost. Arnhemland not only contains the most important wilderness in the Territory's Top End, it is also a stronghold of Aboriginal culture [3] that is also under siege from the demands of our modern, unhealthy, consumerist lifestyle.

There are many threats to Arnhemland and one of the most recent is a uranium exploration site for the Canadian-based mining giant Cameco. Currently, arguments between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people about the Arnhem Wilderness are unhelpful. Those concerned with environmental justice should close ranks with those who support social justice and use their collective talents to fight for the Earth. This isn't a dress rehearsal - where we can split hairs over the meaning of wilderness while bulldozers push exploration roads into remote river catchments.

Those concerned with social and environmental justice may learn respect for the different perceptions of wilderness most quickly when joined in a common struggle. As the world's resources run out, these beautiful, precious, undamaged areas will be on the front line for those environmental issues climbing to the top of the political agenda: energy and greenhouse policy.

The passage of a gas pipeline running parallel to the Stuart Highway from Palm Valley in Central Australia to Darwin, for example, wasn't initially seen as a significant inroad into northern Australia's wilderness. This project became, however, a spine for a major gas pipeline network and therefore facilitating the establishment of other

industries in the wilderness. Bringing offshore natural gas from the Timor Shelf will run a pipeline through the wilderness adjacent to Joseph Bonaparte Gulf to join another pipeline at Matarranka. It is proposed to extend this pipeline diagonally through the Arnhemland wilderness to fuel a refinery at the Gove bauxite mine. The Territory Government's support for mining may also result in a greatly expanded Macarthur River mine, which already impacts on the once pristine Nicholson River Wilderness on the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In addition to these mining schemes, the Territory has many long-cherished schemes to expand agricultural development in the Top End. If the exploitation of the Daly River Catchment proceeds, the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf wilderness will be eroded. Only economic viability acts as an impediment to the further expansion of the Ord River irrigation scheme in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. This project would significantly reduce the Kimberley Wilderness.

So why has the Territory disregarded its duty toward wilderness preservation? A commonly held opinion is that there is lots of wilderness and few Territorians, so there is no urgency. In 1995 the National Wilderness Inventory[4] indicated that more than half the Territory was in a high wilderness condition. This positive assessment of condition needs to be treated with care. The impacts of pest species, particularly cane toads, horses and camels, have already caused serious impacts, including local extinctions of native fauna, loss of native vegetation and massive soil erosion. Unless backed by reliable scientific assessment and data, a regional-scale wilderness assessment,

like the National Wilderness Inventory, can produce misleading results.

If, however, the National Wilderness Inventory is maintained and had its biophysical and disturbance data updated, it would certainly help to identify where there is an urgent need for management action. The application of this map-based technique can effectively identify the threats posed by development to wilderness areas [5]. The areas vulnerable to environmental degradation, inappropriate use and development would be identified. The growing ecological footprints of remote area development would be hard to hide. There is another important reason for concern in relation to the Territory's wilderness. The Territory is working to develop a more comprehensive reserve system without adequate regard to protection of wilderness values. The national parks estate in the Northern Territory has increased from two million hectares in 1992 to five million hectares in 2005. Nine national parks larger than 100,000 hectares contain considerable wilderness areas. The management plans for several of these large parks have either a 'limited use' or 'natural' zone to regulate development and high impact use. There was even a proposal for a Spirit Hills Wilderness Conservation Area.

But this area, like all wilderness-like zones in the Northern Territory, may be open to mining activities and some national parks are being actively explored. The draft plan of management for Barranyi National Park describes the need to preserve the unique wilderness character of the island, which has only one species of feral animal and few weeds. The draft plan of management unfortunately fails to live

up to its stated intentions toward wilderness by leaving the way open for future 'wilderness lodge' development.

The Territory Government may have an unsympathetic attitude toward wilderness but it is notably progressive in its attitude toward joint management of national parks with indigenous people. The Gurig National Park became Northern Territory's first jointly managed park in 1981. In 2004 the Government decided that Aboriginal traditional owners would jointly manage all of the Territory's reserves in co-operation with the Parks and Wildlife Commission. However, worryingly, this arrangement hasn't brought about any demonstrable moves towards protecting the wilderness values within the reserves. With the erosion of wilderness values outside the reserve system in the Northern Territory it is becoming increasingly urgent to secure the wilderness within the reserves.

An open assessment of the issues and problems of preserving naturalness is essential as Territorians continue to develop their land, on-park as well as off-park. I fear that what I call 'wilderness' and Indigenous people may call 'our country' is all too often available for someone else's plans for wilderness lodges, four-wheel-drive vehicle-based recreation, development of roads, mining activities, clearing, grazing, safari hunts and other forms of commercial tourism.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, a 'super-department', the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), managed the state's national parks, state forests and other Crown Land (i.e. lands owned by the state government) for decades. CALM, for so long gatekeeper for the future use of the state's public lands, has now merged with the

Department of Environment to become the Department of Environment and Conservation. In such large bureaucracies wilderness protection struggles to have a voice. Wilderness concerns are represented by a handful of people, in a small branch of a departmental division - a long distance from the source of political power.

Apart from the battles to save the Fitzroy River, the wilderness in the north of Western Australia has been remote from the centre of bureaucracy in Perth, as demonstrated by the neglect of these areas. The Western Australian Government has baulked for almost two decades in proceeding to reserve its proposed parks in the Kimberley, and it can hardly proceed to protect wilderness in the region if it is unwilling to reserve the land it has publicly identified as deserving National Park status. A network of mega National Parks covering the King Leopold and Napier Ranges, as well the Durack River, Drysdale River and Prince Regent River areas would be a useful start.

Significant parts of the vast wilderness of the Kimberley region are located closer to the coast. The inroads made by celebrated pioneering Kimberley graziers, who established their "grass castles", have eliminated much of the wilderness in the interior. The earliest attempts at coastal settlement, on the other hand, were dismal failures and, except for the Benedictine established mission at Kalumbaru, the rugged lands around the Kimberley coast have remained unsettled.

Despite its remoteness, protecting the Kimberley wilderness coast is going to be a challenging fight. In the last decade or so this magnificent coastline has been 'discovered' by tourists and exploited by a number of tour operators who use ships to convey their rich

clients along the coastline. The boats and associated increases in helicopter joy flights are degrading the area's most scenic wilderness attractions. One also has to question how compatible are the huge pearl farms, which spread along this spectacular coast, with the objects of wilderness preservation. Another aquaculture industry threatening the region is a huge prawn farm proposed for Cambridge Gulf near Wyndham.

Further development of cattle grazing areas in the Kimberly has slowed in recent years. Unfortunately, there is a proliferation of proposed mining ventures throughout the Kimberley that threatens the remaining areas of wilderness. At least two new diamond mines are moving to replace the Argyll diamond mine in the East Kimberley that is close to the end of its life. The bauxite deposits on the Mitchell Plateau continues to present a potential threat to one of the parts of the Kimberley with the greatest wilderness value.

In the northern part of Western Australia only the Kurijini National Park [7] has several wilderness zones separated by roads within it, totalling about 125,000 hectares. However these zones were never afforded the statutory protection available under the Conservation and Land Management Act, 1984. The other major wilderness areas in northern Western Australia are the Pilbara and the Tanami Desert, and the Central Australian Ranges. These areas are subject to Aboriginal aspirations and the impacts of mining exploration. Relatively little of these vast areas are reserved.

For the areas that are in national parks, examination of options for the protection of wilderness values is now part of a plan of management

review process. The results of this process may prove more fruitful. However, so far, the Department of Environment and Conservation has only proposed 21,000 hectares of wilderness for protection, none in the northern part of the state. Placing wilderness protection last in a long chain of land use decision-making creates difficulties as competing activities, such as tourist operations and the pervasive off road vehicle user, become established and then tend to dictate park management. In these circumstances some form of interim protection is necessary, even if this measure is initially only a negotiated moratorium on road making and upgrading, park facilities development and commercial use until the wilderness assessment processes are completed.

Queensland

National park reservation had a very slow start in Queensland and many parks remain pitifully small. The Queensland Hansard from the 1970s records the man who became Mines Minister in the Bjelke-Petersen Government, Ron Camm saying that large National Parks were not necessary as you could see just as much standing in the centre of 2 hectares of rainforest as 2000 hectares. With such attitudes prevailing it is unsurprising that the concept of wilderness has little acceptance in Queensland.

The Beattie Government sought to change these old ways of political thinking and has established the goal of securing five per cent of the State's total land area in national parks. The recent forest policy has facilitated the conversion of state forests into National Parks so that the state is just short of achieving that target. Under the forest policy transition program is underway to phase commercial logging out of many areas, including the Wet Tropics.

Queensland has presented major opportunities for wilderness protection over the last decade but first the setbacks created by a previous right-wing government, who used national park reservation as a tool to block indigenous land rights, had to be overcome. The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation undertook a strategy of placing land rights on an equal footing with park reservation. They agreed to work with the Indigenous traditional owners. Then when the progressive Beattie Government was swept into office over a million hectares of land were reserved as national parks or handed back to the region's traditional owners.

Queensland now has 7.2 million hectares of protected areas, including 6.7 million hectares of national parks [8] . The National Parks estate can, however, never be big enough to carry all Aboriginal and Islander aspirations forward. A regional land use agreement approach, such as that developed for Cape York Peninsula in Queensland, provides a cogent solution to ensure an economic base for Indigenous people. Providing for claims over lands with a broad range of productive resources can greatly assist with self-determination and economic independence. This approach could help to ensure that wilderness within national parks are not developed to meet economic and social objectives.

For the new national parks in Cape York the current challenge, being taken up by The Wilderness Society, is to obtain adequate funds for the management of feral animals, particularly cattle and horses, and weeds, which are a huge problem in the tropics. You cannot separate people from wilderness because wilderness needs management.

There are no wilderness areas formally protected under the Nature Conservation Act, 1992 in Queensland because conservation groups have dropped formal wilderness reservation from their campaign priorities. Wilderness is protected 'de facto' in national parks, such as Mount Barney, Hinchinbrook Island, Currawinya and Carnarvon. In the case of Carnarvon and Hinchinbrook Island, national parks with high wilderness values, their plans of management designate remote-natural zones over most of the park with minimal or no visitor facilities and no motor vehicle access, except for management purposes. For the other parks, the plans of management have tended to make the remote-natural zones much smaller. For example, at the northern end of Fraser Island, in the Great Sandy Region National Park, a 53,000 ha remote area zone has been established, but is trisected by major 4WD tourism roads that link with access along the Eastern Beach and associated informal car-camping [9] .

The significant expansion in size of the protected area estate over the last decade, however, has had only limited benefit for wilderness preservation. Fraser Island, which is one of the state's larger National Parks, recently suffered when the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service unleashed a bulldozer to carve kilometres of fire breaks up to 20 metres wide through this World Heritage National Park. Many of the other national parks with wilderness values don't even have a management plan and no national park in Queensland has a statutory Management Plan. There is very little to prevent the recurrence of incidents like the Fraser Island firebreaks unless park management is legally binding on park managers and users alike.

The wilderness areas of Queensland, like elsewhere in northern Australia, suffer from the ravages of the mining industry. The major mining operation on Cape York Peninsula at Weipa, where Comalco has been mining bauxite for four decades, may soon be dwarfed by a Chinese aluminium company. This proposed mining operation at Arakuun on the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria, is in an area that has, up until now, suffered little development.

As one surveys North Queensland there are many mines impacting on wilderness, with more being touted. There is the huge Century mine immediately adjacent to the Riversleigh World Heritage site, the Lawn Hill National Park and the Nicholson River wilderness area. A new copper proposal near Cloncurry recently made national news. These mineral developments are just examples of the many mines being developed in what have previously been very remote sites. In taking this path, all of them will require infrastructure in the forms of roads and other developments which are inimical to wilderness.

The wilderness areas of Cape York Peninsula are further threatened by the proposal to establish a pipeline corridor to convey natural gas from Papua New Guinea right through it from north to south. This is proposed to supply Eastern Australia's insatiable energy demand, and its impact on Cape York Peninsula's wilderness will be very significant. The environmental assessment for the pipeline identifies that an area of high wilderness quality, known locally as 'The Wilderness', will be bisected. The pipeline cuts a 200 metre swath through the bush. Post-construction bush regeneration will be prevented within 50 metres either side of the pipeline. It is possible, however, for the proposed pipeline route to be relocated away from centres of biological integrity and wilderness, if conservation groups remain vigilant. Conservation

has succeeded against mining interests, most notably within the Shelburne Bay Wilderness where in 2003 existing mining leases over its pure white dunes lapsed on expiry.

Australia's first wild rivers legislation was passed by the progressive Queensland Government in September 2005, following yet another vigorous campaign by The Wilderness Society. The Wild Rivers Act, 2005 places strict limitations on development of river reaches that are identified as high preservation areas. The legislation will help to protect the wilderness characteristics of selected catchments of reserved rivers.

The growing Aboriginal aspirations for economic development in Cape York Peninsula resulted in the Cape York Peninsula Land Council aggressively opposing the Queensland Government's proposed Wild Rivers declarations in Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf Country. They believe that attempts to preserve the wild qualities of previously largely unmodified river catchments will impede future exploitation. In the end the pragmatic Queensland Government acquiesced to the wishes of the Aboriginal interests and announced on the 24th of July 2006[10] that it would proceed with only six of the nineteen wild river proposals. These were where there was no strong indigenous opposition. The grazing lobby also had expressed strong opposition to the wild rivers these objections carried negligible political weight. The Aboriginal opposition is by no means universal. Murundoo Yanner, an Aboriginal leader from the southern Gulf Country, publicly supports the protection of the as yet undeclared rivers in his area, in opposition to the Cape York Peninsula Land Council.

In addition to Hinchinbrook and Fraser Island, only four catchments in the Gulf Region were announced for protection under the Wild River Act because they were less contentious and not threatening any mining or other anticipated exploitive activities.

Two wilderness dreamings

Indigenous people own almost half of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn and many desert areas. There should be a place for wilderness in the Indigenous landscape, and the management value of wilderness protection should not be compromised by a trend emerging in some quarters to have the definition of wilderness altered to accommodate modern technology, such as 4WD vehicles and permanent settlements.

The political debate regarding national parks must surely turn on what we can do for the land, not what nature and national parks can do for us. Aboriginal and Islander leaders should address the preservation of nature within their land base, particularly within their national parks. Not all areas should be developed, have road networks or permanent settlements within them.

Wilderness for non-Indigenous Australians is seen as a place where the last remnants of the natural world are safe from the spoiling forces of modern technology. Outside wilderness, any economically useful land is generally dedicated to production for our urban-based society (although The Wilderness Society's *Wild Country p*roject and new land clearing laws are attempting to change that paradigm by promoting integrated conservation management across the landscape).

Wilderness offers respite for the increasingly stressed urbanites and their feedlot society, where food and services are brought to them and their wastes are carried away. In wilderness we can connect with life that still evolves by natural processes. The wilderness of Aboriginal and Islander Australians is a living story based on up to 40-60,000 years of belonging to the country – a land of spirits, dreaming paths, myths and ceremony that create a framework of Indigenous responsibilities for country. The impacts and influences of Indigenous societies in wilderness are recognised, as are the opportunities for Indigenous people to retain links with the landscape. While some Australian wilderness critics like Tim Flannery claim Aboriginal land use precludes wilderness, the issue of impact from Indigenous land use is one of degree, particularly when compared to recent use of modern technologies.

The harmonisation of these two cultural dreamings is imperative to the survival of wilderness in Australia, as much unprotected wilderness is located on Aboriginal land. The belief that Indigenous land use treads more lightly on the land underpins the Malimup communiqué, developed by the former Australian Heritage Commission[11]. The communiqué acknowledges and respects the right of Indigenous people to maintain and strengthen their spiritual and cultural relationships within wilderness, and has built goodwill in that the preservation of wilderness does not exclude people or Indigenous rights. Indigenous wilderness as described by the Malimup communiqué allows for Indigenous hunting using firearms, the gathering of bush foods, the use four-wheel-drive vehicles and the establishment of permanent accommodation. The agreement has, in

effect, inadvertently defined the distance between these two dreamings.

This distance between the two dreamings will increase as Indigenous communities living in a wilderness area use modern technology more intensely and extensively over time. While the occasional use of management roads by Indigenous people in four-wheel-drive vehicles would perhaps pose a low level of threat, it does set a precedent for further public use of motor vehicles that would be incompatible with wilderness values and the maintenance of biological diversity. Further, the establishment of permanent settlements clearly contradicts the wilderness management principles currently adopted in most Australian states and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) wilderness definition.

The IUCN defines wilderness as a: "...l*arge area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition".*

Intensive use of modern technology and permanent or significant habitation is not consistent with accepted wilderness management practice. Things that are true and just, desirable and worthwhile, are not always compatible or mutually reinforcing.

There will be times and places when the social justice for Indigenous people and environmental justice for wilderness do not coincide. In a mature relationship between conservation groups and Indigenous communities there is space for acceptance of difference.

The efforts made to redefine wilderness, to allow modern technology into wilderness as a special case, can only erode the potential for understanding the management purposes of wilderness. Either the redefined wilderness becomes further fragmented by the expansion of permanent Aboriginal settlements and increased use of fourwheel-drive vehicles in these reserves, or indigenous communities are alienated and infuriated by conservation groups who supported the granting of Indigenous wilderness areas but then oppose any increase in the use of modern technology or the expansion of settlements into what they believe should be strictly protected reserves.

The two wilderness dreamings must be married so as to avoid potential confusion in wilderness reserve management during public awareness programs about wilderness, and particularly in campaigns to save wilderness areas. This resolution should be achieved through the development of detailed wilderness proposals in consultation with Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous wilderness concept as found in the Malimup communiqué has not seen wilderness protection extended across northern Australia. Here, nonIndigenous wilderness concepts could sit within Indigenous wilderness, between the low density of existing roads and settlements. This solution has been developed for Kakadu National Park in a process evolving over the last twenty years and that will go on evolving. Kakadu National Park, a Federally managed park within the Northern Territory, contains a wilderness area (designated 'Zone 4' in the plan of management) which covers about 475,300 hectares of the 2 million hectare park.

However, such an approach contains the risk of repeating the lessons learnt in the more settled districts where much wilderness has been compromised by development that should have been avoided. And the removal of the wilderness zone from Kakadu National Park proposed by the recent draft management plan is a worrying sign in that direction.

The degree to which the Malimup communiqué creates conflict with wilderness management principles can be moderated through the Wild Country approach developed by The Wilderness Society. Wild Country management can partly accommodate ideological inconsistencies by retaining important bushland links around development areas and linking potential wilderness reserves areas.

Now is the time to preserve wilderness, not when the last options are being played out; when every national park is an outdoor amusement park for tourists on package tour deals and the four-wheel-drive vehicle enthusiast. Now is the time to save wilderness in Cape York Peninsula in Queensland, Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley in Western Australia. Aboriginal communities have fourwheel-drive vehicles, and should have modern settlements and the best that modern society can offer. Yet motor vehicles form a barrier between wilderness and the human soul. You must 'walk the land' to fully relate and belong to the land. Surely the most sacred, most biodiverse places should be visited on their own terms?

Wilderness is, in administrative reality, a park management system that successfully defends nature from the spoiling forces of modern technology. Wilderness is also a powerful belief that respects the rights of nature and those of Indigenous people, and in politics such

beliefs can become reality. Wilderness has done much to protect nature. There is much more to be done. Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can effectively act together when the bulldozers, miners, loggers and resort developers arrive to despoil the wilderness. The efforts toward wilderness protection 9will be most effective when detailed wilderness protection proposals are advanced that can then be assessed in an open and transparent manner.

One of the more interesting aspects of wilderness protection in Northern Australia in the last decade has been the role played by two private foundations – the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and the Bush Heritage Trust. Both have been very active in acquiring key properties in Northern Australia. The Australian Wildlife Conservancy's acquisition of Mornington Station in the Kimberley covers some wonderful wilderness along the mighty Fitzroy River and King Leopold and Phillips Ranges. Other acquisitions abutting the Queensland's Wet Tropics are most significant. Likewise the land acquisitions of the Bush Heritage Trust in Queensland's Central Highlands wilderness area and the Simpson Desert wilderness are augmenting the efforts of the Queensland Government and extending the protected areas in both wilderness areas.

Although wilderness protection is not a primary objective of either Foundation their role in helping to protect wilderness needs to be better appreciated, especially as the aggregate size of their respective estates grows in significance.

