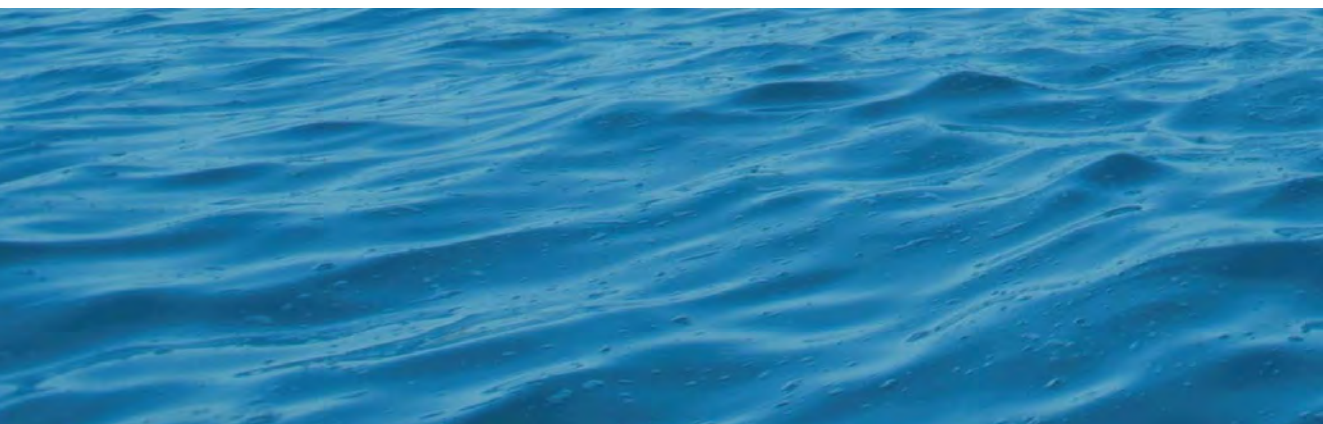




Australian Government
Director of National Parks



Director of National Parks Annual Report 2016-17



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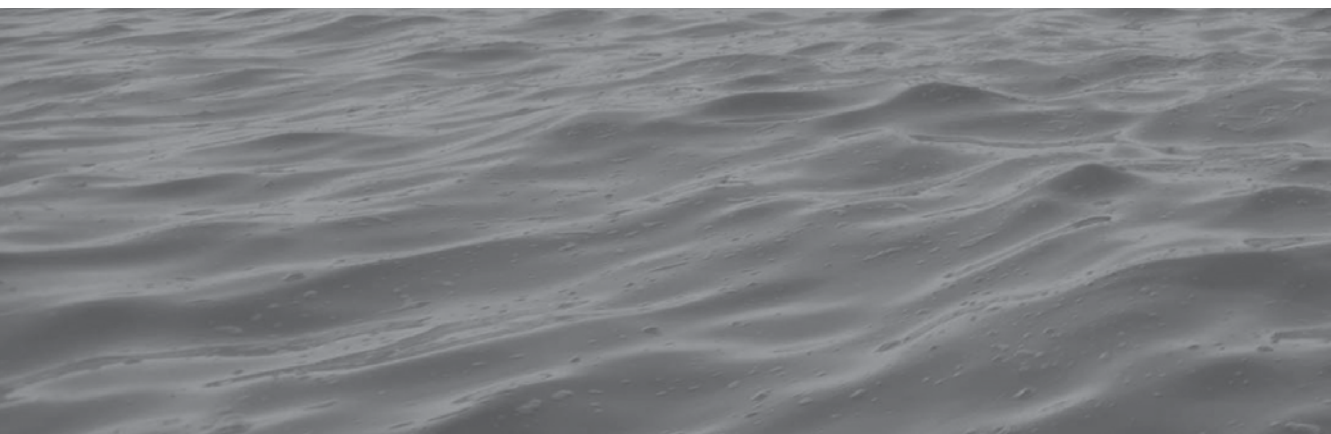


Australian Government
Director of National Parks



Director of National Parks

Annual Report 2016-17



Acknowledgement of traditional owners and country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.



