



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Ricky Archer
Director of National Parks

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for the Environment and Water
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Minister.plibersek@dcceew.gov.au

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter dated 28 October 2024, setting out your expectations for the Director of National Parks (the Director) delivery of environmental regulatory functions.

The enclosed Statement of Intent advises the approach that I will take to deliver against these expectations. I am taking steps to align regulatory efforts of conserving, protecting and sustainably managing Australian's National Parks estate to the *Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business*.

I will continue to engage with you to ensure that you are kept apprised of issues that impact the delivery of regulatory outcomes.

I thank you for the opportunity to set out the Director's Statement of Intent for environmental regulatory functions within your portfolio.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Archer'.

Ricky Archer

10 February 2025

Regulatory Statement of Intent – Director of National Parks

Issued by Director of National Parks, Ricky Archer, on 10 February 2025

Regulatory Statement of Intent

This Statement of Intent outlines actions and approaches the Director of National Parks (the Director) will take in response to the Ministerial Statement of Expectations covering regulatory functions administered by the Director and Parks Australia to achieve the government’s objectives for Commonwealth reserves.

Overview

The Director is committed to using its regulatory functions and effective governance to support the conservation and management of Commonwealth terrestrial and marine protected area estates.

The Director will make regulatory decisions consistent with protecting the environment, enabling traditional use of land, ocean and waterways, and maintaining public access to Commonwealth National Parks in a sustainable way that allows the cultural, social and economic benefits for Traditional Owners.

The Director is supported by Parks Australia, a division of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the Department). Parks Australia continues its journey to strengthen relationships and work in genuine, respectful partnership with Traditional Owners and the communities in which it works.

The Director has responsibility for Commonwealth reserves which include six national parks, the Australian National Botanic Gardens and 60 Australian Marine Parks. These are either directly or jointly managed by the Director, including several sites that overlap fully or partly with World Heritage properties. Of the marine parks, the Director has delegated all powers and functions in relation to the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve to the Department’s Australian Antarctic Division. Australian Marine Parks are managed by the Director and cover 43 per cent of Australian waters.

A new compact with Traditional Owners based on trust

The Director is committed to improving relationships with Traditional Owners of the Indigenous lands where Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa and Booderee National Parks are located, including by strengthening joint management and providing pathways for greater Traditional Owner control over the management of their Country. The Director is also committed to continuing to strengthen relationships with the Traditional Owners of Sea Country that occur within Australian Marine Parks. The Director will uphold the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform Three, *Transforming Government Organisations*, including by improving the way joint management is supported and through legislative reform processes.

Actions

- Working with Land Councils and Traditional Owners throughout lease negotiation processes to ensure they can deliver social, cultural and economic benefits, in line with Traditional Owner aspirations.
- Undertaking a co-designed legislative reform process, together with Land Councils and Traditional Owners, for the future of joint management, including enabling legislation and governance settings, to support the aspirations of Traditional Owners in the management of their lands.
- Continuing progress towards the long-held goal of Mirarr Traditional Owners for the Jabiluka Mineral Lease area to be incorporated into Kakadu National Park.
- Collaborating with Boards of Management and engage in public consultation to develop new 10-year management plans for Booderee and Kakadu National Parks in line with obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as well as hosting an event to celebrate 40 years since the hand back in Uluru.
- Continuing to work with the Traditional Owners of Sea Country within Australian Marine Parks, including through building opportunities for greater collaborative management.
- Supporting the dedication of Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) as an expression of Traditional Owner led management of IPAs.

Contribution to a Nature Positive Australia on land and in the ocean

The Director will continue to deliver on commitments and programs that contribute to a Nature Positive Australia. Key supportive initiatives include the IPA Program, conservation and taxonomic research at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, supporting recovery of species, especially those in priority places which overlay Commonwealth reserves, management plans for the South-East Marine Park Network, Indian Ocean Territories Marine and Island Parks, and the upcoming statutory review of the management arrangements for 44 of the 60 Australian Marine Parks. The Director will ensure science and research are foundational elements in Nature Positive efforts.