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Fifth National Wilderness Conference
— Background Notes —

by Dr Geoff Mosley

Conference organised by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd held at the University of Technology, Sydney, September, 2006

THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCES AND WILDERNESS PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA

ORIGINS

The national wilderness conference series had its genesis in the decision of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) to work for a nation-wide system of wilderness reserves. The ACF's involvement in this can be traced back to the ACF annual general meeting on October 11, 1969 when during a post mortem on the first Lake Pedder campaign Graham Ford

stood up and stressed the importance of the wildlife and wilderness of the Tasmanian South West and said it was important to find a way whereby all of Australia could share the cost of preserving the region. At this stage it was thought that the authorisation for Stage 2 of the Gordon River Power Scheme would be sought as early as the following year. In response the ACF President, Sir Garfield Barwick, promised that the ACF would take another look at the problem. In April, 1970 a series of actions were suggested one of which was the production of a viewpoint publication on the South West. It was decided that the case would be much stronger if it also dealt with other Australian wilderness areas such as those in Central Australia. In July 1970 the ACF Executive adopted the main recommendations for the viewpoint which had been drafted by Geoff Mosley and this became the policy on wilderness of the ACF. It included the goal of setting aside systems of wilderness reserves in all states and territories and the creation of a national wilderness conservation system.

In October, 1975 ACF Council identified wilderness as one of its three priority campaign areas. In November, 1975 the viewpoint publication was published with the title *Wilderness Conservation Protecting an Essential Freedom*. This publication, which was widely distributed, discussed the definition of wilderness, the arguments for wilderness, and Australia's wilderness areas in what was described as a *Proposal for an Australian Wilderness Programme*. In June, 1976 a Wilderness Committee of ACF Council was established to prosecute the campaign.

In spite of growing community interest in wilderness protection, as shown by the submissions on wilderness to the1973/74 Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate, by the second half of the 1970s the only formally protected wilderness areas in Australia were the wilderness zones in Kinchega and Kosciusko National Parks. To try to speed things up and work for its goal of an Australia-wide wilderness system ACF decided to launch a series of national wilderness conferences. It was impressed by the way the biennial US national wilderness conferences of the Sierra Club, begun in 1949, had helped to create a climate of public opinion which assisted the passage of the US Wilderness Act of 1964. The Conferences were seen as a chance for conservationists to get together to share information, discuss problems and coordinate future programmes and actions. ACF had been running a series of influential national conferences since the late 1960s and the concept was that in future every second conference would be on wilderness.

FIRST CONFERENCE 1977

The first conference in the series held at the Academy of Science in Canberra in October, 1977 concentrated on establishing the stage reached with wilderness protection and how the wilderness reserves could be expanded. In his opening remarks ACF President, Sir Mark Oliphant, paid tribute to the pioneer work of Myles Dunphy and read a paper by Friends of the Earth President David Brower who had been prevented from attending at the last moment due to illness.

The workshops covered a wide range of subjects including short and long term strategies for securing the future of wilderness, legislation, various aspects of education and management, and areas of wilderness potential around Australia. The Conference called on all states to urgently identify areas of wilderness and defer development in them. Other resolutions recommended special policies for fire management in wilderness areas, various measures to increase public support and more wilderness identification and carrying capacity studies. One of the workshops proposed the formation of an Australian Wilderness Society to press for a national wilderness system. A motion in the plenary session that the ACF initiate such a move was defeated with opponents taking the view that this was unnecessary since ACF already had this responsibility.

The Conference proceedings were published a year later as *Australia's Wilderness Conservation Progress and Plans. It included a Wilderness Visitors Code of Behaviour* (a revised version was published in 1982).

SECOND CONFERENCE 1979

A resolution at the first conference had called for a second national wilderness conference to be held in 1979 and this duly took place at the Sydney University in November, 1979. The first conference had identified 'wilderness conservation priorities', 'wilderness evaluation' and publication education concerning the benefits of wilderness' as worthy topics for the second meeting. One of the workshops had recommended

that the next conference be on the theme of 'the value of wilderness'. In the event, since it was the centenary year of Royal National Park (Australia and the world's first national park) ACF decided that the Conference should be on the subject of the values of national parks. Inclusion of this in the wilderness series was rationalised by the fact that the fate of many wilderness areas is bound up with the management of the national parks in which they are located. Some specific wilderness matters were discussed including coastal wilderness protection and the protection of wild rivers. The Conference Proceedings were published as the *Value of National Parks* in 1980.

Between the two ACF Conferences the Natural; Resources Section of the Canberra College of Education had organised a national symposium on wilderness in July, 1978 which had covered a similar range of topics to those dealt with at the 1977 conference, including delineation and prospects with the emphasis being on providing an opportunity for the exchange of ideas between wilderness resource managers. The proceedings of the symposium were published in 1980 as *Wilderness Management in Australia*.

In June, 1980 a further conference on wilderness took place in Australia. This was the Second World Wilderness Congress which was held in Cairns in June, 1980. This 2 provided an additional opportunity to consider Australian wilderness conservation and topics dealt with included Cape York Peninsula, Tropical Rainforest areas, the Great Barrier Reef,

Antarctica and South West Tasmania. The resolutions passed by the Conference included the following critical issues: 'A Plan for Cape York Penisula'; aboriginal land claims (four resolutions); rain forest (two resolutions) and South West Tasmania. The papers from the conference were published in 1982 as *Wilderness* (ed Vance Martin).

THIRD CONFERENCE 1983

The third national wilderness conference was held at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains in September, 1983. The Conference was well attended by members of the Wilderness Society which had broadened its name following the success of the Gordon blockade. Amongst the speakers were Michael McClosky the Executive Director of the Sierra Club. The conference focussed on lessons to be learned from past wilderness battles and strategies and actions for winning future battles. The key conference resolution on a draft national wilderness strategy came from one of the workshop recommendations. The conference resolved:

> *That a national wilderness committee be established to ensure that a wilderness strategy is developed and implemented, that ACF convene such a committee as soon as possible and that representatives from each state and territory, from the ACF, TWS, Colong Committee and other wilderness related groups and from Aboriginal groups form the committee.*

Other parts of the strategy resolution called for the appointment of a national wilderness political lobbyist, the development of a model wilderness plan and a wide range of educational initiatives.

Both the 1977 and 1983 conferences had paid attention to the evaluation of wilderness areas suitable for acceptance, the workshop on 'reversion of wilderness' in 1977 recommending that *disturbed lands be accepted into the wilderness system to the extent that they can be rehabilitated to an acceptable standard.* There was general support for the concept of wilderness reversion in areas where there was a core wilderness area that could be expanded, usually by means of road closures. A companion volume to the 1983 conference, containing the papers and resolutions, was published in 1984 as *Fighting for Wilderness.* It was in two parts: 'Battles Lost and Won' and 'Winning Future Battles'

The National Wilderness Coordinating Committee

There was a six month delay in action on the main strategy resolution until ACF had voted funds for the project. Things began to move at an initial meeting in Sydney chaired by ACF President, Murray Wilcox. There it was decided that what was referred to as the National Wilderness Cooperative had the three main aims of: *a)identifying Australian wilderness areas; b) expanding and defending these areas; and c) devising appropriate legal and political means of achieving the objectives.* That coordination was necessary became apparent by the news that both ACF and TWS were separately seeking a

total sum of about $300,000 from Community Employment Fund Programme funds. This included an application for an ACF wilderness campaign officer to be located in Sydney. The meeting decided to immediately establish a National Wilderness Coordinating Committee with a view to calling the first meeting of the National Wilderness Cooperative. The Coordinating Committee was to comprise representatives from ACF, TWS, the Colong Committee and the Australian National Parks Council (in the event this body declined formal membership).

Pat Thompson was appointed Secretary and the Colong Committee's offer of secretarial services was accepted. At subsequent meetings it was decided that the ACF would play the key role in developing information about the extent and status of wilderness in Australia, whereas TWS would concentrate on wilderness education. One of the first actions of the Cooperative was the development of a wilderness area nomination form. The National Wilderness Coordinating Committee continued to exist until 1987 but became less effective after late 1986. The minutes of the July, 1986 meeting show it discussing a wide range of topics including: the ACF wilderness inventory, a wilderness pamphlet, a draft code of wilderness management, the Kakadu Plan of Management, and a Fifth National Wilderness Conference which ACF was planning to hold in 1987.

Increasingly from 1986 the groups seem to have preferred to go their own way. They had each developed particular

campaigns in 1984. The Wilderness Society had launched a National Campaign for Wilderness in early 1984 with a target date for the establishment of a national wilderness system of the bicentenary year of 1988. Its campaign was managed by a 'Long Term Wilderness Campaign Group'. Both TWS and the Colong Foundation had begun work on a National Wilderness Act. In March, 1985 Peter Prineas began work as an ACF wilderness consultant with the main task of developing a national wilderness inventory. This was published as *Australia's Wilderness Inventory* in 1986 (Prineas at this stage was playing a key role in the development of a NSW Wilderness Act which was seen as a valuable precedent for the development of legislation in the rest of Australia). The Colong Foundation meanwhile was busy with recording wilderness conservation progress and in 1991 published the first edition of its *Wilderness Red Index* (updated in 1993 and 1999).

FOURTH CONFERENCE 1993

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference was held at the Australian Museum in Sydney in October, 1993. Changes in personnel at ACF had been a factor in the ACF not organising the conference at an earlier date. The 1993 Conference was in the event organised by the Colong Foundation under the auspices of the ACF. It was opened by Neville Wran the former NSW Premier. Two main aims were set down for the conference: 1) to review the last 10 years; and 2) *to develop a plan of action to revitalise the wilderness conservation*

movement so that the goal of a national wilderness system can be achieved before the end of the century.

The conference resolutions are given at the end this brief (Appendix 1). Topics covered included: work for a national wilderness protection system (including in the interim the implementation of the wilderness provisions of the National Forest Policy); the appointment of an NGO Task Group to prepare a report within six months on the steps which were necessary for securing a National Wilderness System; a wide range of reconciliation measures including dialogue between conservation organisations and Aboriginal people and encouragement of IUCN to amend its 1990 definition of wilderness to reflect the role of indigenous people with a definition of wilderness as: *an area where little or no persistent evidence of modern technological society is permitted, so that natura l processes will take place largely unaffected by modern technology;* completion of the National Wilderness Inventory; extension of the Wilderness Red Index to the whole of Australia and its regular updating; and revision of the World Heritage selection criteria to explicitly recognise wilderness.

The Task Group met on three occasions and submitted its report to the main wilderness conservation groups within the six month period. A copy of its recommendations – 'Towards a National Wilderness Protection System for Australia: A Campaign Proposal' are also included at the end of this paper

since it is pertinent to the deliberations at the Fifth National Wilderness Conference (Appendix 2).

Developments Since 1993

Since the Task Group submitted its report to the groups there have been a number of developments at the NGO level. Disappointingly the request by the Task Group for a meeting with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to discuss the establishment of a national dialogue on wilderness had been fruitless. The Chairperson, Patrick Dodson, sent a message to say that wilderness conservationists should instead discuss their concerns with local Aboriginal groups throughout Australia.

In July, 1995 TWS organised the Wild Agendas Conference in Sydney. Its focus was equally divided between wilderness protection and wilderness identification. Workshop topics included the anti-wilderness movement; wild rivers and Aboriginal management of wilderness. Participants included members of the Cape York Land Council. At this stage TWS was running a national campaign on the development of a 'Commonwealth Wilderness Protection Program'. A poster for the conference examined federal government inaction on wilderness and suggested that the core wilderness groups had been side tracked away from what should be the main debate - wilderness and its protection. The conference called for a renewed effort to achieve Commonwealth leadership in protecting wilderness, with strong legislation. The conference

proceedings were produced as *Wild Agendas Protecting and Celebrating Wilderness*.

At the final plenary session of the 1993 conference ACF Executive Director Patricia Caswell announced that ACF would be willing to coordinate the next national wilderness conference and would be prepared to do it no later than 1996. However, ACF's attention became increasingly taken up with the Aboriginal reconciliation aspect. In August, 1999 after a discussion extending over several meetings ACF Council approved a policy statement on 'Wilderness and Indigenous cultural landscape in Australia'. The former wilderness position was not withdrawn. Responding to the Task Group recommendations and the policy position of nearly thirty years the new document urged the Commonwealth to: 1) establish for itself a leading role in wilderness conservation; 2) actively promote the establishment of a national wilderness protection system; and 3) maintain an inventory of areas with wilderness condition.

Appendix 1

4th National Wilderness Conference 1993 Resolutions

Securing the Future of Wilderness: A Strategy for Action

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference, having deliberated for two and-a-half days, agrees to the following statement of intent with regard to a

strategy necessary for securing the future of wilderness in Australia.

1 Governments, land management agencies and the conservation movement will need to devote the time and resources necessary to secure the future of wilderness in Australia on a scale commensurate with the importance of the objectives and the size of the task.

2 Wilderness will be most secure if its conservation is accepted by all Australian governments as a high priority and if there is a coordination of effort, not just in relation to the problem at State boundaries but also in establishing and managing wilderness reserves and presenting their values to the public, nation wide.

3 Recognising that considerable progress towards the designation and legislative protection of wilderness has occurred in some States in the decade since the Third National Wilderness Conference, despite the fact that 'economic rationalism' has dominated State and Federal politics in recent years, this Conference resolves to press for urgent and considerable further action towards protecting Australia's remaining wilderness.

4 The best vehicle for a wilderness conservation campaign and also for the coordination of the reserve effort Australia wide is a National Wilderness Protection System, and the Conference calls in the interim for the implementation of the

conservation provisions of the National Forest Policy for the protection of wilderness.

5 While a campaign for a National Wilderness System is necessary, the wilderness conservation movement also needs to guard the remaining wilderness areas and respond to threats. This requires a systematic approach.

6 A National Wilderness Protection System could be established by strong and effective legislation in the Commonwealth and State parliaments without changing the jurisdiction and administration. As already committed by the Federal government, the system should be established progressively between now and the year 2000.

7 An NGO Task Group is needed to develop a campaign proposal for submission to the major conservation groups by March 1994. Membership of the group, which should be small, should be on the basis of expertise (especially capacity for strategic thinking) rather than representation of different organisations (See 13 below). The group should report on the main elements of the campaign to be conducted and how it is to be carried out (including sources of funding). A special part of the Report should be related to the so establishment of the National Wilderness protection System in relation to the Aboriginal interest in areas which are wilderness. The group would be required to consult with Aboriginal bodies to help with the Preparation of the Report and otherwise further the interest of wilderness conservation.

8 National Reconciliation That the Conference:

a) applaud the concept of native title as established by the High Court of Australia;

b) write to the Prime Minister and Cabinet expressing its concern and outrage at the emerging Commonwealth Aboriginal title legislation if it has any of the following alleged unacceptable provisions, including:

- suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act;
- further extinguishment of Aboriginal title;
- unjust validation of a variety of non-Aboriginal leasehold titles;
- the abrogating of Commonwealth responsibilities in assessing Aboriginal title and related matters in favour of State governments; and calls on the Prime Minister and Cabinet to withdraw this legislation and recommence extensive consultation and renegotiation with Aboriginal people around Australia in order to create a just piece of legislation.

c) call upon the conservation organisations to engage in a coordinated, well planned and meaningful dialogue with Aboriginal people, to ensure a greater understanding of areas of mutual concern as they relate to the ongoing protection and management of wilderness areas. The dialogue should also explore common ground between the relationship of Aboriginal people with their land and a western concept of 'wilderness', to work towards a mutually complementary land conservation ethic. It further calls upon the conservation movement to join with the traditional proprietors of land to help to secure further wilderness areas throughout Australia

which embody traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage values.

d) noting the failure of the Commonwealth Government to date to consult systematically with conservation groups while consulting with other major interests, call upon the Government to fully consult with representatives of the conservation movement regarding current suggestions that ownership of national parks and declared wilderness areas be transferred to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to facilitate agreement on Aboriginal title legislation and national reconciliation. It further calls for full involvement of the conservation movement in any representations on such proposals.

e) recognising: the rights of indigenous people to land to which they have a preexisting affinity; and the recent Fifth World Wilderness Congress considerations of the role of indigenous peoples in wilderness management; and further to resolution 7C18 of that Congress, which encourages IUCN to review its approach to wilderness; this conference calls upon the World Conservation Union (IUCN) at its forthcoming General Assembly, to amend its 1990 definition of wilderness to reflect the role of indigenous people.

The definition should properly describe wilderness as '...an area where little or no persistent evidence of modem technological society is permitted, so that natural processes will take place largely unaffected by modem technology'.

9 A continuing process of survey and assessment of wilderness areas in Australia is supported. The Conference urges the completion of the National Wilderness Inventory as one of the tools for wilderness quality assessment, to be used:

i) as an element in defining a national comprehensive system of protected areas;

ii) as one of the information sources in establishing a National Wilderness Protection System;

iii) in developing links between the maintenance of biological diversity and ecological integrity;

iv) in identifying the impacts of alternative management options for proposed wilderness areas;

v) to identify the opportunities for restoration and enhancement of wilderness. The conservation movement wishes to have continuing consultation with the development and the application of the Inventory.

10 Over the next decade the future of most wilderness will remain tenuous, therefore its monitoring (the condition, the threats and progress in reservation, management and restoration) will be a high priority. The Wilderness Red Index will need to be developed, kept up to date and well supported. The Conference urges the extension of the Index to the whole of Australia and its use as a major tool in wilderness preservation campaigns.

11 The growing awareness of the importance of arid and semi-arid lands conservation in both Australia and internationally

is noted by the Conference. In view of Australia's significance and responsibilities in this area it is desirable that an Arid Wilderness Symposium be held in 1994 to promote and wilderness and to identify issues and strategies for and wilderness protection and management.

12 That the Conference call upon the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO to review the arrangements for the assessment of wilderness as part of the natural world heritage properties. This should reflect the universal outstanding values of some wilderness areas and lead to a revision of the criteria for natural properties in the Operational Guidelines (with wilderness explicitly recognised as an attribute and not regarded only as a factor affecting integrity).

13 The following volunteers were endorsed as members of the NGO Task Force (see 7 above): Georgia Stewart; Ross Scott and Pat Thompson.

Appendix 2

CAMPAIGN FOR A NATIONAL WILDERNESS PROTECTION SYSTEM
Report of a Task Group to Groups Interested in Wilderness Conservation

1 Background

1.1 Establishment and terms of reference: The Task Group was established by the Fourth National Wilderness Conference (8 -

10 October, 1993) to develop a campaign proposal for submission to conservation groups by March 1994. We were asked to report on the main elements of the campaign, and how it is to be carried out (including sources of funding). A part of the report was to refer to the establishment of a National Wilderness Protection System in relation to the interest of Aboriginal people in areas which are wilderness.

1.2 The work of the Group: The Group met in Melbourne on three occasions and we now present this report for consideration by those bodies which we think are most likely to be interested in implementing the campaign. We found that with the limited time and resources available we could not undertake an effective consultation with Aboriginal people. Consequently, our recommendation on this crucial matter is limited to suggestions on future consultation.

2 Strategic Principles

2.1 Main objective of campaign is a National Wilderness Protection System (NWPS): The objectives for the campaign and some of the major means for achieving them were agreed to at the Conference in a 'Strategy for Action' (see attached resolutions, Appendix 1). Most important was the agreement (Resolution 4) that the best vehicle for a wilderness conservation campaign, and also for the coordination of the reserve effort Australia wide, is a National Wilderness Protection System (NWPS). This could be established without any change of reserve jurisdiction and administration.

Resolution 4 called for the implementation in the interim of the conservation provisions of the National Forest Policy. These provisions include the AHC regional assessment process which has created difficulties in WA, and Vic. The moratorium clause should be isolated when these provisions are supported in any way. Groups which are national in scope are the most suitable bodies to lobby and promote the NWPS.

It was also recognised by the Conference that it will also be essential to protect the remaining wilderness areas (Resolution 5) and develop the State/Territory wilderness reserve systems. Theses systems are the building blocks of a National System and if they are not improved the latter will be an insubstantial affair. It is best if the bulk of this work is done (stepped up if possible) b the State/Territory conservation groups who are already experienced in this field. State-based natural environment groups not doing much on wilderness should be encouraged to make it a higher priority.

2.2 Staged approach necessary: While it would be magnificent if the federal government were to immediately accept the suggestion of the Conference to begin work on a National Wilderness Protection System this is not likely to happen without pressure from the groups. The NWPS is not likely to be achieved unless there is a strong and well-coordinated campaign, and even then progress is likely to be incremental. The Government has financed the National Wilderness Inventory (NWI) for seven years but the logical next step - the making of a commitment to the NWPS - is a big step,

particularly in the present political climate. The most achievable first target would be an agreement to establish a unit in the federal bureaucracy concerned with wilderness and the development of the NWPS. It may be all we can achieve at the national level over the next year.

2.3 Main components of the campaign: The Group believes that, the campaign will need to have four main components: • lobbying federal Government on the NWPS; • lobbying State/Territory governments to persuade them to improve their wilderness reserve systems and cooperate with the Commonwealth on a NWPS; • public education on wilderness values and the advantages of a NWPS, including ongoing Aboriginal liaison; • monitoring progress with the protection of wilderness Australia wide. Each component can be allocated as a task or area of responsibility to a conservation group or groups. It is obvious that success in one task will reinforce the likelihood of success in the others.