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Letter of transmittal



Australian Government

Director of National Parks

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

As the accountable authority for the Director of National Parks I am pleased to present the annual report on the activities of the Director of National Parks for the reporting period ending 30 June 2017 in accordance with section 46(1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

The Director of National Parks Annual Report 2016-17 has been prepared in accordance with the PGPA Act and includes:

- the annual financial statements for the Australian National Parks Fund, including the matters required by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Financial Reporting) Rule 2015
- the matters required by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 for the reporting period
- the matters required by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

In accordance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework, as the accountable authority for the Director of National Parks I have taken all reasonable measures to prevent, detect and deal with fraud relating to the Director. I am satisfied that this agency has prepared fraud risk assessments and implemented fraud control plans, has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection procedures and processes that meet the specific needs of this agency, and has taken all reasonable measures to minimise the incidence of fraud in this agency and to investigate and recover the proceeds of fraud against the agency.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sally Barnes'.

Sally Barnes

Director of National Parks

29 November 2017

The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks is responsible for the conservation and management of the Australian Government's terrestrial and marine protected area estates established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

As at 30 June 2017, the Director was responsible for seven terrestrial reserves (six national parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens) and 59 Commonwealth marine reserves. The location of Commonwealth reserves are shown in Figure 1 with further details for each reserve available in Appendix A.

The Director of National Parks was assisted by the staff of Parks Australia, a division of the Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department), in the management of these reserves.

Three parks—Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Booderee—are leased to the Director of National Parks by their Aboriginal owners. These parks are jointly managed by the Director and a Board of Management and are generously made available by their Traditional Owners to visitors and tour operators to enjoy and appreciate.

Brief history of our reserves

- 1977 Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park is declared.
Name changed to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in 1993.
- 1979 Kakadu National Park is first declared.
- 1980 Christmas Island National Park is declared.
- 1982 Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve and Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve are declared—the first of 12 individual marine reserves to be declared throughout Commonwealth waters over the period 1982 to 2000
- 1986 Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden is declared.
- 1991 Australian National Botanic Gardens is declared.
- 1992 Jervis Bay National Park is first declared.
Name changed to Booderee National Park in 1995.
- 1995 Pulu Keeling National Park is declared.
- 2002 Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserves is declared.
- 2007 South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network is declared comprising fourteen individual reserves.
- 2012 Commonwealth marine reserves networks first declared, comprising 44 individual reserves and incorporating 12 pre-existing reserves, and the Coral Sea Commonwealth marine reserve.

Our vision

Outstanding natural places that enhance Australia's well-being.

What we do

We protect the natural environment and cultural values of Commonwealth reserves by effectively managing them jointly with traditional owners and the wider community.

We work to achieve ecologically sustainable use, so that these unique places may be enjoyed now and by future generations.

We provide enriching experiences to attract and inspire visitors and we look to deliver economic, social and cultural benefits to traditional owners and regional economies.

Like many private sector, public and community organisations we are dedicated to maintaining Australia's unique plants and animals and halting species extinction.

Our values and approach

As Australian Public Service employees, Parks Australia staff uphold the values of the service. As conservation area managers we strive for an approach that is:

- **knowledge-based** - we use evidence about our conservation assets and management performance to make decisions about future management activities and investments
- **transparent** - we use clear criteria to determine our priorities and we communicate and explain our decisions
- **accountable** - we clearly articulate what we seek to achieve through management interventions and measure our progress towards set outcomes
- **collaborative** - we seek and support genuine partnerships to deliver conservation and tourism outcomes
- **adaptive** - we incorporate lessons and performance information into management and business planning
- **innovative** - we create the space for devising creative solutions and promote exposure of our staff to diverse experiences in conservation area management.

Figure 1: Location of Commonwealth parks and reserves which are the responsibility of the Director of National Parks in 2016-17