Actions:

- Supporting the existing 89 dedicated IPAs. Supporting the 32 consultation IPA projects to achieve dedication, which will add a further 3.5% of Australia's landmass to the National Reserve System. The IPA program will be improved through the application of a consistent funding model across all projects, providing environmental expertise to IPA managers and strengthening delivery and monitoring of the program.
- Delivering invasive species control including cat eradication and yellow crazy ant control programs at Christmas Island National Park, rodent control and assisted nesting to support the recovery of the endangered Norfolk Island green parrot at Norfolk Island National Park and buffalo and pig control at Kakadu National Park.
- Building on the Australian National Botanic Garden's plant conservation collection, including in the National Seed Bank, and expanding it into genetic diversity research to provide stock needed for endangered species recovery programs.

- Continuing involvement in the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research collaborative venture to inform conservation and sustainable management and use of Australian vegetation.
- Commencing work towards the scheduled 2028 review of management arrangements for 44 Australian Marine Parks through consolidation of relevant data and scientific knowledge and engagement with key partners and stakeholders including Traditional Owners, Indigenous Ranger groups with connections to Sea Country, Australian Marine Park Advisory Committees, and other marine park users.
- Prioritising the quality and effective management of Australian Marine Parks through the 2028 review and reinforcing Australia’s leadership role in marine protection under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Regulator performance best practice

The Director will continue to ensure that Parks Australia’s regulatory functions are delivered as intended using robust and transparent assurance frameworks and clear policy objectives.

Particular attention will be paid to:

- Working with Traditional Owners and First Nations communities to ensure effective regulatory arrangements, including appropriate enforcement mechanisms for managing non-compliance in Commonwealth Reserves.
- Maintaining close relationships with partners and co-regulators to drive nature positive reforms to protect, restore and improve our environment.

Consistent with the expectations of the Minister, the Director will apply best practice to implement its regulatory functions in line with the three main principles of the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128):

- **Continuous improvement and building trust:** regulators adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving their performance, capability and culture to build trust and confidence in Australia’s regulatory settings.
- **Risk based and data driven:** regulators manage risks proportionately and maintain essential safeguards while minimising regulatory burden, and leveraging data and digital technology to support those they regulate to comply and grow.
- **Collaboration and engagement:** regulators are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way.

Actions

Continuous improvement and building trust

- Assisting the regulated community to understand their rights and obligations under Commonwealth environmental law through education, training and guidance resources.
- Applying standardised engagement processes and transparency in decision making to foster collaboration and co-design with Joint Boards of Management, Traditional Owners, First Nations People, Indigenous Protected Area managers and local communities who live in and adjacent to our terrestrial and marine parks.

- Supporting businesses, the regulated community and the broader community prepare for the new Nature Positive regulatory environment.
- Taking a decisive approach to enforcement and prosecution.
- Providing accurate and timely advice on significant current and emerging issues relating to the Director's regulatory functions and reforms.
- Delivering continual improvement to compliance capabilities by seeking new and emerging technologies to improve regulatory and compliance monitoring and enforcement in Commonwealth reserves.

Risk based and data driven

- Improving Parks Australia's risk strategy by defining the processes for identification, assessment and development of controls and action plans that outline governance and risk management arrangements.
- Continue to work with and action advice from the Department's Portfolio Audit Committee on improvements for managing risk, including how Boards of Management engage in risk management activities relating to jointly managed national parks.
- Utilising scientific partnerships and research to deliver robust and transparent decisions based on timely and reliable data and information.
- Ensuring that regulatory responses are data driven and proportionate to the risks posed by any non-compliance, considering all relevant compliance history.

Collaboration and engagement

- Contributing to actions that support Australia's obligations under international agreements and national environmental law including:
 - Australian Marine Park management plans
 - the World Heritage Convention
 - the Ramsar Convention
 - recovery, wildlife conservation and threat abatement plans.
- Working with other Australian and state and territory government agencies to respond to environmental incidents and accidents.
- Continuing to improve our approach to compliance through ongoing collaboration with relevant government agencies to ensure efficiencies and sharing of best practice.

Reporting requirements under *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*

The Director has embedded the Regulator Performance Management Guide (RMG 128) and its three best practice principles into its corporate documents, including corporate plans and annual reporting as required by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

This Statement, along with your Statement of Expectations has will made available on the Parks Australia website. Under the Director's leadership, Parks Australia will collaborate with and support the Department and relevant portfolio entities to deliver against your Ministerial expectations.