2.4 Close cooperation essential: There being so many interrelated tasks, a good level of cooperation (including high standards of communication and coordination of activities) will be necessary. This will require clear understanding of objectives and goals and of who is doing what. Bilateral contact between groups engaged in the same or closely related tasks is to be expected, but is this enough? The Task Group's job will be finished once it has distributed this report but it was convinced that there would be a need for some arrangement for disseminating information of interest to all

groups.' and for reviewing the strategy and tactics and the results of the campaign as it proceeds.

3 Factors to be Considered in Planning the Campaign: Obstacles, Difficulties and Threats to Wilderness

3.1 The need for awareness of the difficulties the o posing forces: It is important for those who will be involved in the campaign to have a realistic appreciation of the obstacles they face and the full extent of the threats to wilderness. The threats come in many forms including: • competition for land from resource exploiters (mining, logging, and pastoral interests and other incompatible activities such as inappropriate facility dependent tourism (sometimes using the term 'ecotourism'); • poor planning and management, and inadequate size and connectivity of reserves, causing overuse, inappropriate use, loss of wilderness qualities and biological integrity (e.g. illegal use of tracks by vehicles and horses, inappropriate fire control measures, spread of weeds and feral animals).

Driving all of these forces is the philosophy of economic rationalism which promotes economic growth, privatisation of resources and reliance on market forces and the profit incentive for the allocation of resources and the determination of land use. Government mentality is fixed on false concepts of balance and conflict resolution, as opposed to genuine nature conservation objectives.

The protection of wilderness is in many ways at the opposite end of the philosophic spectrum to economic rationalism. It is concerned with maintaining a community asset and with long term considerations. The starting point is an idea of environmental quality, not a mechanism for increasing the throughput of resource use for consumption, which stresses quantity.

As a result not only is each piece of surviving wilderness (protected or not) threatened, but these forces have a vested interest-in the seeking to destroy existing reserve systems and prevent their extension.

This means that considerable resistance to the campaign must be anticipated and countered. As a result of the operation of these forces in the past the bureaucratic base for wilderness conservation in the public service is also very weak.

3.2 Weaknesses in the conservation movement: Another major obstacle for the environment movement is the unresolved debate about the best way of seeking its objectives. This includes uncertainty about where wilderness conservation fits into its work. Is the role of the environment movement to attempt to mitigate and cushion the adverse effects of economic rationalism working within a system which is inherently destructive, or is its destiny to lead society in developing a new human/environment relationship? Should it look to government for leadership, or should it be the aim to help the community develop a new vision and demand

change? Is wilderness a leftover objective from the past of marginal importance, persisting through the inertia of the conservation movement, or is it potentially a core concept for a new paradigm? The lack of discussion and resolution of these issues, coupled with the frustration felt from working within the processes of an economic rationalist dominated regime (and thereby helping to prop it up) is inhibiting the effectiveness of the movement. Reliance on government grants has diverted effort into government-approved projects with consequent distortion of the movement's agenda.

Another feature of the contemporary conservation movement is its difficulty in developing an effective dialogue with Aboriginal people who own or claim wilderness areas. Without adequate dialogue the two cultures will most likely miss out on an opportunity to develop mutually advantageous management arrangements.

Still another problem is the different use and definition of the wilderness concept by different parts of the conservation movement with regard to minimum size, etc. The spectrum approach used by the National Wilderness Inventory in defining the distribution of wilderness quality can increase the scope for confusion. With the concept being attacked by some academics and scientists (e.g. claims regarding subjectivity, invalidity due to past human impact, and not given a high priority compared to habitat for endangered species, representative areas and areas of high biodiversity)

this lack of full agreement will make it more difficult to promote the NWPS.

There is also a lack of agreement in the movement on the relative amounts of time and resources to be devoted to the different aspects of wilderness conservation, which include lobbying for reserves, management monitoring and education.

3.3. Weakness in the existing State/Territory systems: Progress in the establishment of the wilderness reserve systems is uneven and specific management is poorly developed. Better resolution of fire protection in relation to wilderness conservation goals is one such need. Over most of the continent there are no wilderness reserves. Many wilderness reserves have no management plans.

3.4 Weaknesses in the Commonwealth approach: Although the Commonwealth released a Discussion Paper (the Robertson Report) in January 1992 which outlines the options for implementing a NWPS it has not responded to the Paper and the over 90 submissions received. Nor has it indicated when it will respond. There are indications that both ANCA and the Department of Sport, Environment and Territories are not overly sympathetic to wilderness conservation.

4 Factors to be Considered in Planning the Campaign: Those Which May Assist (Opportunities)

4.1 Wilderness survives and its protection is accepted: In spite of the past and present difficulties there are still a considerable number of areas in which wilderness still exists. These are being assessed through the NWI. There have also been some positive achievements which can be used to advantage in working for an NWPS. Wilderness conservation is accepted as a legitimate aim by all the governments of Australia and is strongly backed by the community when threats arise. All States and Territories have either reserved areas specifically as wilderness, or intend to do so in the near future. Three States (NSW, South Australia, and Victoria) have enacted special wilderness 1egislation (although in Victoria this is included in the National Parks Act rather than as a separate piece of legislation). Wilderness conservation has also won statutory recognition in many western - countries and IUCN has elevated it. in, status to a sub category of one of five categories of protected area. The contribution of wilderness to the preservation of biodiversity, and the habitat of endangered species is widely acknowledged. Although there is no international convention specifically relating to wilderness, neither is there for national parks or other categories of reserve.

4.2 Australian Government initiatives relevant to wilderness conservation: These include the following:

a) The Federal government accepts that wilderness conservation is a 'legitimate land use' (Bob Hawke, Statement on the Environment, July 1989) and wilderness has been a

constant item in all the Government's environment statements over the last five years.

b) A National Wilderness Inventor' of Australia was initiated in 1986 and will be completed in 1994. It is to be maintained.

c) The Government is committed to the establishment, 'progressively', by the year 2000 of a national comprehensive system of conservation reserves. It is also committed to providing incentives for State/Territory cooperation in developing the system of protected areas and developing nationally consistent .principles for management of reserves. The NWI is to be used as 'one of several key indicators in- the development of the reserve system'. In December 1992 the Government announced its commitment to spend $16.85 million to, amongst other things, promote and. encourage State and Territories to the commitment to avoid activities that may significantly affect areas of wilderness likely to be of high conservation value (Paul Keating, Adelaide 21.12.92). $13.9 million of the commitment is for the protected area system and the NWI.

d) From 1989 to 1991 the Australian Government campaigned internationally for. the defeat of the proposed mineral regime in Antarctica and for the establishment of an Antarctic Wilderness Park.

e) The Government signed the Biological Diversity Convention in 1992 and this came into force in 1993. It is close

to finalising a 'Biological Diversity Strategy' and ma introduce a Biological Diversity Bill. Wilderness y conservation can make a major contribution to biological diversity.

f) The Government has passed an Endangered Species Act (1992) and a 'Strategy for the Conservation of Species and Communities Threatened with Extinction' is being prepared. Wilderness conservation can make a major contribution to conservation of the habitat of endangered species.

g) The Government has produced a 'National ESD Strategy' (1992). Wilderness conservation can make a major contribution to ESD.

h) Wilderness is one of the criteria for placing areas on the Register of the National Estate, and National Estate nominations have often both relied heavily on wilderness for their successful listing and been useful in protecting wilderness (e.g., SW Tasmania, and the native forest debate generally in eastern Australia).

i) Australia ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1974 (it came into force in 1975) and has enacted legislation for the protection of world heritage properties. 13Wilderness is both a world heritage attribute and a condition contributing to the ecological integrity of World heritage.

j) The National Forest Policy Statement (December 1992), signed by all States and Territories except Tasmania, states

that 'it is important that all Australia has a comprehensive, adequate and representative network of dedicated and se 1 cure nature conservation reserves for forests and reserves for protecting wilderness'. The Government has agreed to review the appropriateness of the existing reserve system to determine any further action that may be required to complete its development as a matter of policy. A working group is making recommendations to the Government on the broad categories on which to base the reserve system and is looking, in particular, at how the principles of comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness relate to reserves to protect wilderness. Elements of the Forest Policy strategy are aimed at providing interim protection of wilderness values until assessments are completed, protection of wilderness by means of reserves by 1995 and the development of management plans to protect wilderness values.

k) The Government in January 1992 released for public submissions a Discussion Paper, Wilderness in Australia: Issues and Options which identified different ways of implementing a NWPS including a National Wilderness Management and Commonwealth legislation for wilderness.

5 Recommendations: A Proposed Campaign Plan for Further Action in 1994 - 1996

5.1 A framework for action: Campaign plans will need to be developed in detail by the participating organisations.

Therefore what follows is a basic outline or framework for the overall campaign. The suggestions about which organisations should undertake which tasks are based on knowledge of their objectives, geographic scope and experience. The campaign needs to exploit the strengths of the present situation and attend to the weaknesses. Some more detailed idea of how these might be addressed are given in 6. The major long term objective is a NWPS providing appropriate security and management for all surviving wilderness areas (incorporating restored areas), well presented and well understood by the public and all branches of government. It is recommended that there- be parallel work on (a) the development of the State/Territory system and (b) the development of an overarching National Wilderness Protection System. The first step of the latter should be to move towards a Register and Commonwealth legislation by lobbying for the establishment of a specific wilderness unit or agency to ensure that wilderness continues to be regarded as a type of reserve requiring a special category and specialised management within the national system o conservation reserves. The Register will help to do this in the sense that reserves which are on it can be described collectively as a National Wilderness System. Without a special unit there is a danger that the distinctive protection needs of wilderness will be lost (wilderness being viewed only as a 'factor to be considered in the establishment of a system of ecological reserves). As far as funding is concerned it is assumed that if a group takes on a commitment to participate in the campaign it will adjust its priorities and provide funding at

an appropriate level. This does not mean of course that special funding should not also be sought.

5.2 Allocating responsibilities:

5.2.1 State and Territory Conservation Councils/ Tasmanian Conservation Trust, National Parks Associations, TWS (and any other relevant State level body):

- continue to press for the development of their respective wilderness reserve .systems (introducing and improving legislation, and improving management);
- education locally concerning the value of wilderness and the advantages of them being linked through the NWPS; and
- lobbying their overnments to agree to cooperate with the NWPS.

5.2.2 The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society:

- a joint cam aign to lobby the Federal Goverrunent on: - the acceptance of the goal of a NWPS - the setting up of a special unit for wilderness (preferably in the AHC)
- carrying out a public education programme on the distinctive benefits of, wilderness conservation and the NWPS.

5.2.3 All groups: Carry out initiatives locally to establish ongoing liaison with appropriate Aboriginal community representatives in order to find common ground with Aboriginal people in the area of wilderness protection.

5.2.4 Colong Foundation for Wilderness: Further develop the National Red Index for Wilderness as a means of listing potential wilderness reserves and providing a monitoring/watchdog mechanism. A mechanism needs to be developed for the Index to be reviewed by other NGOs concerned with wilderness assessments.

6 Some Action Proposals Relevant to the Implementation of the Campaign Plan. The list is not meant to be comprehensive; many good ideas for specific action can be found in the Proceedings of the Fourth National Wilderness Conference, *Wilderness: The Future*.

A State and Territory Reserve Systems (mainly State/Territory bodies).

1 Push for special wilderness legislation in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Queensland using elements of the legislation in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia as a model (see also John Whitehouse's paper in *Wilderness: The Future* on model legislation and methods for evaluating effectiveness).

2 Identify and campaign for the protection of wilderness restoration zones in areas that are identified as capable of being restored to wilderness through an appropriate management regime.

3 Push for the development of plans of management for all wilderness areas.

4 Develop a 'Wilderness Watch' in each State/Territory to provide surveillance and monitoring of areas likely to be threatened.

5 Counteract proposals for inappropriate development in potential and existing wilderness reserves (e.g. roadworks, building and infrastructure developments, huts).

6 Develop improved contact with State/Territory agencies, especially at the regional level, both to ensure understanding and to maintain communication for @early warning' purposes.

B The National Wilderness Protection System: Public Awareness and Education (a national campaign (ACF and TWS) supported locally by other groups.

1 Provide an updated statement on wilderness values and definitions dealing with all challenges of subjectivity, invalidity, etc.

2 Relate the advantages of wilderness conservation to biodiversity ESD, endangered species, land protection and world heritage.

3 Expose and counter the use of the term eco-tourism for inappropriate developments. Do this in the context of an. explanation about appropriate forms of recreational use in'wilderness areas. Define what is and is not acceptable in ecosystem terms.

4 Utilise, existing wilderness education materials, particularly the @S wilderness education unit.

C Wilderness and the NWPS: The. Political Parties (all groups).

1 Make input into the process leading up to the ALP National Conference (at which policies are determined)

2 Make input into the Federal Coalition processes.

3 Make similar input into the State/Territory political party processes to ensure that policies for improved wilderness protection are developed.

4 Focus development of grassroots support in both State and Commonwealth marginal electorates.

D The National Wilderness Protection System - The Commonwealth (ACF and TWS)

1 Obtain a response from the Commonwealth to the Robertson Report with meaningful commitment to action.

2 Get the Commonwealth to develop a special wilderness unit in the Australian Heritage Commission which will do the g-round work for the introduction of the NWPS (the Register, legislation, code of management) and run a wilderness public education programme.

3 Persuade the Commonwealth to thoroughly apply throughout Australia the interim protection/moratorium mechanism included in the National Forest Policy Statement (to be used to hold off development in sensitive areas until full assessment has been made).

4 Get the AHC to re-prioritise its work programme with the aim of getting all areas the movement would like to see protected as wilderness on the Register of the National Estate, (or at least the interim list) by the end of 1995. This would be consistent with commitments in the National Forest Policy.

E The Conservation Movement and the NWPS (all groups)

1 The National Red Index to be developed and linked with the work of the Environmental Resources Information Network (ERIN), SERIS, the Threatened Species Network and the WWF (Protected Areas Strategy).

2 Improved communication, both informal and by increased coverage of wilderness issues in newsletters. There is a need for increased frequency of newsletters (e.g. Connews) that

include requests to members for action, even if this is at the expense of reduced quality of presentation/production.

3 Restructuring of finances to ensure an increase in the percentage of funds used in campaigns and increased efficiency of financial management.

4 Further refining of counter tactics and greater use of research on opponents to wilderness, followed by public exposure,, e.g. use of FOI etc. to establish such things as detrimental financial deals, cross subsidies, conflicts -of interest.

5 Renewal of the concept (see also B1 above) through international contacts. .Keep the concept up to date taking on new and energising international perspectives and developments, e.g. climate change, indigenous peoples' interest in wilderness, etc. Wilderness needs to be properly positioned in the overall environmental debate.

6 Plug the wilderness protection issue into all appropriate fora, e.g. debate on republic/constitutional reform.

7 Encourage involvement with Aboriginal people at the local level. The Conference made an offer to consult with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation nationally that was not accepted by the Council but the Conference Resolutions were passed to the Council's Rural Co mmittee. Encourage ATSIC to establish a Standing Committee on the Environment. Try to

develop a working relationship. Learn from past successes and failures of cooperative approaches to wilderness protection and management with traditional owners. An open and dynamic approach is essential.

8 For the ACF to take a higher profile in the wilderness campaign.

9 Increase the effective involvement of user groups that may not primarily regard themselves as conservation groups in a campaign sense; e.g., many bushwalking, canoeing and cross-country skiing organisations.

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Keeping the Wild in Wilderness: Virginia Young

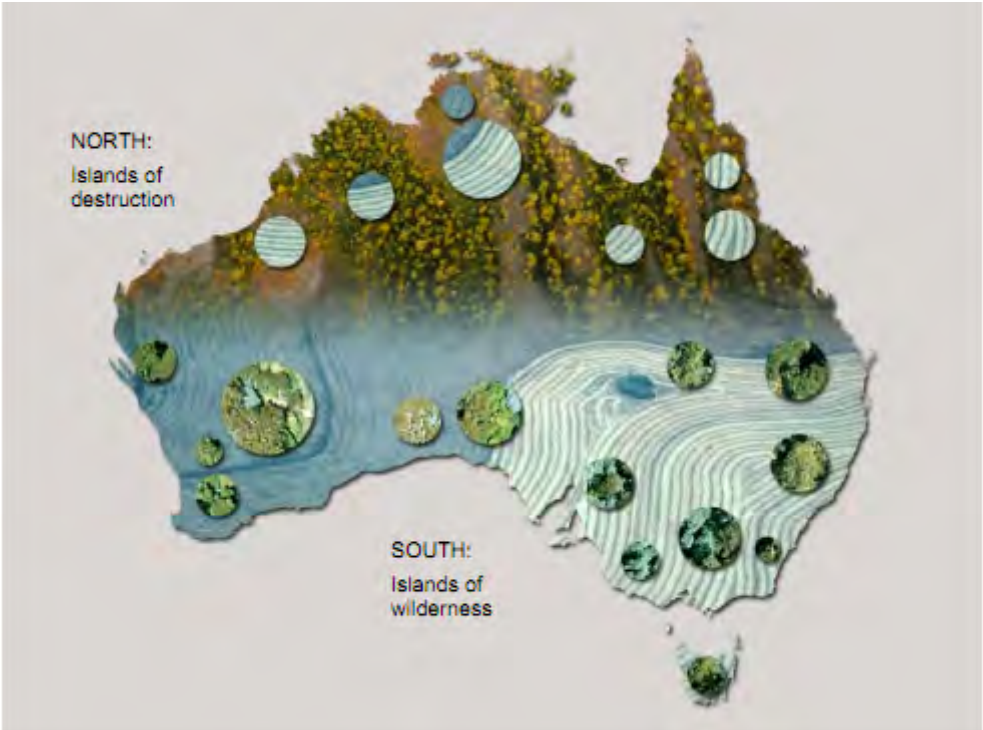
Keeping the Wild in Wilderness (Notes of Virginia Young's talk, along with her Power Point presentation, have been used by the Conference organisers to prepare this paper for these proceedings. We apologise for any inadvertent errors of interpretation.) by Virginia Young National Strategic Campaigns Coordinator for The Wilderness Society

The primary objectives of the Wilderness Society have evolved in recent years from protect, preserve and promote wilderness to 'protect, promote and restore wilderness and natural processes across Australia for the survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth'. Our new purpose has been developed to face new challenges and permits us to better

embrace relationships with Indigenous culture in harmony with the natural world.

The remaining areas of large intact landscapes are the deserts, high latitude boreal forests and tundra grasslands, the Amazon and Northern Australia. It is of great concern that the footprint of human activities is expanding into these formerly remote parts of the globe.

The Australian continent can be divided along the Tropic of Capricorn for the purpose of considering appropriate methods of natural area management. In northern Australia, islands of destruction threaten the integrity of vast areas of tropical wilderness. In southern Australia, relatively small islands of fragmented, temperate wilderness exist in a sea of disturbed land. The challenges of "keeping the wild in wilderness" differ in the intact and fragmented landscapes.



In tropical Australia, the challenge is to contain the threats from impinging on wild lands, whereas in temperate Australia the challenge is to ensure the protection of remaining wilderness islands, for example by linking these areas with corridors of natural bushland.

The threats of wilderness in both northern and southern Australia include:

- Population and urban expansion;
- Tourism and recreational use;
- Agriculture and grazing;
- Dams and diversions;
- Climate change;
- Roads and infrastructure;
- Ferals and weeds;
- Clearing;
- Logging;
- Salinity;
- Inappropriate fire management

WildCountry is a science-based, continent-wide approach to nature conservation that will give nature its best possible chance of survival in the future. *WildCountry* has been developed to meet the challenge of:

- Keeping the wild country intact wherever it may be and to protect wild nature in a fragmented landscape to provide country-wide conservation of nature for the long term; and
- Promoting the need for understanding how nature works, ensuring that the natural ecological processes which sustain wildlife can continue to do so.

The *WildCountry* Science Council has described seven "connectivity" processes necessary for the healthy functioning of natural ecosystems (Mackey et al. 2005, Soulé et al. 2004):

1. Critical species interactions involve keystone species (eg, tiger quolls, and birds and insects pollinators) that strongly interact with other species and require free movement through the natural environment to function effectively.
2. Long distance movement of native mammals and insects is necessary to allow them to cope with seasonal and year-to-year variation in habitat and food resources.
3. Rapid climate change and climate variability makes the need for connectivity between natural environments through the landscape essential, as climate change forces alterations in the distribution and interactions of native plants and animals.
4. Ecological fire regimes are necessary for the maintenance of connectivity at the landscape level.
5. Natural evolution is dependent on connectivity, as plants and animals need to be able to retreat into refugia in times of extended drought, and also to allow plants and animals within refugia and that are adapted to new conditions to move out into the landscape.
6. Hydroecology is maintained in catchment areas by native plant cover that help regulate water flows through ecosystems and can ensure natural productivity and pure water supplies, through, for example, the protection of wild rivers.
7. Coastal zone fluxes - healthy catchments ensure healthy and productive coastal zones, as catchments transport water and nutrients from the inland.