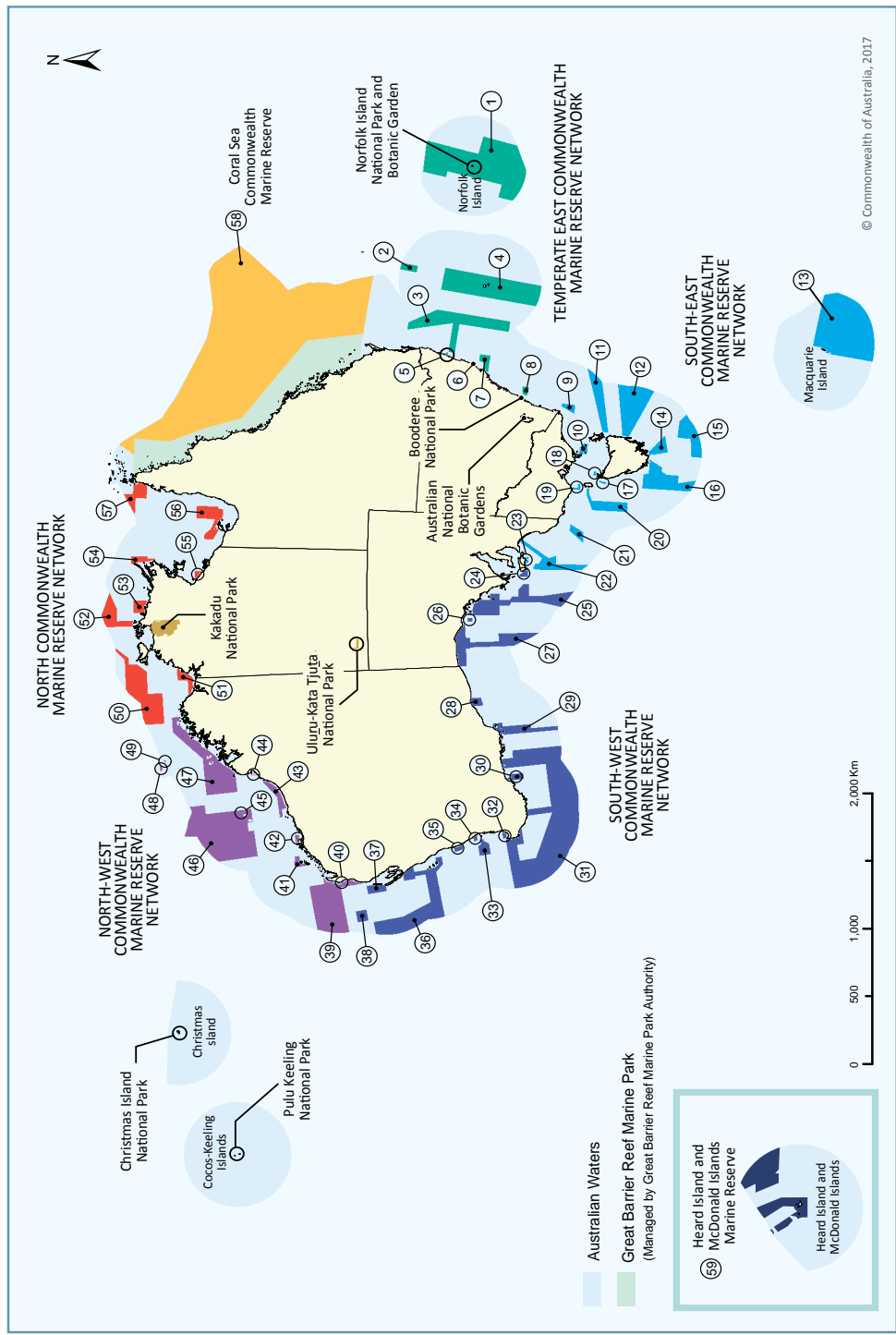


Table 1: Key to the location of Commonwealth marine reserves

Reserve Name	Map Label
Temperate East Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network	
Norfolk	1
Gifford	2
Central Eastern	3
Lord Howe	4
Solitary Islands	5
Cod Grounds	6
Hunter	7
Jervis	8
South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network	
East Gippsland	9
Beagle	10
Flinders	11
Freyinet	12
Macquarie Island	13
Huon	14
South Tasman Rise	15
Tasman Fracture	16
Zeehan	17
Boags	18
Apollo	19

Reserve Name	Map Label
Franklin	20
Nelson	21
Murray	22
Southern Kangaroo Island	23
South-west Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network	
Western Kangaroo Island	24
Western Eyre	25
Murat	26
Great Australian Bight	27
Twilight	28
Eastern Recherche	29
Bremer	30
South-west Corner	31
Two Rocks	32
Geographie	33
Perth Canyon	34
Jurien	35
Abrolhos	36
Carnarvon Canyon	38
North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network	
Gascoyne	39

Reserve Name	Map Label
Ningaloo	40
Montebello	41
Dampier	42
Eighty Mile Beach	43
Roebuck	44
Mermaid Reef	45
Argo-Rowley Terrace	46
Kimberley	47
Ashmore Reef	48
North Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network	
Joseph Bonaparte Gulf	50
Oceanic Shoals	51
Arafura	52
Limmen	53
Arnhem	54
West Cape York	55
Gulf of Carpentaria	56
Wessel	57
Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve	58
Heard Island and McDonald Islands Commonwealth Marine Reserve	59



The grounds of the Australian National Botanic Gardens came alive each evening during the Canberra *Enlighten* festival—held in March this year.

