



Australian Government
Director of National Parks



Australian
Marine Parks

Director of National Parks' response to the South-east evaluation

I welcome this independent evaluation of the 2013-2023 South-east Marine Parks Network Management Plan. I accept the findings and embrace this opportunity to reflect on and improve our management of these extraordinary marine parks.

The South-east Marine Parks Network was the first network of Australian Marine Parks established to protect Australia's oceans whilst allowing for sustainable use. The Network includes 14 marine parks and covers 388,464 square kilometres of unique and diverse ocean features. The Network was proclaimed in 2007 and has been governed under this Management Plan since 2013. This evaluation has come at an important stage as we consider how to best shape the future management of the Network.

The evaluation acknowledges the great outcomes achieved over the life of the ten-year plan, and that the management of the South-east Network is a fulcrum for innovative conservation management activity and in-depth research in an area of previously inadequate knowledge. These combine to generate profound scientific energy and new understanding of the unique South-east marine region.

Significant partnerships have been forged with the marine science community and compliance agencies, establishing a strong foundation for both an enduring and evolving management approach.

I acknowledge the areas identified for improvement, including our regulatory approval system. I'm pleased to confirm we are already taking steps to improve our regulatory approvals IT systems across all of Parks Australia.

The evaluation also identified the need to work collaboratively with First Nations people, to ensure Indigenous engagement actions are realistic and aligned to the context of the South-east region. Parks Australia continues to work with First Nations People, across both our iconic jointly managed parks and our marine parks, to build better ways to ensure Cultural knowledge is integrated in planning and management. Traditional Owners have been sustainably using and managing their Sea Country, in areas now included within Australian Marine Parks, for thousands of years.

I am committed to working in partnership with First Nations people, local communities, research institutions and industry groups to ensure that goals in the next management plan for the Network are aspirational yet achievable.

The evaluation of the management plan is the first step in a broader review process that will culminate in a new management plan to replace the current one. The evaluation reports are published at the start of the first of two rounds of public consultation, to inform public comments and the drafting of a new management plan. The reports include several recommendations on how future plans might need to be structured to support robust and ongoing assessment of our successes and weaknesses. Though the current plan expires on 30 June 2023, the Network will continue to be managed under existing arrangements until a new plan is finalised.

I look forward to working closely with our partners and interested stakeholders in the development of a new management plan for the South-east Marine Parks Network, including on the intended expansion of the Macquarie Island Marine Park. I am committed to building on the strong foundation established in the first ten years of active management to ensure the protection and ecologically sustainable use of these unique areas.

Jody Swirepik
Director of National Parks

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