Protecting biodiversity in an ecosystem and evolutionary context is the new paradigm for wilderness conservation

This approach has three key elements:

1. It recognises that the evolved characteristic biodiversity of biomes/ecosystems that have evolved in any one place: • represents all forms of native plants and animals and their life history strategies that are best adapted to natural selective forces; and • the biodiversity that is optimal given the environmental and natural disturbance regimes.
2. It seeks to protect and restore the natural processes that sustain system dynamics and evolutionary potential, that is, processes that: • constitute evolutionary selective forces (eg fire regimes); and • generate and sustain system dynamics and habitat resources (eg productivity).
3. It defines "connectivity" with regard to integrity of the natural environment in terms of ecosystem functioning and the condition of natural processes as well as the arrangement of ecosystems.

WildCountry science is developing principles (and associated methods) for largescale, long-term conservation. It is developing conservation processes that are multiscaled looking at the spatial (local–regional–continental–global) and temporal (yearsdecades-centuries-millennia scales). This new approach to wilderness conservation is about understanding how nature works including the fundamental level (ecological

processes), and the holistic picture that nature operates over large scales and long time frames, not just in the "here and now".

Ironically, this is also the oldest approach to working with nature – Australia's Indigenous citizens have been using this approach for at least 40,000 years. Indigenous Australians have lived on the continent for between 40,000 – 50,000 years. In many places traditional links to land and sea remain strong. Many Indigenous communities still rely on "bush tucker" such as those who depend on the Aurukun wetlands.

Nature conservation in northern Australia has different management imperatives:

Much of our big natural and extensive landscapes in the north and centre are degrading due to feral animals, weeds and changed fire regimes, which is in marked contrast to the level of wilderness protection and management in the south. Australia's drier and tropical habitats are in dire need of active labour-intensive management. There is a need for more people living on the country and for them to be supported to look after the land. Cape York, for example, covers almost 14 million hectares and has just 18,000 residents (and, excluding town-based people, this represents only one person for every 200 sq km 2).

Wild Rivers Rangers

The promised employment of 100 Wild rivers rangers is one initiative to ensure that wild country is better managed in north. In September 2006 Anne Bligh, Deputy Premier of

Queensland, said that "If re-elected the Beattie Labor Government will enlist the traditional skills of Indigenous people to manage its Wild Rivers...The [rangers] will be drawn from local areas and will represent the traditional owners. They will work on weed and feral animal management, controlling stream bank erosion, maintaining water quality, re-vegetating riverine areas and educating the public generally about the worth of keeping our rivers in a wild state." *WildCountry* Indigenous Conservation Strategies"

We are developing a program in which land justice, Indigenous rights and conservation are resolved for the protection and maintenance of the Australian environment. The *WildCountry* approach contains the following features:

- Developing knowledge, research and policy through combining Indigenous ecological knowledge with conservation science:
- Engagement and communications – The Wilderness Society is focusing on: – Indigenous people in general, with appropriate communications and membership engagement strategies; and – regarding particular environmental outcomes, we are focusing on key land owners and communities.
- Allies and cooperation agreements – The central tenet of our program is to develop alliances and agreements with Indigenous traditional owners, and other Indigenous land and sea interests.
- In situ conservation and homelands development – Real support and engagement on conservation and homeland development, including enterprise opportunities, on Country.

Indigenous Protected Areas – legislative and policy requirements

The Wilderness Society has identified the following principles necessary for the development of a comprehensive, representative and adequate system of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs):

1. Legal frameworks for protected areas must be adequate in dealing with, and accommodating, the rights and interests of Indigenous Traditional Owners, and the positive contributions to be made by them in environmental protection and natural resource management;
2. Development of the Indigenous aspects of all protected areas within the IUCN reserve categories (including category 1a and 1b which are conventionally assumed to preclude compatibility with Indigenous environmental, cultural, social and economic interests);
3. Protected area status using IUCN reserve categories I through IV should be the preferred status for IPAs, and that the application of these categories should not affect the ownership and management rights by Indigenous Traditional Owners. This may require legislative reform;
4. Facilitation of a comprehensive, graduated system of Indigenous land management, from natural resource management and multi-use homelands through to strict protected areas, through legislative and administrative supports, and backed by a sliding scale of public investment,

with higher investments resulting in line with higher conservation outcomes.

Cape York Peninsula some key facts:

Queensland is one of the most biodiverse locations on planet Earth. Its "core residual areas" of nature, which are largely undamaged by human activity, mainly lie in the far north, in one of the world's great biological treasures: Cape York Peninsula.

The Cape embraces:

- 13.6 million hectares
- One of the world's 37 great wild domains
- 40 endemic fauna species
- 397 rare, threatened or endangered plants
- Globally rare old growth rainforests
- Australia's largest & most diverse wetlands
- 21 pristine wild rivers
- the healthiest section of the world's greatest barrier reef system

Protecting the extraordinary natural values of the Cape requires a fundamentally new approach which would deal with threats to the whole landscape.

The Wilderness Society has been involved with the Cape for many years. We fought to protect the pristine dune fields of Shelburne Bay from sand mining in 1987 and secured protection for the Starcke wilderness in 1994. Last year, however, two enormously significant conservation victories were achieved on an entirely different plane:

- legislation banning broad scale land clearing across most of Queensland; and

- the introduction in Queensland of Australia's first Wild Rivers legislation, providing a legislative mechanism for protecting wild rivers.

Co-operation agreements between TWS and Indigenous communities

Dialogue with Indigenous communities is resolving tenure and conservation issues over land acquired by government to meet the dual objectives of Indigenous land rights and nature conservation.

Seventeen properties have been acquired and, provided there is traditional owner consent, a protected area network with World Heritage listing covering about 10 million acres and 750 miles of the east coast should be possible in the near future. Members of the *WildCountry* Science Council and others provide the scientific basis for The Wilderness Society's work on the Cape. Their comprehensive assessment will continue to help us keep Cape York intact.

This conservation work would not have been possible without working cooperatively with Indigenous owners. Cooperative work with the traditional owners of Cape York goes back more than 20 years. For example, the successful joint campaign with the Wuthathi people – traditional owners of the white sand dune country of Shelburne Bay, to cancel sand mining leases. A current cooperative agreement with the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation aims at delivering a 300,000 acre IPA in the near future. The cooperation agreement between The

Wilderness Society and the Traditional Owners of Kaanju homelands (Cape York) aims, among other things, to ensure that Kaanju Ngaachi (homelands):

- are managed and maintained at the highest level of ecological and cultural integrity, and that there is public, community and philanthropic support for this environmental goal;
- and form an important part in the mosaic of Protected Areas and Conservation. Agreements that are or will be established to achieve high-level protection of the diverse and magnificent environments of Cape York Peninsula.

The Wilderness Society in conjunction with the Australian National University and the Chuulangan Aboriginal Corporation have developed an approach to Indigenous environmental assessment of a candidate property or landscape.

The Indigenous environmental approach applies the following key identification criteria:

1. Context

- What are the main environmental characteristics of the property?
- What kinds of landscape ecosystems does the property represent?
- Where else are there similar landscapes?
- What Indigenous cultural sites and groupings of sites are, or were, present in the area?

2. Composition

- What species and ecological communities are present on the property?

- Are there any threatened species or ecological communities present or likely to be present on the property?
- Are there ecological communities or ecosystems on the property that are particularly important for traditional human-nature relations?

3. Condition

- To what extent has the vegetation cover of the property been degraded by modern land use activity?
- Has the soil been eroded or contaminated, or the water polluted?
- Are feral animals or invasive plants a problem?
- Is Indigenous natural and cultural management continuous or discontinuous?

4. Connectivity

- Can the property enhance the viability of an existing protected area (eg, by buffering the boundary or linking two currently unconnected areas)?
- Does the property have habitat resources that are important for migratory animals (eg wetlands) or ecologically important species (eg, seed dispersing birds)?
- Does the property play an important role in hydrological processes (eg, encompasses a ground water recharge zone)?
- Is the property part of connected Indigenous estates and homelands?

5. Restoration Potential

- If the ecosystems or ecological communities on the property are in poor condition, are there good prospects for ecological and eco-cultural restoration?

We are applying the following practical steps to protect the Cape:

- Scientific assessment using WildCountry principles
- Prevent key threats, such as land clearing, inappropriate mining and regulation of rivers
- A conservation plan based on large connected networks of protected areas
- Funding to buy strategically important land
- Develop co-operative relationships with Indigenous communities
- Resolution of land tenure issues
- Securing political support for a conservation-based future
- Development of a "conservation economy"

Of all the steps taken to date, the most important outstanding issues is the development of economic opportunities for Indigenous communities who wish to conserve their land. With better funding opportunities, much more could be done to secure powerful protection and conservation management outcomes on the Cape.

Gondwana Link – a Western Australian case study

The south-west of Western Australia is internationally renowned as a global biodiversity hot spot and for being one of the world's great botanic provinces. Gondwana Link is a new vision for the south-west. It aims to restore plants and animals and ecological connectivity from Kalgoorlie to Margaret River, a distance spanning almost a thousand kilometres and divided into eight planning regions.

Gondwana Link is enabling the community to tackle ecological restoration on a scale never before attempted in Australia and seeking to protect our last great temperate woodland wilderness using the same WildCountry principles.

Most of this region has been heavily fragmented by intensive agriculture or logging, however, groups and individuals inspired by Gondwana Link are turning the tide through bush purchase, conservancy agreements and revegetation.

The contributors to Gondwana Link include The Wilderness Society, the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park, Greening Australia, Australian Bush Heritage Fund, Mallee Fowl Preservation Group, and the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group. Each of these organisations contribute their knowledge and existing expertise to the project, guided by the conservation principles of Gondwana Link.The conservation efforts include broad-scale ecological restoration between the Stirling Range and the Fitzgerald River National Parks, which are two of the biologically richest wilderness areas in Australia.

There is also the critical Ravensthorpe bush connection that represents the very last link between the globally recognised Fitzgerald River National Park and the drier inland, yet this link remains at risk through neglect and destructive activities. The Gondwana Link vision encompasses several superlative wilderness areas, from the tall forests of the Walpole Wilderness, to the amazing heathlands and mallee of the Fitzgerald River National Park and the forests of the Stirling Ranges National Park.

The ecological principles developed by Gondwana Link are for any landholder or NGO stakeholder to use and work towards the vision of a protected, restored and reconnected landscape.

Changes to land use are already occurring through the work of inspired individuals and groups.

The Great Western Woodlands

At 16.1 million hectares, is the Great Western Woodlands of southern Western Australia possibly contains both the largest remaining areas of temperate woodlands and temperate healthlands in the world. These woodlands support 17% of Australia's vascular plant species in 2% of Australia's land area. Data from National Land and Water Audit, Australian Native Vegetation Assessment states that the region contains one third of Australia's major vegetation groups. Gondwana Link vision is facilitating positive action to reduce damage from irresponsible mining, frequent fires and other threats.

Scientific assessment of the extraordinary Great Western Woodlands is being undertaken in co-operation with the local Indigenous communities and the Australian National University. Already it seems likely to be another World Heritage area in waiting, but achieving comprehensive protection for the area will be a major challenge. While it is all public land, few people know of its existence; it has no conservation history; negligible community capacity; disparate Indigenous interests; and in the medium to long-term is highly threatened by open cut mining. Community education and capacity-building is needed if this area is to receive secure protection. The Current

Challenges being addressed by The Wilderness Society

To sum up, The Wilderness Society is working with the community to develop:

- A scientifically based continent-wide planning framework for nature conservation;
- A large-scale system of connected protected areas, with wilderness at its core;
- Measures to remove serious threats and improve management of land for conservation outside the formal reserve system;
- Strategies for the establishment of conservation economies;
- Capacity in local communities to maximise conservation effectiveness. In conclusion The Wilderness Society wonders whether it is now appropriate to seek amendment of current wilderness legislation to accommodate Aboriginal rights and interests? And should we set up a working group to develop a dialogue around this question as an outcome of the conference?

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Science and nature conservation in the wilderness J.B. Kirkpatrick

Science and nature conservation in the wilderness J.B. Kirkpatrick School of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, Private Bag 78, GPO, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7001 Email: J.Kirkpatrick@utas.edu.au

Abstract

A personal account of some of my experiences of, feelings about, and attachments to the Tasmanian wilderness is followed by a dry discussion of the virtues of wilderness, in general, for nature conservation and scientific knowledge, using the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area as a case study. The remoteness and primitiveness of wilderness areas makes them some of the most important parts of the surface of the earth for the conservation of biological diversity, although wilderness recreation must be controlled to

avoid degrading this resource, and some human intervention may be needed to maintain biodiversity. Scientific investigation in wilderness can provide an understanding of our impacts on other areas, can provide the basis for proper management and can satisfy our curiosity about nature. However, science as a recreational use should not degrade the wilderness resource. Introduction

The wilderness quality of land is contingent upon its remoteness and primitiveness (eg. Helman et a1 1976; Kirkpatrick and Haney 1980; Lesslie 1991). Land that maintains its primitive qualities may be traversed by roads or rail. Land that is remote from any form of mechanized access may be severely degraded by introduced animals or plants, or by pollutants from industry. In neither of these circumstances would land be considered wilderness. Past a subjective conjoint threshold of remoteness and primitiveness, an increase in either of these qualities results in an increase in wilderness quality. In this paper I address the relationship between wilderness and nature conservation and the importance of wilderness to science, partly repeating the material in an earlier paper of mine (Kirkpatrick 1994). However, before I subside into scientific dryness, I present an account of my experiences of, feelings about, and attachments to the Gondwanan Tasmanian wilderness, in which I have spent much of my scientific life.

A scientist in Gondwanan wilderness

In nature the places that have the greatest variety of life are those where the physical environment has been relatively constant during geological time. The richness rises from within, species evolving to both fill and create niches. The Gondwanan supercontinent must have been a wonderfully rich and varied place, as it lay so long in a warm and 1constant world. Its break up is thought to have precipitated the descent into the cold climates of the last two million years. One bit of Gondwanan land lost its richness crossing the equator. In compensation it created the Himalayas, as it crashed into the Asian plate. Another portion of the supercontinent drifted to the South Pole, there to become encased in ice and almost bereft of life. The Australian plate drifted north into aridity, with only a few wet and high parts of Tasmania retaining their Gondwanic biota to any extent or in any richness. Well that is today's story anyway.

In 1969 I was a postgraduate student at the University of Melbourne. My researches involved much travel, as I was studying the southern blue gums, among which is the floral emblem of Tasmania. Tasmania in the late sixties seemed far from the milk bars of Moorabbin and the Administration Building sieges of the universities in Melbourne. It was not even possible to buy a counter lunch, the shops had goods hanging darkly from the ceiling and people wearing beanies sitting around on wooden chairs, and the distances between service stations were monumental. The people in the east of the state were amazingly friendly, very unlike those in the

back blocks of New South Wales, where one sensed constant danger to life and limb from the glowering, intolerant inhabitants, and especially from their policemen, clad in black leather and carrying guns to complement their florid physiognomies. But it did rain every night in Tasmania.

With that much rain there seemed little to lose, at least in comfort, by heading for the purportedly wetter west, where there grew few or no blue gums, but where I thought we would find extensive rainforests dominated by the Antarctic beech that filled just a few wonderful gullies among the wet eucalypt forests of southern Victoria. My wife, Sue, and I headed down the Strathgordon Road, a gaping linear wound cut viciously into a khaki and white landscape, unlike anything we had seen before. We camped at a picnic ground which had wood neatly provided, a pipe for a fireplace and a small prefab toilet, all surrounded by tall eucalypts. It turned out to be a bad night, detonators placed in the wood by playful Hydro employees created a visually exciting shower of red hot coals and pieces of our dinner. Atypically, the sky cleared. Afraid of using the wood for heat we crept into our one man tent to start the usual race to get to sleep before our lilos deflated.

We were awakened by the roar of a car engine and bright lights fixed on our tent. Wishing I was back in western New South Wales, I leapt out of the tent, hoping to inflict some damage on the obviously crazed inhabitants of western Tasmania before we were subjected to whatever they had in

mind. I slipped on the icy ground then relaxed as I saw that it was one of the sweet Tasmanian policemen, who had previously spoken to us only to tell us that the one remaining hubcap had fallen off our bomb. This one suspected us to be a pair of indomitable bush walkers who had failed to return from the mysteries of the wilderness, where they were almost certainly safer than us.

We awoke in a solid tent. After reducing its volume with considerable physical force, we set off again in search of rainforest. There was a little bit on the right of the road. We clambered through the white, bright jumble that was more visible from space than the Great Wall of China, into Antarctic mysteries, sitting above the fog that filled the valleys of the west. Glowing green moss, the absurdness of pandani and the pink dots of climbing heath all helped restore our psychic equilibrium, and made the horrors of the night subside. 2In 1972 we returned to Tasmania. I had been appointed a lecturer in Geography at the University. I have since worked my way up from office boy to professor. I avoided western Tasmania for a while. It was hard enough to adjust to clean air, cold weather and the constancy of teaching commitments without subjecting myself to the rigours of an alien environment, especially since I had seldom walked with a pack and was not particularly fit. However, a day stroll up the north-eastern ridge of Mt. Anne was planned by a few of my colleagues who proved later to look less fit than they were, and a glance at a map showed the distance to not be particularly great,

although I should have paid more attention to the number of contours, and the forty metre intervals between them.

Clear skies were obviously characteristic of western Tasmania. Our party gathered in the shards of morning air and desultorily kicked at white pebbles as we discussed the day ahead. It seemed that the route was an overgrown bombadier track, followed by navigation between bits of coloured plastic attached to trees. We were almost explorers. One of the real explorers did not return.

Walking through buttongrass plains turned out not to be one of life's greatest pleasures, but it did assure me that I was not likely to suffer from thirst, a common occurrence on my Victorian day walks. We seemed to be walking through this black morass for ever, but at last we milled uncertainly on a bit of plain searching for the plastic ticket to rainforest and ridge. We started our climb among giant eucalypts and their subordinate, but far from pygmy, myrtles. Soon we left the eucalypts and moved between giant myrtle and sassafras, the ground crumbling beneath our feet.

I was used to ground, and trees, being hard, occasionally brittle and crackling, but never disintegrating upon touch. I did not expect forests that had survived the rigours of geological time to be so fuzzy in their contact with the rest of reality. My muscles ached and my mouth was dry. At last we were to stop for refreshment. There was no water, in a rainforest. My colleagues quested for caves and water does not

sit for long on limestone. However, there were pools on the ridge itself, which could not be much further on. I did not ask.

I soon forgot my thirst and fatigue. Suddenly we were among King Billy pines and pandani. The pines had trunks that bifurcated well above the ground, and in the crooks of their bifurcations there grew other trees and shrubs. The pandani were tall, leaning in sympathy with the pines, whose branchlets did almost crackle underfoot.

In this pine forest I was out of time. It could as well have been forty-five million years ago, or ten million years in the future. The forest felt independent of people, and very much capable of self-perpetuation I regretted the pieces of plastic, and the pad just beginning to form. I worried a little about the worth of the wood, a worry exacerbated next year with my first visit to the West Coast Range where King Billy Pine was mined in a singularly ruthless fashion, wherever it was not killed by fires lit by loggers and miners. But the first shock was such that I could not believe such actions possible. In Melbourne we had fought hard to keep a thin strip of coastal tea-tree, riddled with virulent weeds from elsewhere in the world, and garnished with rubbish by beachgoers, from being turned into a car park. If that was important surely this place would last forever.

Thirty years after my first visit that forest is still there, in a Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area I helped a little to create. It may even survive for the future. I now know that forests like those on the Northeast Ridge of Mt. Anne are not particularly common, and that many have been destroyed in the last two hundred years. I also know that the King Billy pine stands in the lower part of the altitudinal range of the species depend on infrequent catastrophe for their self-perpetuation, as the pine seedlings are not successful where dense shade is provided by other rainforest trees. The stand that so affected me probably had its origins in reinvasion of King Billy from the edge of a small burned area more than five hundred years ago. Elsewhere the species establishes on landslips. Not many catastrophes are necessary to regenerate a species that can live for thousands of years, and King Billy walks a tightrope between the absence of catastrophic disturbance and its excess. The paradox of combined durability and vulnerability is one that is common among the Gondwanan relicts.