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Director's message

1

Director's message

I am proud to present the collective achievements of Parks Australia, our joint management boards, our valued partners and friends for 2016-17 in this annual report.

The report presents our results and outcomes directly against the priorities and measures that are set out in the Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The plan is our primary planning tool and our resources, human and financial, have been focussed on delivering priorities within our three overarching goals:

- Resilient places and ecosystems
- Multiple benefits for traditional owners
- Amazing destinations

As well as reading this annual report I encourage you to find about what we have planned for 2017-18 by reading our corporate plan at:

environment.gov.au/topics/national-parks/parks-australia/publications

A major achievement for the year was the commencement of the process of drafting new management plans for four networks of marine reserves and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve. The first consultation period seeking input to the plans and feedback on recommendations in the independent Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review was undertaken in 2016-17. Draft plans with details of zoning and proposed management actions will be released for public consultation early in the 2017-18 financial year. Building on the success of the National Indigenous Forum held in August 2016 in Darwin, we are having ongoing conversations with sea country traditional owners to ensure cultural values are appropriately included in the new management plans and future management actions.

Parks Australia proudly manages three national parks with traditional owners: Kakadu, Booderee and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks. In 2016 three of our traditional owners, Sammy Wilson from Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Justine Brown from Booderee and Freya Alderson from Kakadu, joined traditional owner representatives from across Australia to host a conversation on joint management at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii. Participants shared experiences, challenges and stories about joint and co-management arrangements in places as diverse as New Zealand, Canada, Easter Island and America. All were keen to keep the networking alive and look for future opportunities to continue to share our joint management journey.



Sadly our plants don't always get the attention they deserve when we talk Australia's threatened species. Here at Parks Australia we're rectifying that with our significant and successful work to cultivate and store the seeds of threatened plants. The Australian National Botanic Gardens and the National Seed Bank, both based in Canberra, are central to the national and global efforts. Additionally, our botanic garden at Booderee National Park has successfully cultivated the threatened *Banksia Vincentia*, and are looking to create a seed orchard within the park in the near future.

On Christmas Island the hard work of our rangers, local community and research partners has paid off with positive numbers for Lister's gecko and blue-tailed skinks. I'm also pleased to say the Cocos buff-banded rail population translocated from Pulu Keeling National Park to nearby Horsburgh Island continues to thrive.

Our ongoing efforts to build our marketing capability to increase visitation and provide new and exciting opportunities for visitors continues to pay dividends. Our parks welcomed over 1.38 million visitors over the year, up four per cent from our record visitor numbers last year. Revenue collected is used directly in our parks and at the Australian National Botanic Gardens for conservation and visitor programs, with a percentage flowing to traditional owners under our leasing arrangements at Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Booderee. Visitor satisfaction continues to be high. We are proud to support the visitor economy and provide special holiday moments for Australian families and our international visitors.

I am also pleased to report that the Parks Australia social media channels reached an audience of over 30.4 million users, up from 17 million in 2015-16, an increase of 77 per cent on the previous year. A great result.

This year we farewelled Paul Minogue, our Principal Legal Officer who has provided stellar advice and overall support to Parks Australia for many years. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Pete Cotsell, our departing Kakadu Park Manager. Pete made a significant contribution to management of the park, particularly in relation to fire planning, feral animal reduction and joint management relationships. I wish him well in his future roles.



Sally Barnes
Director of National Parks





Overview 2

The Minister

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, was Minister for the Environment and Energy with responsibility for the Director of National Parks as set out under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) during 2016-17.

The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks is a corporation sole established under Division 5 of Part 19 of the EPBC Act. The corporation has a single director—the person appointed to the office named the Director of National Parks. The current office holder is Sally Barnes, appointed by the Governor-General in January 2014 for a period of five years. See Chapter 5 for details of the Director’s statutory functions.

In 2016-17 the Director of National Parks’ average Parks Australia staffing level was 321 employees across Australia and recorded a total price output of \$80.3 million .

Under delegation from the Director, staff of the Department’s Australian Antarctic Division manage the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve.

The jointly managed parks, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Booderee, are managed by the Director in conjunction with a Board of Management established under the EPBC Act with a majority of board members being Indigenous persons nominated by the traditional owners. See Chapter 3 for details of our current Boards.

