
Tasmanian Wilderness (Australia)

No 181quiues

1 Basic data

State Party

Australia

Name of property

Tasmanian Wilderness

Location

State of Tasmania

Inscription

1989

Brief description

In a region that has been subjected to severe glaciation, these parks and reserves, with their steep gorges, covering an area of over 1 million ha, constitute one of the last expanses of temperate rainforest in the world. Remains found in limestone caves in the interior attest to the human occupation of the area from the Pleistocene to the end of the Ice Age and near the coast there is evidence of more recent pre-European settlements.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

6 March 2013

2 Issues raised

Background

In 1982 and 1989, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a mixed property under cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi), and under all four natural criteria (vii), (viii), (ix) and (x). In 1989 there was an extension of the property, mainly to the north and east. The property then covered 1.38 million hectares, or 20% of the State of Tasmania. There is no buffer zone.

In 2010, an extension to the property covering 21 small areas around the eastern and southern boundaries that are part of national parks or state reserves was approved by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session (Brasília, 2010) (Decision 34 COM 8B.46). At the same time the Committee welcomed the intention of the State Party to add the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight to the property when mining licenses have expired, and requested the State Party to ensure that the protection and management of the property within its modified boundaries takes account of past decisions of the World Heritage Committee regarding the state of conservation of the existing

property, including the management of threats in the areas adjoining its boundaries.

In its State of Conservation report 2011, the State Party advised that the 21 areas of national park and state reserve approved for addition to the property by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010 are now incorporated in the World Heritage Area and are covered by the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan (TWWHAMP). National environmental law protects the values of the World Heritage property from threats originating both inside and outside its modified boundaries.

In February 2012, the State Party submitted an extension to the property to include the Southwest Conservation Area south of Melaleuca to Cox Bight, an area of 3,810 hectares surrounded by the existing property on all sides except the south, where its boundary is the sea, thus completing the proposal for extension put forward in 2010.

The area proposed for addition to the property included cultural sites which complement those already within the property. It included coastal and other sites of importance to the Aboriginal community as well as the Needwonnee cultural walk, a joint project between the Aboriginal community and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.

The World Heritage Committee at its 36th session (St Petersburg, 2012) approved this minor boundary modification and adopted the following decision:

Decision: 36 COM 8B.45

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-12/36.COM/8B.Add, WHC-12/36.COM/INF.8B1.Add and WHC-12/36.COM/INF.8B2,*
2. *Recalling Decision 34 COM 8B.46;*
3. *Approves the minor modification of the boundaries of the property Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia, in line with the proposals of the State Party, and as previously considered by the World Heritage Committee;*
4. *Reiterates its recommendation that the State Party consider further minor modifications to the boundaries of the property, considering the past decisions of the World Heritage Committee on boundaries in relation to the natural and cultural values.*

Modification

The proposed modification submitted on 1st February 2013 is a response to the World Heritage Committee decision 36 COM 8B.45.

The proposed addition to the property includes areas along the northern and eastern boundary, comprising eucalypt forest, associated rainforest, and a range of

landforms including karst and glacial features, as well as both alpine and sub-alpine environments.

The currently registered property is 1 412 183 hectares in extent; the extension of the property would add between 170 000 and 174 000 hectares.

The purpose of the modification is to serve better identification of the natural attributes of the property and enhance protection of its Outstanding Universal value. However, the modification is submitted on the basis of natural values only.

It does not address cultural values. No information has been provided by the State Party as to the inclusion within these areas of cultural attributes of Aboriginal importance, in relation to the Outstanding Universal Value of the existing property, nor have the boundaries been justified in relation to cultural attributes.

The State Party acknowledges that “the cultural values require further study and consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community”.

The extended property will be managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and its existing management systems and processes. The management plan will be reviewed in 2015, and formally amended to reflect the extended boundaries. There is no mention of how cultural attributes will be managed.

The property is protected under national legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. There is no indication as to how cultural heritage is protected.

ICOMOS understands that the proposed extension covers a forest area which contain well-documented Aboriginal heritage places, including caves with occupation deposits and painted art dating to the Pleistocene era, and rock shelters with evidence of Holocene occupation of the highlands of Tasmania that might complement and strengthen the Outstanding Universal Value of the existing TWWHA. ICOMOS is concerned that there is potential for any continued logging to impact on cultural elements in the absence of the appropriate study, identification, location and protection of cultural heritage.

At its 36th session the Committee encouraged the State Party to consider further minor modifications to the boundaries of the property in relation to natural and cultural values. This proposal only addresses natural values.

Furthermore although the State Party in 2010 gave a commitment to increase resources for cultural heritage management, the current request does not provide evidence as to how cultural values might be protected and managed.

The current minor boundary modification is of considerable size and within the various areas there appear to be significant cultural attributes that relate to those in other parts of the property. ICOMOS does not consider that it would be appropriate to add these areas to this mixed property without an understanding of the cultural attributes that they contain or an evaluation as to how these might be considered to support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The State Party suggests that the omission of information on cultural values can be remedied by a State of Conservation report to the Committee at its 39th session. ICOMOS does not consider that the evaluation of a minor boundary modification can be considered through the State of Conservation process or that the assessment of value can be undertaken retrospectively.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the proposed minor modification to the boundary of Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- Undertake further study and consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in order to provide more detailed information on the cultural value of the additional areas and how these relate to the Outstanding Universal Value of the existing property;
- Provide detailed information on the legal provisions for the protection of cultural heritage in the extended property;
- Provide detailed information on the management arrangements for cultural heritage and in particular for the control of access to archaeological sites and sites of cultural significance.