I gained the top of the Northeast Ridge well in the rear of my companions and in a state of extreme desiccation. I was not charmed by the scoparia that prickled my ankles, and was even less charmed by the total absence of water. However, water there was well below, where a lake sat deep in rainforest in a U-shaped glacial valley. Not quite so far below there was another shelf with occasional bright green patches that hinted of water. The more parched of us headed down. The dense scoparia scratched its way up our bodies until it was

overhead, then scratched its way down again. At last there was water, lying among some bright green rocks. Having drunk my fill I was capable of perceiving the environment I had attained with such prodigious effort and hardship.

The glades in Gondwanan forests are the most traditionally beautiful places I have been. No great garden exceeds them in beauty. They are the antithesis of most of the Australian bush, bush that the first Europeans to occupy the continent found grey, monotonous and untidy, but in which I found my Australian identity. The glades are full of contrasts of colour and form, with plants whose symmetry pleases the eye, and are redolent of lands long since extinct. They are the essence of Tasmania.

The vegetable rocks that filled most of the glade in which I now briefly rested were the greatest unexpected delight. I had read of cushion plants in the ecological literature that I perused through interest and necessity, but I did not expect them to be so bright green, billowing and hard, and I was entranced by the miniature gardens that formed on their surfaces. Half a decade later on a small plateau below Federation Peak I came across the mixed species mosaic cushion heaths, again after struggling through scoparia. These form a patchwork quilt of bright blues and greens, each patch equalling one plant. After having worked and played in the high country of Tasmania for three decades I am still delighted and surprised by pattern and detail and its unpredictability, and I still sit and meditate hoping to absorb

some of the peace, beauty and spiritual depth that fills these places. Although it has proved not always to be calm and sunny in Tasmanian Gondwanaland, I have seldom felt any fear. The most dangerous animal stays near his roads, and flimsy material and a bit of stolen down are ample protection against wind, sleet, hail and snow, which all have their own pleasures. But, the wild can be corrupted. At the Walls of Jerusalem there is a place called Dixons Kingdom, Dixon being one of the romantic high 4country graziers who broke the fabric of much of the more fertile high country with their fires, cattle and sheep. Much to their chagrin, the mountain cattlemen and their horses have been replaced by hordes of bush walkers attracted to the high cliffs arid grassy, pencil pine forests that may also have lured Dixon. Horse and cattle droppings have been replaced by circles of rock filled with charcoal and silver paper, and the native fauna, always opportunistic, has adapted to the new resource.

No Australian or New Zealander could be surprised to learn that possums have adapted their ways in order to make use of the wilderness tourist resource. There are possums in the middle of Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney. However, many thousands of years have passed since there were marsupial devils anywhere near the sites occupied by these great modern wens. The devil has survived well in Tasmania, developing a taste for dead sheep and cattle, right down to the largest bones. Many a boot has also been lost to a devilish appetite. However, these latter incidents have been sporadic, undoubtedly discouraged by violent men with guns.

Bushwalkers are a gentler breed, and have fallen ready victim. While devils do not leap at their throats, they have discovered that packs are transportable and chewable, and that entrance can be gained to tents full of food by the simple expedient of a few seconds chewing and tearing. Although a victim of this corruption of the pure wild, I gain comfort from thinking of it as natures' revenge for silver paper.

The Gondwanan forests in the central mountains of Tasmania have a gentler aspect, devils and possums ignored, than those of the west and south west. Soft herbs and grasses replace hard leaved sedges and shrubs in forest glades, and animals and their signs are more frequently encountered. The pencil pine forests of the Central Plateau are reminiscent of the grass-floored pine forests of the northern hemisphere mountains, but are much more attractive with their close blue-green swards cropped by wallaby and wombat, their squat, twisted, brown-barked older trees and their pyramidal juveniles, only a few centuries old. The trees in these forests were germinates when Terra Australis was Terra Incognito. When the oldest of them germinated, our European ancestors, dwarfed by malnutrition, were subsiding into the Dark Ages from the relative civilization of Roman times.

In lots of ways it is better to be alive now than in Mediaeval Europe. While apocalypse and plague obsessed the people of the Dark Ages to at least the same extent as they obsess the people of today, we do live longer and our Day of Judgement, if it comes, will be an act of free choice on the part of at least

one human being with his finger on the button. However, the Mediaeval peasant could think, with good cause, that the physical and social landscape occupied by his grandparents would be little different from that occupied by her grandchildren, if her genetic line avoided Viking raids and plagues. The Aborigines had the same expectations. Great events would live in legend for thousands of years, but a comforting continuity of the form and substance of existence prevailed. Husbanding predominated over innovation.

Any intergenerational continuity in the relationships between people and people, and people and landscape, is the exception rather than the rule in contemporary western societies. Constant change breeds insecurity and conflict as well as wasting the earth. 5If we lived in a steady state society, like the Aborigines and most of our other ancestors, we would probably appreciate the Gondwanan rainforests of the wilderness in the same way that we would appreciate the view from our verandah or the taste of home grown potatoes, as an important part of an enduring, interesting and hospitable world. In our growth society the they are both much more important and much more vulnerable. They are one of the few strong links to our important past, and the important past of the planet, that has survived the turmoil of the last two hundred years. They can attach us to a past when the future is insecure and unpredictable. They also remind us of our place in the stream of life, in which we are the floating leaves while the forest is the water milfoil.

The particular floating leaf that returned after dark to the Scotts Peak road, in a severely debilitated state, has since drifted widely in the mountains of Tasmania, enduring the punishment by pack, the ordeal by quagmire, and the test by scrub, in order to have the privilege of visiting and revisiting the wilderness, and attempting to describe, understand and conserve its vegetation. I am happy to report that much more remains to be learned, and that there are many places in the Tasmanian fragments from the ancient continent that I will never visit. May they endure for their own sake.

Wilderness and nature conservation

The remoteness of wilderness, in itself, has some direct benefits for the maintenance of biodiversity. These include the absence of artificial barriers to the movement of native organisms, the absence of artificial channels for the movement of exotic organisms and the distance decay effect noticeable with deleterious disturbances such as anthropogenic fire, fertilizer and pesticide drift, pollution drift, exotic disseminule drift and alterations to drainage and water quality.

The benefits to be gained from the reduction of edge effects are enormous for the first 100 m or so of remoteness, but less marked or negligible with increases in remoteness beyond this distance, as most edge effects have a rapid reverse exponential decline with distance. The major exception is upstream hydrological disturbance. In the western Tasmanian wilderness, the damming of the Gordon River for

hydroelectric power has had devastating downstream effects, including a threat to the survival of meromictic lakes near the river mouth (Bowling and Tyler, 1984). In 2005, artificial addition of salt water proved necesary to maintain meromixis and the species that depended on it. Highly mobile invasive plants and animals can be another exception. Marram grass (Ammophila arenaria) and sea spurge (Euphorbia paralias) have spread on sea currents into the previously pristine wilderness beaches of southwest Tasmania, requiring an active and ongoing eradication effort (Balmer et al. 2004). The bumble bee (Bombus terrestris) had penetrated into the far depths of the western Tasmanian wilderness less than a decade after its introduction to Tasmania (Hingston et al. 2002).

Given that edge effects penetrate a reasonably constant distance regardless of the area of a piece of wild land, large compactly-shaped ecological reserves sacrifice less of their area to disturbance than small or convolute reserves. Thus, given the same shape a larger reserve 6will have a greater proportion of primitive country than a small reserve. Primitive country is generally the cheapest to manage for biodiversity conservation. Thus, the higher the proportion of biodiversity reserves that is wilderness, the cheaper is the management.

The large areas that are necessary before land can be denoted wilderness increase the likelihood of the survival of a large proportion of native species in response to climatic change.

Such change has been, and will be, dramatic. For example, only 18,000 years ago the rainforest of the Western Tasmanian Wilderness was confined to a few low altitude valleys, while alpine vegetation covered most of the area (Kirkpatrick and Fowler 1998). Now, alpine vegetation is rare and rainforest common. Even in the last thousand years substantial climatic changes have occurred (Cook et al. 2001). These changes can be complex, with parts of the Tasmanian wilderness becoming colder and drier over the last 50 years, the reverse of the general tendency (Kirkpatrick et al. 2002).

Wilderness is generally conceived to be a form of recreational land use. Wilderness recreationalists may be passive, or active. While the passive use of wilderness has no direct impact on this resource, the active use of wilderness may have considerable biophysical consequences. Thus, recreational use may degrade the wilderness quality of primitiveness, and, in extremis, destroy the resource.

Walkers have spread the root rot fungus, Phytophthora cinnamomi, along most major tracks through the south-western Tasmanian wilderness (Podger and Brown 1989; Podger et al. 1990) and have been the source of several fires that have destroyed areas of firesensitive vegetation (Brown et al. 1983; Kirkpatrick and Dickinson 1984; Kirkpatrick 1997). Their feet create permanent scars in sensitive ecosystems (Calais and Kirkpatrick 1986; Whinam and Chilcott 1999, 2003). They dig to bury their wastes (Bridle and Kirkpatrick 2003) which in some environments do not break down, creating coproliths

(Bridle and Kirkpatrick 2005). Horse riders can potentially create even more damage (Whinam et al. 1994; Whinam and Comfort 1996), although their numbers in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area do not yet present a serious problem. The maintenance of biodiversity will obviously require restriction on the intensity and type of use of wilderness, and other primitive areas by recreationalists, and some degree of management intervention in these same areas (Kirkpatrick 2001). I believe that this intervention needs to be directed towards biodiversity conservation, not the replication of the human-free landscape of the interglacial before humans arrived in Australia, or even necessarily the landscape created by the interaction of gatherer-hunters with the rest of the ecosystem.

The concept of primitiveness that prevails among wilderness recreationalists is that landscapes that lack human disturbance best express this quality. However, total freedom from human disturbance might not be the optimal strategy for biodiversity conservation in landscapes that it now seems have been modified by people through the dramatic climatic and landscape changes of at least the last 34,000 years (Cosgrove and Allan 2001). For example, the cessation of Aboriginal patch burning (Marsden-Smedley 1998) has threatened the orange-bellied parrot in the wilderness of south-west Tasmania (Brown and Wilson 1984), and may lead to other significant landscape changes, suggesting that it might 7be desirable to cry to artificially create a facsimile of

the Aboriginal fire regime (MarsdenSmedley and Kirkpatrick 2000).

Because the attributes of remoteness and primitiveness have only survived in areas that have been of little use to agricultural and industrial people, the wilderness of today contains only a subset of biodiversity. Thus, while wilderness preservation will greatly increase the chances for long term survival of a substantial proportion of our biota and communities it will be insufficient in itself to ensure biodiversity maintenance in Australia. The priority areas for nature conservation lie in the fragmented natural landscapes of the most heavily modified parts of the continent and in improved control of exotic plants and animals (Kirkpatrick 1991; Kirkpatrick 1999; Mendel and Kirkpatrick 2002).

Wilderness and science

Wilderness can be an impediment to many types of scientific investigation, because of the cost of gaining access and the restrictions on manipulation of the environment imposed by the necessity of maintaining naturalness. On the other hand wilderness provides the opportunity to study ecosystems that have suffered little or no modification as the result of the European invasion of Australia. It also provides benchmark areas that allow the development of understanding of the changes wrought in ecosystems by agricultural and industrial activities. These wilderness benchmark areas are particularly important for processes and patterns that incorporate large tracts of land.

The impact of our agricultural, silvicultural and industrial activities on the soils that ultimately provide all of us with life is relatively poorly understood. Wilderness areas allow us to investigate the degree of change from the natural condition. Similarly, wilderness areas contain some of the few largely natural aquatic systems in Australia, allowing investigations of the degree of change that has occurred with human manipulation. For example, scientists visited Tasmania from Scandinavia to look at naturally acidic waters as part of their investigations of acid rain. Our understanding of forest pathology is aided enormously by the existence of remote forests. For example, the myrtle dieback that is affecting Tasmania's rainforests occurs in the most remote and untouched areas, indicating that it is a natural phenomenon.

Apart from the types of practical scientific investigations indicated above, wilderness areas can teach us much about ecological and evolutionary processes. They are large enough for evolutionary and ecological processes to approximate their pre-agricultural form. Given that they occupy types of landscape that were unattractive to economic development, they may also contain all or most of some types of ecosystems, species and genotypes. The satisfaction of our curiosity about any of these biological entities must rely on scientific work in wilderness.

Discussion

The satisfaction of scientific curiosity about the natural systems of wilderness does have a negative aspect. Part of the spiritual and recreational attraction of wilderness is its mystery. Some wilderness recreationalists have argued that even large scale topographic maps should not be produced, much less detailed geological or vegetation maps. They argue that the human need to accumulate scientific knowledge should, like more material needs, be satisfied elsewhere in the landscape, as the need for mystery and adventure in the unknown fastnesses of nature cannot be satisfied elsewhere than wilderness, whereas scientific investigation is an infinite process that can be undertaken anywhere.

There may be some wilderness areas where unmapped and uninvestigated tracts of land could be regulated to persist without endangering the natural essence of wilderness or the values, other than recreational, that wilderness protects. However, it is hard to know where these areas are without some scientific investigation, and there is no doubt that scientifically-based management prescriptions will be necessary to maintain biological diversity and naturally functioning ecosystems in a large proportion of our wilderness (Robertson et a1. 1992). We have to have the knowledge to keep pathogens, exotic species, unsuitable fire regimes and destructive recreationalists at levels consistent with the maintenance of both wilderness quality and biodiversity. Curiosity-based research could reasonably be considered to be an equally appropriate wilderness activity as

peak-bagging and can provide outputs that make the retention of wilderness a prime political object.

However, it is critical that scientific activities, like those of other recreationalists, do not degrade the very resource on which they depend (Robertson et al 1992).

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Tasmania's Wilderness: Progress in the Face of Institutional Hostility Geoff Law

Tasmania's Wilderness: Progress in the Face of Institutional Hostility Geoff Law December 2006 (Geoff Law of the Wilderness Society presented a broad brush and well illustrated picture of the wilderness situation in southern Australia to the Conference. We have not been able to included all of his power point presentation on this website. However, we have been able to include the section of Geoff's paper dealing with Tasmania which should be of particular interest to wilderness enthusiasts.)

Tasmania has one of the world's great temperate wilderness areas. Most of the western part of the island is in a wild state.

The wild and scenic areas that contain core wilderness cover an area of approximately 2.5 million hectares.

Tasmania has no Wilderness Act and there are no explicit provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act that protect wilderness. This seems extraordinary, especially given the profile that the Tasmanian wilderness has acquired through campaigns for Lake Pedder, the Franklin and lower Gordon Rivers, the Lemonthyme and Southern Forests, the Tarkine, and the Styx Valley.

Nevertheless, significant progress has been made in protecting wilderness in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and adjoining national parks cover over 1.4 million hectares of wild country. National parks in other parts of the state cover an additional 149,372 ha. There is a National Parks and Wildlife Service with many staff members dedicated to protecting the wilderness areas under their care. Tasmania is renowned nationally and internationally for the beauty of its wilderness. There is a strong culture of conservation within the Tasmanian community which is expressed in evocative photographs, dynamic public events, daily media coverage and constantly evolving campaign strategies and tactics.

Yet Tasmania's wilderness is also under enormous threat. There is less wilderness left in Tasmania today than ever before. The bulldozers and chainsaws of the logging industry are still penetrating previously remote and natural valleys.

Proposed tourism developments have been approved in inappropriate locations within national parks.

Companies exploring for minerals in wilderness 'reserves' are talking up the prospects of new mines. The drivers of off-road vehicles are claiming mineralexploration and hydro tracks as 'traditional' recreation areas. The Tasmanian Government has shunted the Parks and Wildlife Service into the Tourism Department, separating it from nature-conservation specialists.

At a 'big-picture' level, the issues affecting Tasmania's wilderness can be categorised accordingly:

- The future of important but comparatively small areas of wild country in eastern Tasmania.
- The management of the TWWHA and adjacent national-park land;
- The threats of mining, mineral exploration and inappropriate recreation in 'reserved' land to the west of the TWWHA (West Coast and Tarkine)
- The destruction of wilderness taking place almost every day – and that is scheduled for the future – in forested wilderness to the east and north of the TWWHA and Tarkine.

Eastern Tasmania

In 2005, significant areas of public land in Tasmania were handed back to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. This included over 45,000 ha on Cape Barren Island in the Furneaux Group of islands in Bass Strait. Much of this land is very wild and very scenic. It contains important tracts of

heathland, wetlands, mountain peaks over 500 metres tall, magnificent beaches and sand-dunes, and freshwater lakes. The determination of the island's tenure – after a long period of uncertainty – creates a new opportunity for the conservation movement. We can now open discussions about how best to manage the wild and uninhabited parts of this beautiful island with its Tasmanian Aboriginal owners.

On the eastern parts of mainland Tasmania, the positive developments since 1993 include the expansion of the Freycinet, Ben Lomond and Mt William National Parks, and the creation of new or expanded Forest Reserves at Mt Maurice, Mt Victoria and the Blue Tier as well as in the large basin that feeds Great Oyster Bay. These muchneeded new reserves are counter-balanced by the rapid attrition of adjacent wild country by Australia's most severe logging. Some of this is occurring on precipitous slopes in what would otherwise be stunning mountain landscapes.

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

Over 90% of the TWWHA consists of national parks or equivalent tenures; a tiny amount (730 ha) consists of Aboriginal land (covering places of immense spiritual and cultural value to the Tasmanian Aboriginals, such as Kuti Kina Cave); and about 7% consists of Conservation Area, within which certain exploitative activities such as mineral exploration or hunting are allowed to occur.

In 1999, 20,114 ha of wild country immediately adjacent to the TWWHA were added to the national-park system as part of the 1997 Regional Forest Agreement (RFA). These have yet to be nominated as an extension to the TWWHA, despite a provision in the RFA that committed the federal and state governments to a World Heritage assessment by 30 June 1998. Those 20,000 ha contain spectacular places that are an integral part of the Tasmanian wilderness. They include Blakes Opening in the SouthWest, Beech Creek, Nelson Falls, the Dove River and South-East Cape.

Management of the TWWHA is determined by the management plan for the area, which was prepared by the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service[1] It covers 1.384 million hectares of World Heritage Area plus 20,114 ha of adjacent national park or equivalent – a total of over 1.4 million hectares of wilderness and other wild country. The Plan was approved in March 1999 but amended in 2002 to allow a tourist resort to be developed at Planters Beach near Cockle Creek in the Southwest National Park.[2]

The management plan divides the TWWHA into four zones. The largest is the Wilderness Zone, which covers approximately one million hectares and has the following objectives:

- To allow natural processes to operate with minimal interference.
- To retain a challenging, unmodified natural setting that suitably experienced and equipped people can visit for wilderness recreation and scientific purposes.

- To use wilderness as a primary means of managing, protecting and conserving World Heritage and other natural and cultural values.

The size of this zone and its objectives constitute welcome formal recognition of the importance of wilderness in Tasmania.

Smaller but still large areas are managed as a 'Self-Reliant Recreation Zone'. In the South-West, these include iconic bushwalking destinations such as the Eastern and Western Arthur Ranges, the Southern Ranges, and the beaches, coves and headlands near South-West Cape. In the north, they include high country popular with anglers.

Significant areas are managed as 'Recreation Zones'. These areas contain heavilyused constructed walking tracks (such as the Overland Track and South Coast Track); huts; waterways popular for boating (such as the Macquarie Harbour, the Gordon River and the Pedder impoundment); areas on the Central Plateau where hunting is permitted; bitumen roads such as the Lyell Highway and the roads to the PedderGordon hydro-impoundments; and two four-wheel-drive tracks (Patons Road in the Forth Valley and the Mt McCall Road to the Franklin River).

Finally, there are the relatively small 'Visitor Service Zone' and 'Visitor Service Sites' which apply to heavily-used tourist

attractions at places such as Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair, Sarah Island and Scotts Peak.

While the overall approach of this zoning system is sound, the protection of wilderness is undermined by the following applications of the system:

- Hunting parties are permitted to take dogs into those parts of the TWWHA where hunting is permitted (on the Central Plateau and at Farm Cove on Macquarie Harbour). This may be the source of wild dogs recently seen in part of the TWWHA, particularly in and around the Walls of Jerusalem National Park;
- The self-reliant recreation zone encourages walking in the spectacular ranges of the South-West although park managers have yet to come to grips with the impact that walkers have had and are still having on sensitive high-altitude environments;
- Wilderness in the Adamsfield area could potentially be destroyed by new mining operations if commercial ore bodies are discovered by those exploring this area for minerals (a permitted land-use in the 5400-ha Adamsfield Conservation Area);
- Building a tourist resort at Planters Beach will ruin the atmosphere of the immediate area (both within and immediately adjacent to the Southwest National Park), degrade the natural environment, destroy cultural values, form a blot on the landscape, and interfere with public access to the beach;
- The zoning of the Mt McCall Track for recreation prevents the rehabilitation of this road which was built by the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission so that the Franklin River could be dammed. A provision of the 1992 Management Plan for the road to be closed and rehabilitated was overturned by the state and federal governments in 1997.