Non-statutory functions

The Minister and the Secretary of the Department have delegated to the Director functions and powers for programs that complement the Director’s statutory functions. Under these delegations the Director manages the Australian Biological Resources Study and the development of Australian Government policy on management of Australia’s genetic resources, including regulating access to these resources in Commonwealth areas. The outputs of these non-statutory functions are reported in the Department’s annual report.

Non-financial performance overview

Our work during 2016-17 towards our vision—outstanding natural places that enhance Australia’s well-being—is presented in Chapter 4 of this report in our annual performance statement. Throughout 2016-17 we worked to achieve outcomes that support our vision and our three key goals.

Our three key goals are:

- **Resilient places and ecosystems** - we continued to invest resources to reverse the decline of threatened species and reduce the impacts of threats like weeds and feral animals. Our implementation of a more comprehensive procedure for analysing and reporting on trends and prioritising our efforts is advanced and is now paying dividends in terms of our understanding of our reserves and how we can appropriately target our management action across the Parks Australia estate. Resilient places are vital to support continuing cultural practices in our reserves. On-country trips improved our understanding of culture and looking after country. Local communities and volunteers across the parks estate continue to help us to achieve natural and cultural conservation outcomes.
- **Multiple benefits for traditional owners** - we continued to work together with traditional owners to progress opportunities for local employment and Indigenous enterprises in our three jointly managed parks. We introduced new employment pathways through tourism initiatives such as the food festival Taste of Kakadu. Our Boards made significant improvement to their governance and reporting systems. On country walks and talks for our employees connected them with our jointly managed parks; the insights and understanding gained will positively contribute to work in these parks into the future to protect country and culture.
- **Amazing destinations** - we welcomed even higher numbers of visitors than in 2015-16 with many times more 'virtual visitors' appreciating our places by extending our social media reach. We offered a diverse range of experiences and events in 2016-17, showcasing the natural and cultural values of our reserves with sensitivity. Many new tourism experiences were introduced successfully, while our long-standing favourites were rejuvenated to delight new (and returning) visitors.

We also delivered corporate priorities under our 'ways of working'. We made significant progress in improving our knowledge of our reserves and this will assist us in determining the appropriate management approaches. Our business systems improved and we have operational plans in place across the parks estate. Our report card approach has improved our executive oversight and has positively influenced reserve management.

Table 2: Summary of non-financial performance for 2016-17

GOAL	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGETS
Resilient Places	Populations of threatened and significant species are increasing (page 30)	On track
	Populations of priority invasive species are reduced (page 32)	On track
	New management plans for Commonwealth marine reserves in effect and implemented (page 33)	In progress
	Increase in the number of marine reserve long term monitoring sites (page 34)	On track
Multiple benefits for traditional owners	Increase in the numbers of Indigenous employees and/or contractors directly or indirectly providing park services (page 47)	On track
Amazing destinations	Maintain or improve the level of visitor satisfaction and number of visitors (page 55)	On track

WAYS OF WORKING	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGETS
Evidence based management	Percentage of annual reserve report cards produced and approved (page 63)	On track
	Percentage of annual reserve report cards considered and responded to by Parks Executive Board (page 64)	On track
	Increase the knowledge base for long-term adaptive management of the marine reserves (page 64)	On track
Ecologically sustainable development	Enhance level of active management of marine reserves and engagement of users and stakeholders (page 73)	In progress
Partnerships and co-investments	Partnerships and co-investments support in accordance with framework (page 78)	On track
Responsive organisation	Proportion of reserve management plans in place (page 83)	In progress
	Timeliness of response to incoming ministerial correspondence items, ministerial submissions, question time briefs, parliamentary questions on notice, senate estimates questions on notice and public enquiries to the Community Information Unit (page 84)	On track
	Achieve a risk maturity of 'Advanced' in the annual Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking Survey (page 85)	On track
	Number of externally reportable breaches of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (page 85)	On track
	Variation from agreed cash operating result (page 85)	On track
	Increase in gross return from commercial operations and activities listed in Director of National Parks Charges for Commonwealth Reserves (page 86)	On track

Financial summary

The DNP observed further revenue growth to the jointly managed parks and continued to benefit from the revenue initiatives implemented in 2015-16, with an increase of seven per cent to permit and entry fee revenue. The Commonwealth Marine Reserves Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of the Environment and Energy was not recognised in the original 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) and is the primary variance for 'Other Terrestrial Parks and Reserves' in both revenue and expenses. The triennial asset revaluation resulted in a \$20 million movement in the asset revaluation surplus, with the land (31.7 per cent), buildings (36.8 per cent) and infrastructure (24.4 per cent) assets being the majority of movement across the Parks and reserves. This outcome brought a surplus result to the Director of \$10.12 million.

