



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP**  
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

Director of National Parks

Statement of Expectations

2024

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This Statement outlines my expectations, as the Minister for the Environment and Water, for how you, the Director of National Parks (the Director), will carry out your functions to achieve the government's objectives for Commonwealth reserves.

The Statement sets out the expectations of the Director for delivering against key government policies and commitments and is also intended to satisfy the requirements outlined in the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128) regarding the exercise of regulatory powers to achieve regulatory objectives.

I ask for your response to this letter through a Statement of Intent advising the approach you will take, with the support of the Parks Australia Division of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the Department), to deliver against these expectations.

**Overview**

The Director of National Parks is a corporation established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and is responsible for the conservation and management of Commonwealth terrestrial and marine protected area estates.

The Australian Government is committed to an Australia that is nature positive. This includes changing our laws to reverse the trajectory of environmental decline and continuing the government's partnership with First Nations peoples to co-design cultural heritage reforms and to protect and sustainably manage Australia's natural, historic and Indigenous-heritage places for future generations.

At the centre of this work is the staged legislative reform of the EPBC Act, which will include separate national parks legislation to provide the framework for the protection and management of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones.

For Commonwealth national parks and reserves, the Australian Government is committed to ensuring the highest level of protection for the environment and cultural heritage, and to improving joint management arrangements for the three national parks on Indigenous land—Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa and Booderee National Parks. This commitment requires regulatory decisions that protect the environment, enable traditional use of land, ocean and waterways,

and maintain public access to Commonwealth National Parks in a way that supports cultural, social and economic benefits for Traditional Owners.

The Australian Government is committed to effective governance and performance of regulatory functions. Our regulatory reform agenda aims to boost Australia's productivity and lower the cost of living by ensuring a fit-for-purpose regulatory environment. This is complemented by the APS reform agenda's four priorities for an APS that: embodies integrity, puts people and business at the centre, operates as a model employer, and has the capability to do its job well.

### **Ministerial direction**

My expectations are formed by the statutory functions of the Director for the management of the Commonwealth national and marine parks estate, including those parks with World Heritage values, and the Director's statutory role to contribute to the protection, conservation and management of biodiversity and heritage in areas outside Commonwealth reserves.

Consistent with the Government's policy agenda outlined above, my expectations apply to the Director's role in progressing the recent commitment by the Prime Minister to add the Jabiluka uranium mine lease area into Kakadu National Park.

### ***A new compact with Traditional Owners based on trust***

The Nature Positive Plan commits the Government to restoring trust and confidence in the management of jointly managed Commonwealth National Parks, including by providing Traditional Owners with more control over the management of their Country.

I expect that on behalf of the Government, you will engage with transparency, fairness and in genuine partnership with all relevant Traditional Owners to:

- negotiate, within your financial and legal responsibilities, new terms for the jointly managed Commonwealth National Parks leases, aiming for greater consistency with traditional laws and customs and alignment with Traditional Owners' aspirations, including for economic development, employment opportunities and control over management and protection of Country and culture
- co-design the future of joint management, including the enabling legislative and governance settings, to support evolving aspirations of Traditional Owners, including pathways for sole management
- progress the process of incorporating the area of the Jabiluka Mineral Lease into the Kakadu National Park, in line with the wishes of the Mirarr Traditional Owners
- ensure the ongoing protection of the Outstanding Universal Values of the Kakadu World Heritage Site and Uluru-Kata Tjuta World Heritage Site

In line with Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, I expect that you will lead Parks Australia to fully embrace the institutional transformation necessary to respond to the needs of Australia's First Nations, and

embed practices of transparency, accountability, cultural safety and genuine engagement that are critical to restoring confidence and trust.

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

The Director plays a key role in supporting the implementation of national and international commitments for the conservation of biodiversity, both within and outside Commonwealth reserves.

- I expect that you will continue the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program including supporting the existing 85 dedicated IPAs which cover over 87 million hectares of land and 5 million hectares of Sea Country. I expect you will continue to support the 36 consultation IPA projects including the 12 new IPA projects that once dedicated are expected to add up to 7,604,693 hectares of land to the National Reserve System and 461,732 hectares of Sea Country to the IPA estate. This has the potential to protect nearly 1% of Australia's landmass as part of the National Reserve System, contributing to our commitment to conserve 30% of Australia's land by 2030.
- Guided by the *Threatened Species Action Plan: Towards Zero Extinctions 2022-2032*, I expect you will work to support the recovery of our unique plants, animals and ecological communities. I ask that particular attention be paid to priority places identified in the Plan that overlay Commonwealth reserves, including Christmas Island and Norfolk Island National Parks, and Kakadu National Park.
- I expect you will ensure the Australian National Botanic Gardens continue to support critical plant conservation and taxonomic science and remain a centre of excellence for Australian native plant research and conservation, including through collaboration with the National Seed Bank, its participation in the Australian National Herbarium/Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research, and cutting edge horticultural practices for its living collection.
- I expect that you will ensure that science and research is supported as a foundation for the effective management of Commonwealth protected areas and to assist Parks Australia make the best possible contribution to a Nature Positive Australia more broadly.
- I expect you to undertake early engagement with First Nations, marine parks users, and key stakeholders in the upcoming 2028 review of management arrangements for 44 of the 60 Australian Marine Parks, based on clarity of directions and process, and on the best available scientific knowledge. The review should prioritise protection of the most vulnerable and valuable ecosystems within the estate and contribute to further progress in delivering our international commitments and position of leadership in marine protection under the Global Biodiversity Framework.

### ***Regulator performance best practice***

I expect that you, as Director of National Parks and in your regulatory role, will apply best practice principles from RMG 128. Those principles, summarised below, should be embedded into the Director's administration of regulatory functions and reflected in the Director's corporate documents.

I also expect that consideration of regulatory performance be reflected in the annual reporting under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

- 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.

The Director's delivery of regulatory functions must be underpinned by a commitment to periodically assess its regulatory arrangements for effectiveness and efficiency in delivering intended outcomes.

I also ask that particular attention be given to the following:

- Working with Traditional Owners and First Nations communities to ensure effective regulatory arrangements in accordance with the Director's responsibilities under the EPBC Act, including appropriate enforcement mechanisms for managing non-compliance in Commonwealth Reserves.
- Maintain close relationships with partners and co-regulators to drive nature positive reforms to protect, restore and improve our environment.

With respect to shared operational responsibilities between the Director and the Department, I expect clarity in roles and accountabilities, and collaboration to support a risk-based approach.

### ***Relationship with Minister***

I expect the Director of National Park will provide accurate and timely policy advice on significant current and emerging issues and risks relating to the Director's functions and reforms and with regard to key areas of priority for Government.

As the responsible Minister, I will provide an enabling environment for the Department to consistently implement best practice by ensuring you are well informed of the Government's policy direction and priorities, as specific initiatives and strategies are being considered.

**Transparency**

I ask that this statement and your response be made available on the Department's website. I also ask that you continue to collaborate with and support the Department and relevant portfolio entities in delivering against their Ministerial expectations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tanya Plibersek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'T'.

TANYA PLIBERSEK

28.10.24