At a more fundamental level, wilderness is let down by attitudes of hostility or indifference by governments. Federal and state ministers have stepped in to override the wilderness-protection objectives of the Management Plan for the TWWHA by amending it to keep open the Mt McCall Road; to facilitate the Planters Beach tourist resort; and to water down provisions of the Walking Track Management Strategy aimed at controlling the impacts of bushwalkers.

Negative attitudes towards wilderness by government ministers have also weakened advice regarding the protection of wilderness. For example, membership on the World Heritage Area Consultative Committee, which advises government ministers, has been skewed towards exploitative interests. It has been very light-on for advocates of wilderness protection. The 16-member committee contains representatives from recreational and development interests such as tourism, freshwater angling, forestry, trade unions, local government and 'established practices'. In theory, there is a place on the committee for a member representing 'conservation advocacy'. That position has been left vacant for several years. This is an example of government censorship of debates within its advisory committees.

There are three major outstanding issues adversely affecting the integrity of the Tasmanian Wilderness within the World Heritage Area:

- The still unresolved issue of whether, and, if so, how much, to burn buttongrass plains that are adjacent to

mountains whose high country holds fire-sensitive alpine and sub-alpine vegetation;
- The use of the Gordon Dam's power station to provide peak load to Victorian power consumers via Bass Link. This creates unnaturally high levels of flow on the Gordon River downstream of the dam for short but very frequent periods, thereby eroding the riverbanks and destroying rainforests;
- The likely impacts of global warming on high-altitude eco-systems that have no higher country to which to 'retreat'.

The West Coast and Tarkine

Immediately to the west of the TWWHA lie ranges of spectacular, glaciated mountain peaks, significant tracts of temperate rainforest, expansive moorlands, and wild beaches and headlands. Governments and industry have resisted attempts by conservationists to add these places to the TWWHA and national-park system.

Industry argues that these areas are prospective for minerals such as gold, copper, lead and zinc. The wild country that forms the outer parts of this wilderness lies very close to West Coast mining towns such as Queenstown and Rosebery. However, the RFA and subsequent government decisions have created a significant set of reserves covering these places.

Fifteen years ago, the Tarkine was 'the forgotten wilderness'. There were very few reserves there. The Tarkine now contains the 17,980-ha Savage River National Park plus an additional 275,000 ha of other Formal Reserves. These new and expansive

reserves cover superlative natural features such as the Norfolk Range and its adjacent heathlands and dune-systems, the Donaldson River, major parts of the rainforested catchment of the Keith River, the Meredith Range, and some magnificent stands of untouched tall forest west of the Huskisson River.[3]

While these reserves are off-limits to logging, they are, unfortunately, open to mineral exploration and potential mining. Some, such as the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area, are also open to cattle-grazing and damaging recreational driving of off-road vehicles.

In January 2006, beautiful and ancient rock engravings on the Tarkine coast were badly vandalised. This was an expression of hostile attitudes to Aboriginal heritage in parts of the north-west community. The perpetrators of this outrage have yet to be caught or punished. The maximum penalty is, in any case, only $1000. To the south, the spectacular coastal scenery of the Mt Heemskirk Regional Reserve was threatened by a proposed wind farm until the scheme was cancelled.

South of the Tarkine are an additional 296,000 ha of reserves immediately adjacent to the TWWHA. These contain spectacular features such as the Tyndall Range and Lake Huntley; Reynolds Falls; Granite Tor; the West Coast Range; Mt Murchison; and the rainforests and moorlands south of Macquarie Harbour. All of these places are open to mineral exploration and potential mining. South of Macquarie

Harbour, mineralexploration tracks are being taken over – and engraved into the thin quartzite soils – by off-road vehicles.

All of these places suffer from a dearth of decent management. The 'objectives of management' for the Conservation Areas, Nature Recreation Areas and Regional Reserves that constitute the majority of areas described above do not mention the word 'wilderness'. Yet the wilderness within these reserves is part of the same great tract partially protected by the TWWHA itself. It would therefore seem sensible that their management be compatible and coordinated with that of the TWWHA.

The forests

East and north of the TWWHA and around the fringes of the Tarkine are the world's tallest hardwood forests. These contain trees often more than 400 years old and up to 20 metres in circumference. They blanket valleys such as the Weld, Huon, Styx, Florentine, upper Derwent, Picton, Huskisson, Rapid and Arthur. They are being destroyed at a sickening rate. At least 1000 ha of high-quality wilderness is destroyed by these operations each year.

When the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) was signed in November 1997, its advocates disingenuously proclaimed that it protected 95% of Tasmania's wilderness. This act of statistical creativity failed to acknowledge that approximately one third of Tasmania's high-quality wilderness, as defined and mapped by the RFA, was (and

remains) open to destructive activities such as mining, mineral exploration and off-road recreation.

Most of Tasmania's pristine tall-eucalypt forests occur within the '5%' of the wilderness still threatened by logging, or within wild country whose integrity is essential for maintaining wilderness within the TWWHA itself. The proposed logging in valleys such as the Weld, Huon and upper Florentine would dissect pristine country that contains wild rivers, caves, other karst formations and significant examples of Aboriginal heritage. While Forestry Tasmania claims to have management prescriptions that cater for some of these features, they are applied in a reductionist, piecemeal fashion. As the valleys get carved up, small buffer-strips are left around sink-holes, caves, Aboriginal shelters or eagles' nests. The intervening forests are felled. The value of the valley as part of a great wilderness is lost.

In May 2005, the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments signed a supplement to the RFA entitled 'the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement'. (No community representatives were signatories or involved in determining the agreement.) This was said to protect an additional '148,000 ha of public land, including 120,000 hectares of oldgrowth forest'.[4] This claim was a sham. The Agreement actually protected only 27,000 hectares of forest actually threatened by logging.[5]

Some vitally important tracts of rainforest in the Tarkine were protected, as well as some superb stand of giant trees and intact tall forest in the Styx valley. Elsewhere, the Agreement was largely a cynical exercise in identifying forests that could not have been logged anyway due to practical, technical or legal reasons, and then declaring them to be 'new informal reserves'.

Because of this 'loss' of resource (the areas referred to above are all public land), the industry was provided with a package of $235 million of taxpayers' funds. For the amount of forest protected, this was obscene. It is indicative of the anti-wilderness values of the state and federal governments that they feel compelled not just to compensate extractive industries, but to actually over-compensate them, for the protection of publicly-owned wilderness that they never owned.

Many of those taxpayer funds are now being spent on destroying wilderness. For example, millions are to be spent on new logging roads into the Styx, Weld and Upper Florentine valleys to enable the extraction of 'specialty timbers' from the mature rainforest understoreys in those forests. Ironically, and tragically, the areas being destroyed using taxpayers' funds in the Styx and Florentine are places that the Federal Government promised to protect in October 2004.[6] In May 2005, it admitted that it had failed to achieve the promised 'target'.[7]

The Wilderness Society and small local groups such as the friends of the Blue Tier and the Huon Valley Environment Centre have fought against this destruction. Protests occurred in both the Weld and Florentine valleys in 2006. Conservation groups have proposed new formal reserves – or extensions to existing ones – that would protect an additional 500,000 hectares of land in Tasmania. These areas contain approximately 240,000 hectares of State Forest that is threatened by logging.[8]

The future Threats to wilderness in Tasmania are sufficiently enumerated above. New opportunities for advancing wilderness conservation are as follows:

- Discussion with the Aboriginal owners of Cape Barren Island about protection of that beautiful island's wonderful scenery and biodiversity.
- Developing a World Heritage extension for the Tasmanian Wilderness that would incorporate the Tarkine, western reserved lands, the Great Western Tiers (adjacent to the existing TWWHA), and the largely intact forests stretching from Mt Rufus in the north to Cockle Creek in the south.
- Working with the Tasmanian Government to develop and implement Management Plans for new formal reserves so that wilderness protection is an objective of management.
- Using new images, new places and the governments' broken promises to continually rejuvenate the campaign to protect wilderness from logging.
- Educating the public and decision-makers about the role that natural vegetation – particularly forests that contain mature trees and oldgrowth – can play in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, thereby reducing greenhouse emission.

- Educating the public and decision-makers about the role that forests play in protecting water-catchments and in regulating the flow of water from catchments to domestic and agricultural users
- Continuing to promote the spiritual values of wilderness through new images and writing.

A Wilderness Act is required in Tasmania. This is possibly the only way of ensuring that cohesive management strategies that protect wilderness are implemented across reserve-boundaries. Substantial tracts of wilderness in Regional Reserves, Conservation Areas and Nature Recreation Areas abut the Wilderness Zone of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area – particularly along its western boundary. Similarly, management sympathetic with wilderness values is necessary in State Forest adjacent to the TWWHA and in associated Forest Reserves. There is no reason why a holistic approach to management of all of the above should not occur.

In many of these places, the boundaries between areas of different tenure have no onthe-ground relevance. They are imaginary lines. The wilderness areas they cross, however, are intensely and beautifully real. And that is the source of the conservation movement's strength and hope. Tasmania's wilderness has such a powerful beauty that it is constantly attracting new visitors from the mainland, from overseas and within Tasmania itself. In this way, the campaign to protect wilderness is constantly renewed.

1 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999

2 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Management Plan alteration 2002

3 http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/

4 A Way Forward for Tasmania's Forests, The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, Australian and Tasmanian Governments

5 Question on notice, Peg Putt MHA to Premier Paul Lennon, No: HA06/9, 31 October 2006

6 The Howard Government 2004 Election Policy, A Sustainable Future for Tasmania

7 Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, Fact Sheet No. 3

8 Protecting Forests, Growing Jobs, ACF, The Wilderness Society et al

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Untying the Wilderness Knot – towards celebrating wilderness as 'lanai' Haydn Washington

Untying the Wilderness Knot – towards celebrating wilderness as 'lanai' Haydn Washington (22/2/06)

What on Earth do I mean? Why is wilderness 'knotted', and how did it get that way? What is a 'lanai'? What has this got to do with celebrating wilderness? Well – a first question we need to ask is 'what is it we are celebrating'? What is 'wilderness'? I used to think once that this was obvious and was clearly answered by the formal definitions, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition that wilderness was:

'A large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without

permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition' (Kelly et al 1993)

This is pretty clear isn't it? How could one get confused? Sadly, it's a bit more complex than that. In terms of my own background, I am an ecologist, and I have been a wilderness advocate for more than thirty years. I was a key person involved with the campaign for the Wollemi wilderness in NSW, and also was a lobbyist in the Wilderness Society for the NSW Wilderness Act. For the last few years I have been doing a Ph.D. at the University of Western Sydney on 'The Wilderness Knot'. As part of this, I helped to set up (and then worked with) the Blue Mountains Wilderness Network to try and gain meaningful dialogue around 'wilderness'. During the last thirty years, I have seen the meaning of 'wilderness' change. Wilderness now has many meanings, and some of them have very little to do with the formal definition above. Wilderness has become a knot - a tangle of confused meanings. To some it is the original and best of planet Earth, to others it is just a 'Western construct'. This confusion has reached the stage where, despite the formal definitions of wilderness, some scholars can argue to protect large natural areas, yet be highly critical of the term 'wilderness'. Clearly, we are not comparing apples with apples here, and when one person says 'wilderness', others are hearing various meanings.

So how did we get into such a 'Gordian' knot around wilderness? There are at least five strands that make up the

wilderness knot. These are **philosophical, political, cultural, justice and exploitation**. Conservationists mainly speak of only the last strand, that of developers, loggers or miners seeking to exploit a wilderness. However, the confusion around wilderness is due to all five strands acting together. Given that four of the strands are rarely spoken of, it is these I will concentrate on, and take it as granted that we know there are forces out there seeking not to celebrate wilderness, but to 'make a buck' out of exploiting it.

You may wonder what 'philosophy' could possibly have to do with wilderness? 'Wilderness' occupies a unique position philosophically, in that it is disliked by both Modernism as well as some strands of Postmodernism. It is thus something of an orphan philosophically, with only Romantics, some 'Deep Ecologists' and environmentalists to champion its cause. Wilderness is also caught up in the debate around anthropocentrism and ecocentrism - or whether humans or the whole ecosystem are seen as being central to one's world view. Wilderness also gets involved in the debate about 'humans being part of nature'. Some confuse our evolutionary heritage (where we obviously are part of nature) with a question of ethics. Being 'natural' doesn't mean what we do is necessarily ethical or 'good', or even sensible. There is also the issue of a philosophical concern about creating a human/ nature split (= dualism) and whether this is somehow related to wilderness. Many writers (including Washington 2002) worry about this human/ nature dualism, but many disagree with postmodernist philosophers such as Cronin (1996) and

Callicott (2003) who seek to link this to 'wilderness', thereby confusing the term.

Perhaps the most critical philosophical issue around 'wilderness' is intrinsic value. For modernists, wilderness has no *intrinsic value*, it is just a resource for human use (Oelschlaeger 1991). However, postmodernism revolted against modernism, so one might hope it would *support* intrinsic value and the right of wilderness to exist for itself? This hope was expressed in Oelschlaeger's 1991 book 'The Idea of Wilderness' – yet sadly the opposite has occurred, with a number of postmodernists being highly critical of 'wilderness'. Postmodernism is in fact a 'geography' of different ideas that developed in opposition to Modernism. One key postmodernist criticism of wilderness seems to lie in the importance given to *language*, (e.g. Derrida 1966). A second source appears to be a fixation with dualisms (Butler 2002), and that all *dualisms* are inherently bad (Cronon 1996). A third source is the intense skepticism about the real, and the claim that we live not inside reality but inside our representations of it (Baudrillard 1987, Butler 2002). A fourth source is the suspicion of the influence of romanticism on the conservation movement and 'wilderness'(Cronon 1996). A fifth source is the suspicion that wilderness was itself a 'grand narrative' that needs to be broken down (Cronon 1996). A sixth source is the suggestion that wilderness ignores the history of native peoples, and is not only a Western but a *colonialist* concept (Langton 1996, Adams and Mulligan 2002).

Postmodernist Callicott (1996) argues that *'the concept of wilderness ... is obsolete'.*

Philosopher Arran Gare (1995) however is critical of aspects of postmodernism, stating that while it has demonstrated problems with Modernism, it has been powerless to oppose them. Gare (1995) and Butler (2002) list the problems with postmodernism as its opposition to any grand narratives, its failure to take action, its fixation on 'dualisms', its problems with reality, and its inability to understand science. Gare (1995) concludes that postmodernism is consumerist, actually stops opposition to mainstream modernist culture, and has a tendency to 'nihilistical decadence'. In the light of such criticisms, it should be noted that postmodernism (or the related post-structuralism) is the dominant theory espoused by many University faculties (e.g. social sciences, sociology, education, philosophy). Such faculties train many of the bureaucrats who will later work in government departments and make decisions on whether large natural areas (= wilderness) are protected. Many of these presumably take away a vague idea that the term 'wilderness' is somehow suspect.

However, there are other strands to the knot besides philosophy. The *political strand* also tends to isolate wilderness. Politics is generally seen as a spectrum between the Left (Socialism/ Marxism) and the Right (Capitalism). However, both these political ideologies are based on the idea that nature is just a 'resource' (Eckersley 1992). Marx himself

wrote of 'first nature' (or unimproved nature = wilderness) and 'second nature', which was nature given value by humans transforming it (Hay 2002). Soule (2002) has pointed out that:

> *'Extremists at both ends of the wilderness debate promulgate myths to further their political goals. Both the far right and far left hate wilderness on the grounds that it excludes human economic uses'.*

The Left/ Right spectrum is thus quite inadequate to understand wilderness – so wilderness has also become an orphan politically. There is also the *cultural strand*. It has been pointed out that:

> *'It is only a culture which has begun to register the negative consequences of its industrial achievements that will be inclined to return to the wilderness' Soper* (1996).

This is hardly surprising, as if you didn't clear and fragment most of the land, you would not need a name for those large natural areas that survive? Wilderness is a word of Anglo-Saxon/ Celtic origin (Robertson et al. 1992) and has no strict equivalent in other languages. There is no word for wilderness in Spanish (Rolston 2001). In Aboriginal cultures, there was no strictly equivalent word - however there were *sanctuaries* where there was no hunting or gathering (Rose 1996). Wilderness (where humans visit but do not remain permanently) has come into conflict with the Aboriginal idea of 'caring for country', where one needs to *live on country* to look after it. Wilderness is often lumped in with other 'Western' concepts as being exclusively a European idea. Callicott (2003) states that wilderness is an ethnocentric

concept, and that Europeans saw the New World as 'a pristine wilderness'. Part of the difficulty in this debate is *distinguishing* between the fact that the term 'wilderness' *does* derive from a European culture, and the reality of large natural areas (and how they should be managed). For example, Rolston (2001) notes:

> *But the trouble is that such critics have so focused on wild as a word taken up and glamorised in the term wilderness, that they can no longer see that wild and wilderness do have reference outside our culture'.*

Large, natural areas exist on all continents of the world, irrespective of the culture which lives there. Their existence is thus not culturally relative or a cultural creation - but their perception, and the values ascribed to them, are.

There is also a strand to the knot concerned with the tension between *social justice* (justice for oppressed human groups) and *environmental justice* (justice for the non-human world). Cronon (1996) appears to argue that we should allow development of wilderness to help the poor, or to create an economic base for dispossessed indigenous peoples. Langton (1996) states:

> *'It is difficult for an indigenous Australian to ignore the presumption and arrogance in the arguments of many environmentalists … It seems to us that they are usurping the Aboriginal right of stewardship of the land'.*

Soule (2002) has argued for a unity of both types of justice:

> *'People must have food and shelter, yes, but a world where material welfare is the only acceptable value will be a lost world, morally, spiritually and aesthetically …We need a broader compassion – an ethic that makes room for the 'others'. We should reject the common accusation that untrammelled wild places, free of human economic exploitation, are 'misanthropic' or 'racist".*

Exploitation is the last, most familiar strand. Logging, mining and grazing interests all have lobbyists seeking to exploit wilderness economically. To what extent are the criticisms of wilderness (and the confusion surrounding it) a product of such lobbying? It is difficult to document the extent of this influence, as it is easy to slip into conspiracy theories. However, the 'Wise Use' movement in the USA is a key critic of wilderness, and has strong links to the mining lobby. Luoma (1992) notes that the Wise Use movement has produced a book 'The Wise Use Agenda' which:

> *'demands, among other things, that all "decaying" forest (meaning old growth) be logged immediately and that all public lands, including wilderness areas and national parks, be opened to mining'.*

So what are the key criticisms leveled at 'wilderness' that help confuse people? Of twenty criticisms I have found in the literature, there are eight key ones:

1) Wilderness as a *dualism* – being an area more valued than other natural areas (e.g. Gomez-Pampa and Kaus 1992). Cronon

(1996) argues wilderness is a dualism that actually stops humans from discovering an ethical sustainable place in nature. Callicott (2003) also sees wilderness as a myth that separates man from nature. Neither explains just why wilderness must be a dualism rather than part of a 'naturalness spectrum', nor why identifying wilderness devalues other non-wilderness areas.

2) Wilderness as a 'human exclusion zone', even though no wilderness definition today actually excludes humans (just roads, settlements and mechanised transport). Rolston (2001) points out that:

> *'Neither the Wilderness Act nor meaningful wilderness designation requires that no humans have ever been present, only that any such peoples have left the lands "untrammeled" '.*

Soule (2002) explains that:

> *'With rare exceptions, such as in the former Soviet Union … wilderness areas do not exclude human uses. Fishing, bushwalking, and low impact recreation and camping are usually permitted in wilderness'.*

3) Wilderness ignores that most areas were (or are) the homelands of indigenous peoples (e.g. Langton 1996). Cronon (1996) says:

> *'the myth of the wilderness as 'virgin' uninhabited land had always been especially cruel when seen from the perspective of the Indians who had once called that land home'.*

This criticism in Australia also suggests wilderness is linked to the ethically bankrupt doctrine of terra nullius. Terra nullius means literally 'empty land', though legally it means land not owned by people (as they were deemed to be barbarians). Soule (2002) says 'the skeptics myth' is the idea that hunter-gatherer people perceive of wilderness as home - for humans today now farm, log and mine using an unprecedented and powerful technology. There are almost no societies today that live in the traditional way and do not use modern technology.

4) Wilderness is a 'concept', not a place (Lowenthal 1964, Nash 1979, Cronon 1996). This has strong links to the postmodernist skepticism of reality and its arguments for cultural relativism. Lowenthal (1964) states:

> *'The wilderness is not, in fact, a type of landscape, but a congeries of feelings about man and nature'.*

Interestingly, Nash (2001) has changed his position on this, and no longer makes this claim.