Table 3 presents an overview of income and expenses information for the Director of National Parks. Audited financial statements for the year are in Chapter 6 of this report.

Table 4 presents a five-year financial overview. Information is also presented to provide a financial overview for individual terrestrial reserves (Table 5) and a summary of expenditure for the management of marine reserves for 2016-17.

Explanations on major variances against the portfolio budget statements are provided in the notes to the financial statements and provided in line with the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) standard AASB 1055.

During 2016-17 no notifications of significant non-compliance were reported to the Minister for the Environment and Energy and the Minister for Finance.

An Agency Resourcing Statement was introduced to the portfolio budget statement for government departments in 2008-09 to provide information about the various funding sources corporate Commonwealth entities draw upon during the year. An Agency Resourcing Statement that reconciles to cash reserves in the financial statements for the Director is provided at Appendix B.

Table 3: Overview of financial results 2016-17

		2016 Actuals \$000s	2017 Actuals \$000s	2017 Budget \$000s	2017 Variance \$000s
Jointly managed parks ¹	Income	39,635	41,940	35,922	6,018
	Expenses	(43,640)	(40,419)	(40,482)	63
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(4,005)	1521	(4,560)	6,081
Other parks and reserves ²	Income	27,754	35,657	20,635	15,022
	Expenses	(28,898)	(26,348)	(20,810)	(5,538)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(1,144)	9,309	(175)	9,484
Total for parks and reserves	Income	67,389	77,597	56,557	21,040
	Expenses	(72,538)	(66,767)	(61,292)	(5,475)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(5,149)	10,830	(4,735)	15,565
Governance, corporate services and executive ³	Income	8,453	12,849	9,571	3,278
	Expenses	(8,088)	(13,559)	(10,105)	(3,454)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	365	(710)	(534)	(176)
Total for Director of National Parks	Income⁴	75,842	90,446	66,128	24,318
	Expenses	(80,626)	(80,326)	(71,397)	(8,929)
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(4,784)	10,120	(5,269)	15,389

¹ Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee National Parks.

² Includes terrestrial and marine reserves.

³ Governance, corporate services and executive includes administration, finance, legal, insurance, planning, interest income and bank charges.

Table 4: Five-year Financial summary—Commonwealth terrestrial and marine reserves (\$ millions)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Operations					
Total operating expenditure	60.99	74.10	66.03	72.54	66.77
Total operating revenue ⁴	50.93	89.06	64.84	67.39	77.60
Financial position					
Current assets	44.79	49.44	47.82	48.87	51.16
Non-current assets	200.47	235.13	230.57	223.10	233.86
Current liabilities	14.75	8.25	16.47	11.51	8.76
Non-current liabilities	0.76	14.42	0.95	4.28	9.33
Total equity	229.75	261.90	260.97	256.19	266.93

⁴ Includes revenue from all sources including grants from portfolio agency and externally raised revenue.

Table 5: Overview of individual terrestrial reserves 2016-17

Reserve name	Operating cost (\$000s)	Capital expenditure (\$000s) ⁵	External revenue (\$000s) ⁶	Payment to traditional Aboriginal owners (\$000s)
Jointly managed national parks				
Booderee National Park	6,857	1,075	1,886	786
Kakadu National Park	19,749	2,610	4,025	1,837
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	13,835	717	8,475	2,245
Other Commonwealth terrestrial reserves				
Australian National Botanic Gardens	7,597	1,069	1,305	
Christmas Island National Park	4,327	613	1,708	
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	1,350	314	204	
Pulu Keeling National Park	458	83	16	

⁵ Includes assets recognised for the first time as part of the asset revaluation process.

⁶ External revenue represents total revenue from the income statement less grants from portfolio agency and assets recognised for the first time.

Overview of marine reserves in 2016-17

The Marine Protected Areas Branch spent \$7.5 million during 2016-17.

This expenditure was composed of:

- costs associated with the management of reserves including compliance and field services provided by state and Commonwealth agencies, research and monitoring activities and operational and communication activities and employee costs \$6.3 million
- costs associated with management planning preparations \$1.2 million

Parks Australia will be receiving additional operational and capital funding of \$24.3 million over the next three years to support the implementation of management arrangements for the expanded marine reserve estate, including investment in monitoring technologies and online tools to assist reserve users.

Our approach to ex-situ conservation

Ex-situ conservation—conserving organisms outside the places in which they currently occur—can help to ensure the recovery and long-term survival of valued species and the restoration and resilience of ecosystems.

Ex-situ conservation is an increasingly important part of our work. Examples include:

- cultivation and seed storage of threatened plant species in the Australian National Botanic Gardens and National Seed Bank
- captive breeding of blue-tailed skinks and Lister's geckos on Christmas Island, which has saved these two species from extinction
- establishment of a new population of the endangered Cocos buff-banded rail in the Cocos Keeling Islands.

Further projects involving both plants and animals are planned and include reintroducing eastern quolls to Booderee National Park, which will establish the first wild population of the species on mainland Australia since it became restricted to Tasmania in the 1960s.

These sorts of projects, which complement rather than replace traditional in-situ management, have many potential conservation benefits, including:

- making wild populations more resilient by increasing their abundance, geographic range and genetic diversity
- creating 'insurance populations' that reduce the chances of a species becoming extinct
- restoring food webs and ecosystem function and/or important cultural elements of a landscape by reintroducing a species that was formerly present
- increasing our ecological knowledge through research on captive animal populations, cultivated plants and seed bank collections
- providing valuable opportunities for education and public engagement.



A blue-tailed skink (*Cryptoblepharus egeriae*) in the Christmas Island captive breeding enclosure. (Photo: Parks Australia)

However, the benefits of ex-situ conservation need to be balanced against the potential risks and costs. For example, there may be negative effects on the source population if too many individuals are removed, or unforeseen consequences for the location that we move plants or animals to. Ex-situ projects are typically cost and labour intensive and can involve complicated logistics and ethical considerations. And we also need to accept that projects won't always be successful.

When planning projects we undertake a detailed risk assessment and feasibility study in which we thoroughly consider a range of important factors, including:

- the relative need for conservation action, and the merits of ex-situ options compared with in-situ management
- potential source populations and how to minimise the impacts of taking individuals from them
- the biology of the species and its habitat requirements
- animal ethics and welfare
- options for collecting, holding and releasing organisms (where, when, how and how many?)
- whether any threats are present that could prevent successful establishment of a new population
- the risk of introducing new pests and diseases to an area
- the need to continually monitor the progress of a new population and to use the results to inform future management.

Addressing all these issues, and working collaboratively with experts, other government bodies, non-government organisations and community groups, we give our ex-situ conservation projects the best chance of achieving a successful outcome.



A vet prepares a long-nosed potoroo (*Potorous tridactylus*) for release in Booderee National Park. (Photo: Parks Australia)