5) Wilderness is a '*human artifact*'. This is much discussed in the Australian context (e.g. Flannery 2003, Benson 2004). A major problem here is the distinction between *influencing* a landscape (as all indigenous peoples did) and *creating* it, which is anthropocentric as it places all the emphasis on *human* creation. If wilderness is *our* artifact, then some might believe we can do what we like with it?

6) Wilderness 'locks up' resources, and instead we should have *multiple use* (Cronon 1996). A related theme to this is that if

wilderness is not being 'used' then humans won't *value* it. This ignores not only our ability to extend our compassion to areas that we don't make use of, it ignores the *ecosystem services* of such areas (that do in fact benefit humans). It also totally ignores the artistic, spiritual and recreational uses wilderness already provides. 'Multiple use' can be many things - sustainable traditional hunting and gathering (a reasonable proposition) – as well as logging, mining and grazing.

7) Wilderness is *not* in fact essential for nature conservation (Gomez-Pampa and Kaus 1992, Recher 2003). This seems to discount the environmental impact of roads, and the biogeographic importance of large natural areas, in favour of protecting fragments. It also highlights the fact that species loss can still occur in wilderness, largely due to invasion by exotic species. In regard to the latter, clearly minimum impact management is necessary (as recognised by conservation groups).

8) Wilderness reflects the outdated idea of a 'balance of nature' based on the idea of equilibrium ecology. Callicott (2003) argues that conservationists try to 'freeze-frame' nature and that conservation is in defiance of 'nature's inherent dynamism'. Noss (2003) points out:

> *'No ecologist interprets wilderness in the static, pristine, climax sense that Callicott caricatures it … human generated changes must be constrained because nature has functional, historical and evolutionary limits'.*

A way forward?

The above strands and criticisms make up much of the wilderness knot. Certainly they have confused the term 'wilderness'. So what has my research with the Wilderness Network found out? What can we say about the wilderness knot, and how do we find a way forward? The first insight in fact just how difficult it can be to gain *meaningful dialogue* on an issue that arouses strong passions.

Clark (2004) has spoken of the need for 'profound attentiveness' and 'mutual respect' in dialogue. This may appear obvious - but faced with a nexus of social and environmental justice (where the term 'wilderness' has - wrongly I believe - been linked to the colonial doctrine of terra nullius), it is impossible to overestimate the difficulty of gaining meaningful dialogue. An important part of this dialogue is to recognise that the past history of wilderness campaigning in Australia may not have given *explicit* recognition to social justice and the rights of indigenous peoples. Conservationist Penny Figgis (2005) points out that this was largely an oversight, but one that has left an unfortunate legacy of division - given that conservationists and Aboriginal communities often *do* share many aims in common. The wilderness knot is thus very much about meaning and communication.

As part of my Ph.D. I did eleven in-depth interviews with selected scholars, Aboriginal people and activists, asking them about their understanding and experiences of the wilderness debate. This showed that much of the confusion is really a

smoke-screen, once one gets down to what people *really mean*. Of my eleven interviewees, *all* deplored the clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation over the last 215 years in Australia, and *all* valued large natural areas. However, some did not call these areas 'wilderness', rather preferring terms such as wild country, quiet country, core conservation lands, large flourishing areas, or **la**rge **na**tural **i**ntact area**s** (**= lanais**). I use 'lanai' as a useful shorthand for 'large natural intact areas', as it is the key meaning of 'wilderness' that wilderness advocates are actually on about. 'Lanai' is also much easier to say, and in addition is a Polynesian word for an 'outdoor living area', which seems appropriate. It is essential for us to recognise the widespread nature of an inadequate understanding of the *formal definitions* of wilderness (= a large natural area). There are many associations attached to wilderness, and it is generally some of these that are being criticised, rather than the value of large natural areas *themselves*. It became apparent that even when scholars *knew* the formal definition, they often tended to use their *own* definition of wilderness – for example mammologist Tim Flannery quotes the IUCN definition in his book 'The Future Eaters' (1994) yet in his 2005 interview defined wilderness as 'someone else's country' (which is another thing entirely).

The wilderness debate intersects centrally with larger debates around the land as a whole. One of these is whether humans are part of nature. Philosopher Val Plumwood (2004) points out that while humans are a part of nature, they are not an *indistinguishable* part. We are a self-aware species with a

powerful technology, and this distinguishes us from other species. One can acknowledge the *difference* of humans without subscribing to dualism (Rose, 2005). Similarly, one can see wilderness as the wild end of a *spectrum* of naturalness. Wilderness also runs contrary to the idea of human possessive *ownership* of the land, in contrast to custodianship or *stewardship*. There is also the issue of the history of wilderness literature, and the perceived emphasis on the *'absence of humans'* and on *'purity'* (pristinity), which has dominated some literature in the past (Plumwood 2004). This led to a view that 'wilderness' did not acknowledge indigenous history of occupation, and was somehow linked to terra nullius. The need for an *de-linking* of 'wilderness' from terra nullius is a key insight. In regard to the 'human artifact' debate, there are in fact at least two meanings operating here, one that humans literally did *create* the land, and the other that the *human history of the land* is created by generations of Aborigines, or that landscape is socially (not physically) constructed *in our minds*. The term 'cultural landscape' is much used in Australia, but many of those interviewed agreed that any landscape is a mixture of the cultural *and* the natural. One could call this a *geobiocultural* landscape?

Another insight is the understanding that both *wilderness* and *wild* are words that each have two key but very different meanings. For wilderness there is the older Biblical negative meaning of a 'wasteland', a place to be feared – versus the newer positive meaning of a 'lanai' that we value for itself. The 'wasteland' meaning *is* linked to varying extents with

terra nullius, to dualism, to human 6 exclusion, to the human artifact idea, and to resource exploitation. The newer idea of a 'lanai' is *not* really linked to any of these. Until we acknowledge these two key but very different meanings of wilderness, and point out what 'we' mean when we say 'wilderness' – then much of the confusion will remain. Hence my title here of 'celebrating wilderness as lanai'.

Similarly the word 'wild' has two key but differing meanings. On the one hand it means 'natural', as in *wild*life. However it also has the meaning of 'savage', and 'lawless'. It is this meaning that has been highlighted by Rose (2004). The meaning of 'wild' as *law*less has an impact on Aboriginal people who believe the land must be managed according to Aboriginal 'law'. Calling an area 'wild' can thus be understood to mean it has been degraded by modern technological society, and is no longer natural or 'flourishing'. We approach *meaning reversal* here in terms of these two meanings. This certainly adds to the confusion. Another insight is the recognition of the degree to which anthropocentrism permeates academia, which impinges on management, on the meaning of 'responsibility', and on belief in intrinsic value.

While much of the confusion may be apparent rather then real (when you get to what people really mean), there *are* some 'sticking points'. One is the issue of roads and settlements. In most wilderness areas, roads are closed and permanent settlements are banned. Yet in Aboriginal communities 'caring for country' has traditionally meant

living there. Some people seek to stretch the wilderness definition to include small sustainable indigenous settlements, while others suggest that such areas should be called by another name. Is 'peopled wilderness' a contradiction in terms?

The Wilderness Society in Australia makes use of the term 'Wild Country' in part to side-step this debate. This debate remains ongoing within IUCN and other conservation bodies. Sometimes it is an underlying issue that is not actually addressed, presumably due to the passions involved (as at the 8 th World Wilderness Congress 2005)? Another issue is 'the land needs people' debate. This goes *beyond* arguing there is great value in a deep human/ nature connection. In its extreme form it claims that the land 'dies' without its human custodians. This is clearly anthropocentric - but has received emphasis from recent history, where Aboriginal people have moved out of some lands, the fire regime has changed, and some native species have then gone extinct. What this actually shows is that certain species need a particular fire regime. It does not show that the land actually *needs* people to survive. For example, Aboriginal people died out on Kangaroo Island (South Australia) some 4,000 years ago, yet the land is still very much alive. Related to this idea are different meanings about what 'responsibility' means in regard to the land. This can range from an ecocentric idea of 'obligation to protect and care for' to an anthropocentric idea of a senior looking after a junior - where the junior is the land. Another insight is in regard to Aboriginal law - that this can *change* in response to

the changing world, so the 'law' is not always static. Perhaps the 'law' may need to evolve to protect wilderness – those areas of flourishing country that still remain?

Conservationist Rosemary Hill (2005) argues that Aboriginal communities *primarily* see the human history rather than the 'nature' in the land. It would not be surprising (given their long history with the land) if the human stories attached to the land gained special significance in indigenous societies, compared to conservationists, who mainly see natural values. In this regard the term '*storied wilderness*' raised by Cronon (2003) may be worth developing? It is essential to recognise the importance of the stories (or 'song-lines') that have been attached to lanais. Another related aspect is the question of what *management* and 'looking after' land really mean? There is one view that if land is managed it must be *controlled* by humans, while another view sees the land as independent, and not *under human control*, even if influenced by management. Nash (2001) points out that 'pastoralism is a form of control'. Plumwood (2004) refers to a stream of 'nature devaluing' in our society that seeks to overplay the contribution by humans, and eliminate or render invisible the contribution by nature. What is so urgently needed today is the opposite – a return to acknowledging nature's intrinsic value. 7

One interesting issue that emerged up was 'fundamentalism' versus evolution in regard to wilderness and Aboriginal communities. This fundamentalism may be both Christian or

from Aboriginal Dreamtime religion. Taken literally, they both espouse *creation* and refute evolution as 'just another story'. I believe 'evolution' acts to give humans perspective and humility, and reduces our human-centredness. To refute it tends to align one with the view that humans are *central*. The issue of Christian fundamentalism in Aboriginal communities was highlighted by Archer (2005) who was told that a fossil site (which contained rocks formed many millions of years 'before humans were a twinkle in Africa's eye') would contain *'the skulls of bad humans who were drowned in the Flood'.*

The above have been described here as 'sticking points'. However, they are not so extreme as to actually prevent conservationists and indigenous people *working together* for the protection of lanais. Certainly, in Australia today, where modernist resourcism is still considered the 'Australian way', the two groups have more in common than most other groups. In fact, given that respect for the land is *central* to both groups, it is a tragedy that the confusion around wilderness to some extent keeps them apart.

I use a 'mind-map' to grapple with the many issues involved in this knot. It soon became clear that many aspects related to the land in general, of which wilderness is a subset. Figure 1 shows a mindmap of eleven spectrums of thought involved in how we think about the land. This is not a diagram about 'dualisms', but of the middles in the spectrums of thought, nor is there necessarily a 'right' or 'wrong' side to the diagram. It is

the 'electron cloud' of positions in the middle that make up the tangled knot of meanings around how we see the land. I believe ***activism*** seeks to shift thinking more towards the top part of the diagram. Thus we want to acknowledge the natural in the land as well as the cultural, we want to have an ecocentric outlook (or ecological consciousness) that is based on intrinsic value - rather than human-centred anthropocentrism, we want to see humans as part of nature - but along with a responsibility to care for it, we want to see ourselves as custodians or stewards - not 'owners', we want to acknowledge the independence of the land rather than seek to control it, we want to see the land as sacred rather than just a resource for humans, and we want to decolonise our view of the land. 8

Figure 1 – Mind-map of the land

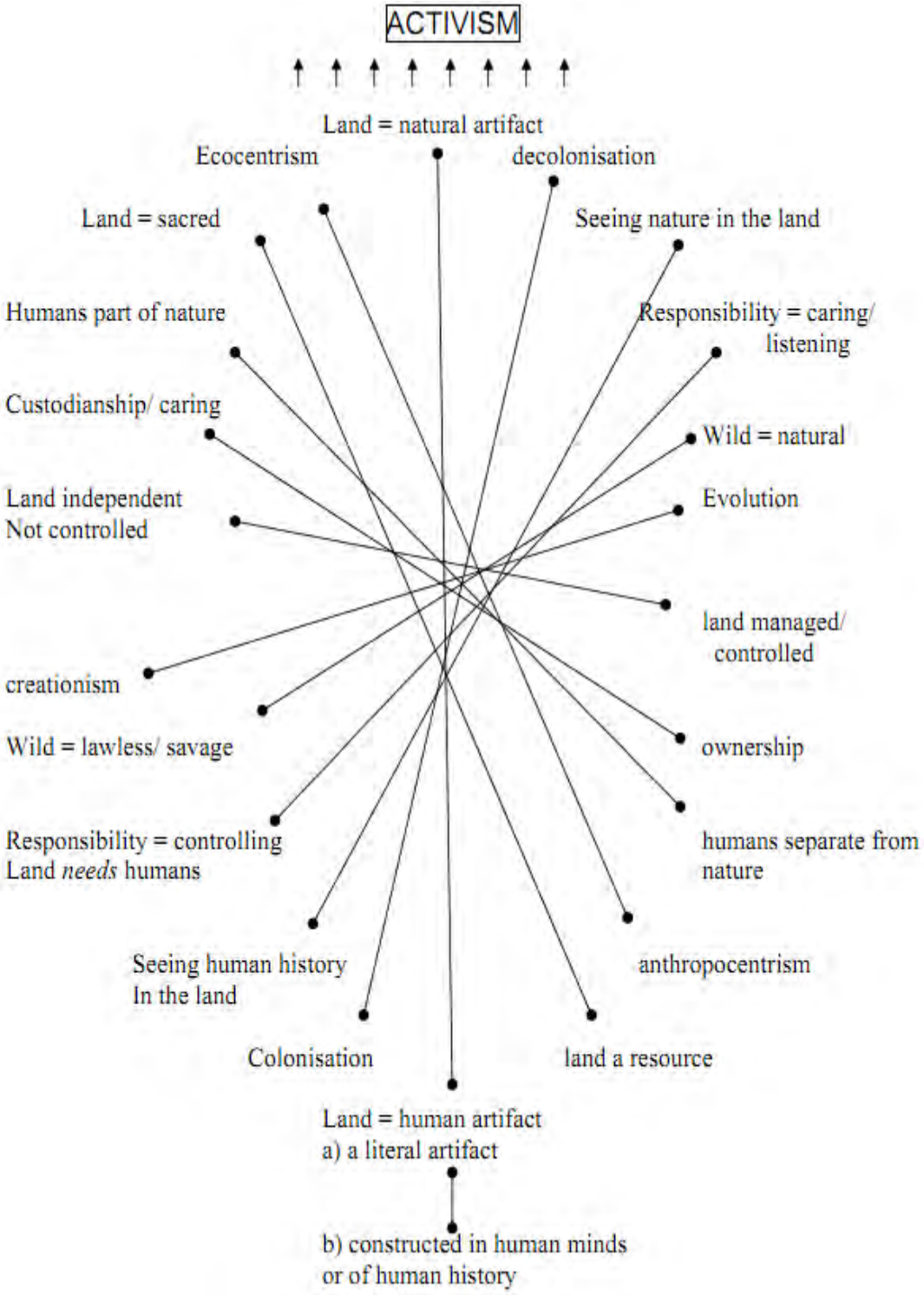

ACTIVISM
Land = natural artifact
Ecocentrism
decolonisation
Land = sacred
Seeing nature in the land
Humans part of nature
Responsibility = caring/ listening
Custodianship/ caring
Wild = natural
Land independent
Not controlled
Evolution
land managed/ controlled
creationism
Wild = lawless/ savage
ownership
Responsibility = controlling
Land needs humans
humans separate from nature
Seeing human history
In the land
anthropocentrism
Colonisation
land a resource
Land = human artifact
a) a literal artifact
b) constructed in human minds
or of human history

Figure 2 – Wilderness 'mind-map'

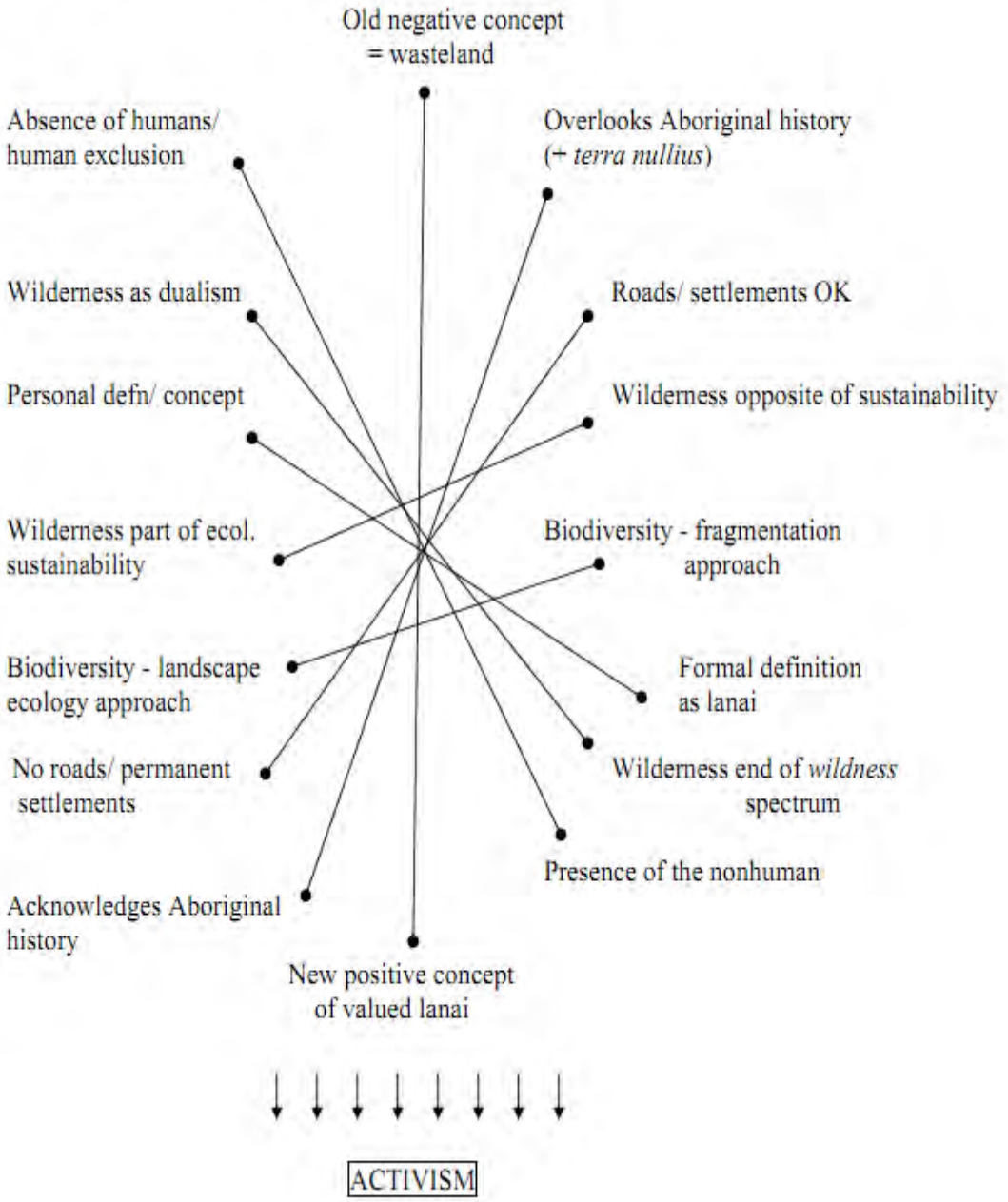
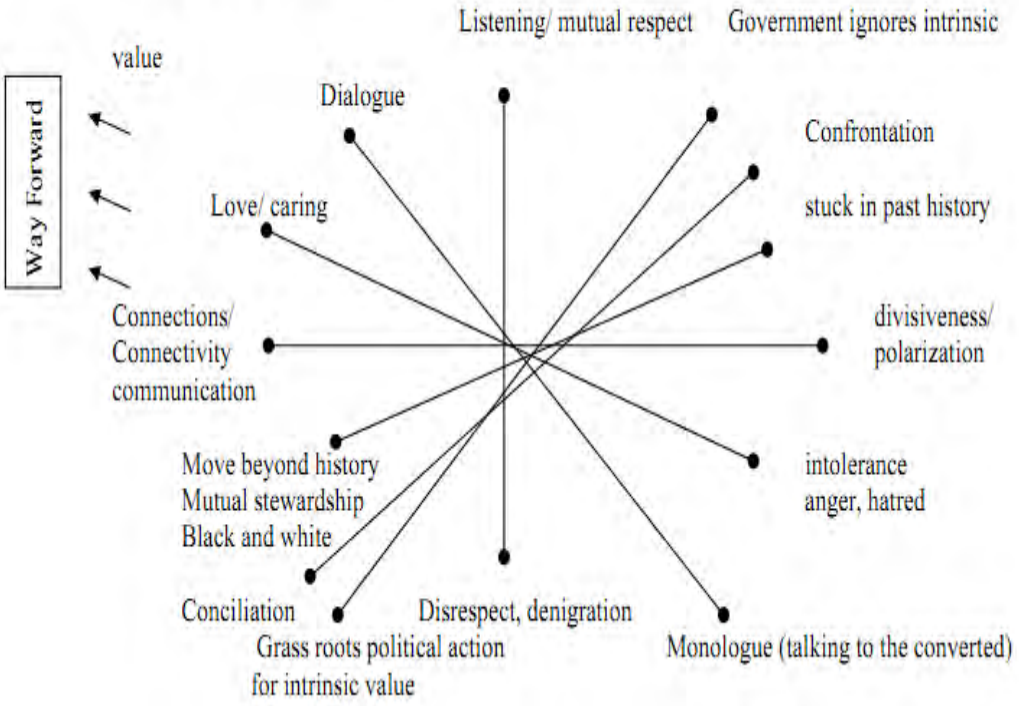


Figure 2 is a mind-map specifically for *wilderness* as a subset of the land. There are some eight spectrums of thought that relate to the wilderness knot here. In general it can be said that activism seeks to shift the mind-set towards the bottom part of the diagram, which uses the positive definition of wilderness, one that focuses on the presence of the non-human (or 'more-than-human' of Abram, 1996), sees wilderness as the end of a spectrum, sees wilderness as part of

a landscape ecology approach, does not contain roads or permanent settlements, acknowledges indigenous history and focuses on wilderness as being a lanai.

Figure 3 – The way forward for 'wilderness' as lanai?



So how do we unravel the wilderness knot and reduce the confusion – so we can continue to celebrate wilderness into the future? Figure 3 suggests a way forward to protect wilderness as lanai. Part of it lies in recognition of the *various associations* that have been attached to the word 'wilderness'. We need to focus on the *reality* of lanais themselves as formally defined, and steer away from popular and personal meanings. We need to avoid the politics of divisiveness and reach meaningful dialogue that disposes of unnecessary confusion, and to elucidate the *real* areas where there are sticking points, and how these can be resolved. We can seek to make connections or we can stay polarised, we can talk to

ourselves or have meaningful dialogue, we can stay stuck in past history or move beyond it to mutual stewardship, we can let the unresponsive political ideologies of government ignore nature's intrinsic value, or we can act at a grass-roots level for change. Rather then the postmodernist idea of deconstructing all 'grand narratives', perhaps we need to espouse a grand narrative of Earth protection and restoration, related to the 'Great Work' of Berry (1999), which in part includes protection of wilderness as lanai.

There is another issue however – that of *political naivety* in academia and in bureaucracy. Many academics are actually criticizing the associations attached to the word wilderness and *not* the formal definition and reality of lanais. This naivety is a problem, as criticisms deriving from it are having an effect in the real world in terms of the gazettal and management of wilderness. Few lanais in Australia today are being formally gazetted as 'wilderness areas'. This means they probably 11 won't be managed as wilderness either. Given the very real power of the exploitation lobby, such naivety plays into the hands of those who are seeking *any* means to continue the exploitation of wilderness. By all means let academia criticize some of the associations (rightly or wrongly) attached to wilderness - but every time this is done there is a need to re-state the urgency to protect lanais (= wilderness). The pressures to exploit wilderness have not gone away, rather they have increased. Many academics seem to forget this in the rush to make their particular contribution.

I would like to suggest that substantial confusion can be avoided - not by retreating from the use of the word 'wilderness', but by concentrating on the definition of wilderness as *large natural areas* (lanais). In fact we cannot have any meaningful discussion about 'wilderness' until we know what meaning of wilderness is being referred to. As well, confusion can be decreased by promoting the recognition that 'wilderness' is in fact a *tribute* to past traditional indigenous land practices (and not a disregard of indigenous history). It was the evolved wisdom of sustainable traditional cultures that retained and sustained lanais - which today many of us call 'wilderness'. Keeping wilderness is thus about honouring that traditional 'wisdom of the elders' (Knudtson and Suzuki 1992). The idea of shared 'custodianship' or *stewardship* of the land (rather than the possessive sense of ownership) is suggested as another way forward to disentangle the wilderness knot.

So when those of us who love 'wilderness' speak of it, we need to speak of wilderness as *lanai*. That is what we are celebrating, those large flourishing areas of natural bush that still remain in a continent where (in many states) the majority of native vegetation has been cleared or fragmented. When we celebrate 'wilderness', we are celebrating wilderness as *lanai* - we are not celebrating other meanings such as 'wasteland', 'terra nullius', 'human exclusion' or a 'purity' fixation. We are celebrating that we still live in a place that has large natural areas remaining – places that we respect and honour and love. Let us celebrate that we also live in a

country where we can still listen to and respect each other, and realise that while I might call a lanai 'wilderness', somebody else might want to call it something else – perhaps ‘Wild Country’ or ‘quiet country’. Let us cut through the confusion to the reality of lanais and their value to us all. Through respectful dialogue we can see that while we might call it different things, it is something that we love and value, and that we must work together to protect it into the future. When we have disposed of the confusion and tangled meanings - so that we can work together to protect lanais – then we can truly celebrate!

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Wilderness and its inspiration

Wilderness and its inspiration (A recording of Dr Brown's talk, which was given without a prepared speech or notes, has been transcribed by the Conference organisers for the proceedings. We apologise for any inadvertent errors of interpretation.) by Bob Brown

Wilderness is arguably the world's fastest disappearing non-renewable resource. Wilderness is inspirational. It can be said that there is no inspiration without wilderness. As the saying goes, "It's not about how many breaths you take; it's about how many times your breath is taken". This saying always reminds me that the greatest source of inspiration is the wild planet itself. Whilst taking David Suzuki, now 70, from Hobart to North-Western Tasmania via the Russell Falls, we brought up the topic of the recent 70th anniversary of the death of the last recorded Tasmanian Tiger. In what might be the words of

the Dalai Lama, 'perhaps the Tiger didn't die: Suzuki was born at the same time and he became an eco-Tiger around the world'.

We spoke about other basic things that don't get talked about much in the rush of television, advertising, making money and greed. I want to reiterate a story from David that applies to wilderness and the interconnectedness of everything - about the Great Forests of British Columbia, which is equivalent to the Tasmanian Forests in many ways. It has the same destructive forces, and is another great temperate wilderness at stake.

The Great Forests of the western coast of British Columbia have the greatest mass of living material per acre anywhere on the planet, and yet they're in depauperate soils. Coming down off the rocks, there's a small coastal plain, the ocean and then a huge forest. For a forest to exist there needs to be nitrogen. Terrestrial nitrogen, N14, is in low quantities at this location. How is it that this massive forest exists?

When they drill tree cores to analyse the core in a laboratory, they find that these trees are not built on terrestrial nitrogen, N14, but on marine nitrogen N15. Why is this so? The salmon swim up the rivers of British Columbia, and into the rivers wade the grizzly bears to eat the salmon every year. Bears love to eat on their own: the bears wander about 150 metres into the forest, and sit to eat the head and guts from the salmon.

They leave the rest on the ground to return to the river in search of more salmon.

Flies are attracted to the salmon left by the bears and next day there are a pile of maggots. Migratory birds that come in from Mexico through to Alaska feed on the maggots and flies that have developed from the maggots. They then take the food, ingested, off to Alaska.

Many things contribute to this cycle amongst the bears creating waste throughout the forest, such as worms, for example. Putting it simply, it is the ocean supplying the crucial ingredient to the location of the biggest weight of forest concentrated anywhere on the planet.

Logging of the headwaters of the rivers sends silt to the spawning places of the salmon. Salmon numbers have collapsed. This fantastic, intricate, interrelated ecosystem is being destroyed. There is a ministry for fisheries; there's a ministry for forests; for tourism; oceans; the environment; and for native people. None of these government departments see it as any of their business to be interrelating with the others. Therefore, this extraordinarily complex network is compartmentalised; a system which we only understand at the edge, and so the forest is being destroyed. This is an inspiring story: through examination of the unexpected, it reveals the abilities of wilderness, and indeed the limits of these abilities to regenerate.

Our minds are conditioned toward immediate self-interest in this age of materialism. What we do know is that not only the evolution or creation of ourselves is dependent on wilderness, but our wellbeing is also dependent on this wild planet. I have reduced this argument, for the sake of simplicity, to consideration of the curl on our ear. Our ears are designed to pick up the slightest sounds of the forest floor, not for listening to TV. Yesterday I noticed this design has been made redundant: as David Suzuki and I were walking to Russell Falls, a young woman was walking toward us on the track. She had earphones stuck in her ears. Presumably she didn't want to hear the native birds that were out in full spring song. She had forgone the need for an external ear altogether. She was powering her way on the walk, listening to some sort of thumping music to remove her brain from the natural environment. Yet her forbears going back thousands of generations used this organ to great advantage.

Those of you who saw the recent Attenborough series on TV may have observed that it was totally based on the exploiting the inspiration of wilderness. There were fabulous pictures of mountain ranges and plunging waterfalls and extraordinary wildlife on the screen. In a way, it seemed like it was all okay. It's fantastic. There it is! Maybe it's not so entertaining for us to understand this greatest resource, if we're simply anthropocentric about it, for human inspiration and uplift and excitement and beauty and adventure, is being eroded much faster than when the first conference was held in 1977.

We thought it was bad then; how rapidly the world is changing!

I read a report during the week that 100 million Chinese citizens will travel overseas for their holidays this year alone. We all do it, and they have every right to do it as well. As soon as I heard that figure, I thought of the great problem and impacts upon wilderness. The pressure of human visitation can destroy the very essence of wilderness which involves remoteness, pristine-ness and silence. Yet perhaps we can get silence from elsewhere? Somebody went into the wild Styx forest of Tasmania and measured the decibels and then went into a plantation, growing under the Tasmanian sustainable forestry program, and found that the noise level fell to almost zero.

It is common sense that we can't recreate wilderness; the essence we bond with is not reproducible, but David Attenborough's program brings it into our living room. The audience for this program was extraordinary – the ABC rated higher than some of the commercial stations. In some ways, it's a very worrying cheat, because it is saying, 'It's alright everybody, the wild country, the spectacle, here it is', and then go pour another red and switch over to another program. In fact, what we are watching is archival footage for a century down the line if humanity is still around at that time. A fortnight ago, reported in the Guardian weekly, Stephen Hawking asked this question on his blog: "Do you think humanity will still be around in 100 years?" He received 3500

responses from optimistic through to totally pessimistic about humanity's ability to survive the next 100 years. The responses indicate what I feel - that we are at a tipping point where we are unleashing these powers of nature, or at least we've got a hold of them. These forces of potential destruction that we have put built into everything from splitting the atom, to fiddling with genes, and into nanotechnology, for example, seem awesome indeed. At the end of all this, Stephen put up what he thought. He began by saying, "I don't know... but have you noticed we haven't been visited by any aliens?" He has a well thought-out theory that evolution on Earth would be roughly convergent with the evolution on planet Zot out there in some other galaxy. He argues that when you get to our situation in evolution, where intelligence comes to a point in finding out what this all about, and therefore getting a hold of the ability to change it, the whole thing implodes. There are no aliens because whatever parallels with humanity out there, civilisations simply get to our stage and don't last the next 100 years.

Now that might make some of us optimistic; but it is a thought. When I look across the Senate I find examples of the theory. We have Senator Abetz the Minister for Forest and Conservation, well isn't that a combination? Most people live a lie in one way or another but why put it into your title! But there it is. What Hawking says is that we are in a period where we have an extraordinary ability to take from the whole living fabric of the planet and convert it to exciting science for

ourselves. Where though, is the ethic, where is the prudence, where is the probity that goes with that?

I am in a political party, and according to polls, 80% of people support embryonic stem cell experimentation. Last time it was in the Parliament a few years ago, my colleague Kerry voted yes and I voted no. I've talked to scientists in the past few weeks, including those on the Prime Ministerial Board, and they said to me: 'you voted for abortion rights for women, and how can you be worried about embryonic stem cell experimentation?' I think the two issues are completely different. I'm like Hawking, I'm extraordinarily worried about humanity's ability to tamper with the human genome and to utilise it in the name of fixing things like Parkinson's disease for example, for which I may very well have the gene myself. The fact that Ronald Reagan had Parkinson's and might have been fixed had there been stem cell experimentation - I don't necessarily put on the positive side of the ledger in my deliberation...I'm still thinking about it.

You can see potential to fix people who have drawn the short straw in life. That's been the case with all in human society and all creatures on the planet. What about the other side of it? We have passed a law saying that you can't clone human beings. Do you know what came out of my discussion with scientists? The scientists ask, 'What's the difference between cloning and identical twins?' When it comes down to it, the scientists are not too worried about cloning human beings, which is quite extraordinary. When we start changing our

diversity, because we think we know better than Mother Nature about what our gene diversity can be, we take ourselves in a very different direction. We want better intelligence, more muscles, better curves, longer life, or to run faster. But look at Stephen Hawking: we'll have to do something to fiddle the genes so that we get Stephen out of the wheelchair. Really are we, as a society, in a situation that we should be involved in such engineering? I suspect not. I suspect we're a long, long way from it, and it worries me greatly.

I go back to wilderness as the reference point. Here is the ultimate laboratory. Wilderness is the place from which all life on the planet as we know it came, and which found itself in a balance with the planet, with very slow turnover and change. I think if we want to interfere and accelerate in that process, we're in real trouble. What we have done is accelerate the destruction of the very thing that gives us life and gives us inspiration.

One of the great joys of being a 'Green' politician, or an environmental activist or author, or scientist, is that being a defender of wilderness is a reciprocal business. I find that I cannot work in the Senate for too long if I haven't been out in the bush for a night, or for a stroll at the beach or a sit by the river. There is an interchange between us and nature, a magic which is quite simply priceless. As Olegas Truchanas pointed out, it has led to great symphonies, great poetry, and great works of art. It does lead to life on Earth, and indeed to TV

ratings going up, because it is so much a part of who we are. The classic, easy to say thing is that we put pictures of wilderness up on our walls, not pictures of bulldozers and chainsaws. You could write a book on why that is the case and you still couldn't come down to it: the answer is wilderness.

We put window boxes of flowers in front of our houses in cities. We don't put wrecked cars, or remnants of washing machines or even computer parts. Why is that? It's because besides our physical make-up: there this extraordinary bond in us.

I heard a discussion on souls and minds during the week: someone from Melbourne was saying again that we're only a receptacle and a response box. The ole' skin and box theory. Well I've spent a frightening couple of years thinking that had to be true, once upon a time. I now believe that individually and collectively there is more to it than that, and wilderness is right in the centre of that debate: The wild planet. "What would the world be, once bereft of wet and of wilderness?", as Gerard Manley Hopkins had it.

Are we doing anything other than marking time? People understand why wilderness systems are a priority, and why it's important to humanity, not only to us as individuals but to humanity's future. How can we look forward to a future in which all of human-kind has no reference point factor to the cradle of our origins, to our own being? We can't do that; we can't leave future generations bereft of that reference.

For example, in Tasmania, I hosted Mark Latham's visit to the Styx Forest in 2004. Mr Latham had breakfast the day before with Premier Paul Lennon and the head of Gunns, John Gay. That breakfast changed him - they'd got to him. Mr Latham was really worried about what he was committed to; the national press were waiting as we were headed out to the Styx. The change from when I'd seen him in Parliament House and said, 'Come on down to the Styx' was extraordinary. It was as if he was ill.

We stood under Gandalf's Staff, 84.5 metres high and therefore able to be cut. A tree 85 metres is safe; 84.5m and it's woodchips to Japan under the Tasmanian logging system. We stood under this gargantuan tree. Mark Latham has a look at it and is taken around it, and journalists waiting there ask, "Mr Latham what do you think of this tree?" He turned and said, "It's a big tree". We walked a few hundred metres through the lush rainforest understorey with Dixonia Antarctica on that beautiful morning to the Cave Tree. It's another extraordinary tree. You could fit a church choir or a whole football team inside the base of this tree. There have been bats and glow-worms living in the tree. We sat in the tree for while, with the media contingent waiting outside. When he came out, this future Prime Minister of Australia, who had been given his redirection the day before by the exploiters of wilderness, was asked by the media, "Well what do you thing of this tree Mr Latham"? And he said, 'It's a big tree with a hole in it". What

does this mean? Well, it means that now that Mark Latham visited this forest, those 20-60 hectares of forest is now safe.

John Howard also has no idea about wilderness. Like many others, he is probably more frightened of it than knowledgeable about it, but he understood, particularly with Mark Latham talking about it and having been there, and their polling showed, that forests had political traction. So on the North Coast of NSW he said, "I'm going to save Tasmania's old growth forests". Now that turned out to be a fib after the election: it was something like fifty thousand hectares.

But, the result of the politics in the run to that election is that the combination of what people in this country really think – those 84% of people who want Tasmanian old growth forests to be protected – resulted in the protection of the largest temperate rainforest in Australia, the Tarkine Wilderness. They can still mine in the area, it isn't totally safe, but it was protected from the anticipated start of the logging of the deep red Myrtles and the erosion of the rainforest. I flew over it the other day with a wealthy Sydney resident who bought five very vital blocks of Crown lease land in a remnant natural corridor between the Tarkine Wilderness and Cradle Mountain. You fly over miles and miles of industrial plantation forestry and destroyed native forest, including a huge amount of rainforest, and of course, the wildlife with it.

So at the end of that, in 2005, an area wilderness has been effectively protected because of Mark Latham's visit. Although

the campaigns of the conservation organisations and locals are extremely important, the Tarkine was saved because people everywhere understand that they don't want nature to be destroyed. They may know little about this area, but they are inspired by it. It's just wonderful to go into the Tarkine now. This morning's Mercury reports that the local council is looking at a program for capitalising on the Tarkine and its wilderness. The local newspaper, the Burnie Advocate, which is not pro-conservation, is promoting studies to enable it to become part of the Tasmanian World Heritage Area. In Tasmania, the mindset is going the way of wilderness. This is against a big conglomerate like Gunns Ltd that believes Tasmania has too many protected species, and that it's okay to kill off a few more of them.

I was at the airport one time and John Gay's wife came up to scold me about 'bad mouthing' her husband in public and the distress this caused. I said to her, "I'd like you to come out and see a Tasmanian community where people have had their lifestyle degraded, their beautiful views destroyed, and are frightened about their kids getting on school buses because the log trucks are thundering by. Their water has been contaminated, their real-estate values are down. They are horrified and their whole lives are being degraded by the activities of your husband and his company". She turned and walked away. John Gay was actually sitting right across the room watching all of this. I don't know why he didn't come and speak to me himself.

I tell this story because there is this extraordinary anger and bitterness that comes into such people: just after the state elections Mrs Gay is fulminating against the 'green trouble makers' because somebody pulled her up in the street and said, "You're a tree killer". Someone else left a dead possum on the lawn. I'm always rung up about these things and I make clear that I don't agree with these pranks. Mrs Gay appeared in the newspaper over this story with a fur collar on - a dead animal around her neck. Yet she was complaining about the one on her lawn. That's the beauty of it, and the inspiration of wilderness. Those that are fighting for wilderness, end up with a better sense of humour in life than those who are destroying it.

This week, four new measures came into parliament. One was to increase expenditure for Parliamentary Members' printing allowance to $13 million so that on average, 25 glossy pieces of paper can be placed in your letterbox wherever you are in Australia in the next 12 months by government members. A 7% hike in pay for Parliamentarians when the rest of the populace is on a 3% increase in salary and wages. Superannuation top-up going from 9% to 15% for the new MPs and old MPs remain on 69%, although the rest of the population is on 9%. $30,000 severance pay if you get disendorsed by your party or if you fail at an election. This is just after they passed legislation essentially saying that 'if you get sacked, too bad'. Unfair dismissals are part of the new nature of this country's workplaces.

Christine Milne brought in a motion during the week to recognise the 70th anniversary of the death of the last Tasmanian Tiger and the need to protect biodiversity in this country. The government voted against that - went for the first four, but voted against Milne's motion. It shows the power of the money over the power of the wilds, at the moment. The question is, do we get disheartened about this? Not as far as I'm concerned.

I just spent a day talking with David Suzuki, I left him at Mole Creek where he's going to help in the wilderness by lifting some feral fish out of the Mersey River to help in its recovery. Going back to David's story about the bear, that story about British-Columbia and our situation in Australia: there are extraordinary pressures on the planet, but there are wins that occur as well. I think there are going to be more wins.

We will see a rise again of a new politic in this century and it will be a global politic. The question this century is going to be between those that are defending the globe, and those who are marauding the globe. There is going to be a new political division. It comes down to Steven Hawking's question: Are we going to have restraint or are we going to rip into it and end up like those aliens who never come? We're all on the side of restraint. It's a beautiful place to be in. This planet is extraordinarily inspiring.

It's a concept to be passing that on to human beings. Those of us who are defending wilderness are defending the survival of

humanity. John Howard and company would argue that they're the people who are on the side of advancing society. They're not. They're the aliens. We're the Earth-lovers. We are the people that recognise this planet as being our mother who has to be looked after.

Thank you.

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