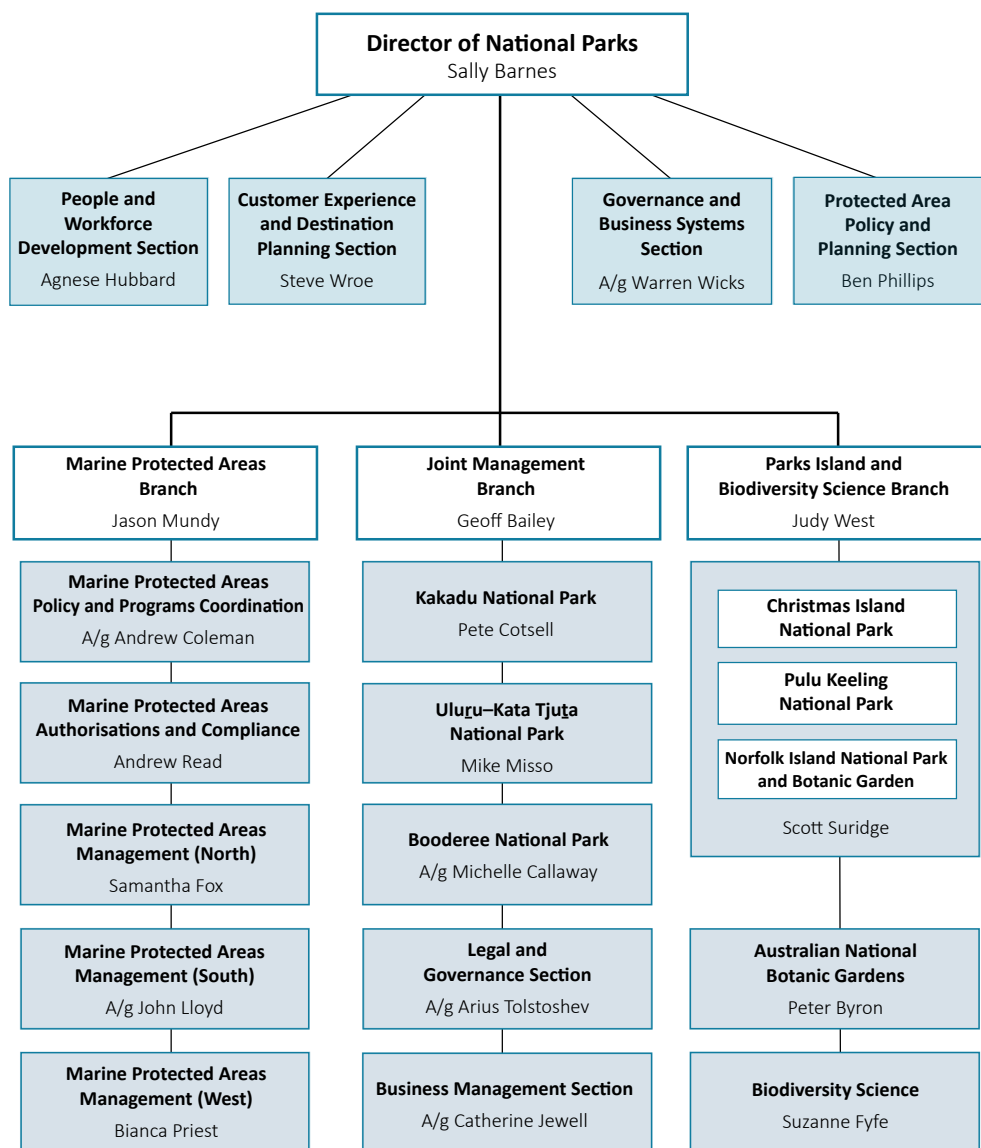




Organisational structure

3

Figure 2: Parks Australia organisational chart as at 30 June 2017



About us and the Boards of Management

Parks Australia operates under a three branch structure, with the Parks Executive team comprising the Director of National Parks and three Assistant Secretaries, Mr Jason Mundy, Mr Geoff Bailey and Dr Judy West.

The Director is assisted by employees of Parks Australia—a division of the Department of the Environment and Energy. In this report, reference to Parks Australia means the Director and Parks Australia employees. Figure 2 shows the Parks Australia organisation chart.

In addition to the Parks Australia executive team, staff of the Australian Antarctic Division are responsible for managing the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve.

The executive team

Sally Barnes

Director of National Parks

Sally has been Director of National Parks for the Australian Government since February 2014. Prior to this role she was the Chief Executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage in New South Wales. She is passionate about Australia's land and seascape and the opportunities to work with traditional owners and local communities to protect and enhance these unique environments and drive the visitor economy in regional areas.



Jason Mundy

Assistant Secretary

Marine Protected Areas Branch

Jason is responsible for the development, implementation and management of Australia's network of Commonwealth Marine Reserves. Previously Jason was General Manager, Strategies Branch at the Australian Antarctic Division from 2011 until January 2016. Prior to that, he worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on overseas postings in the Philippines and Thailand, and positions in Canberra, including Director, China Political and External Section. Jason also worked as a Senior Adviser in the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and as a senior adviser in the International Division of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. He holds an MA (International Relations), a Graduate Diploma (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and did his first degree, a Bachelor of Arts and Law (with First Class Honours in law), at the University of Tasmania.



Geoff Bailey

Assistant Secretary

Joint Management Branch

Geoff has been leading the Joint Management Branch for the past 12 months. Prior to joining Parks Australia he was the Executive Director of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and was responsible for the planning, design and development of a range of Sydney Harbour foreshore parklands on former defence sites. Geoff was previously responsible for architecture and planning in The Rocks and for conservation works at Hermannsburg in the NT. Geoff has over 25 years' experience in planning and managing environmentally sensitive precincts. This experience is invaluable as Parks Australia works to support benefits to Traditional Owners and increase our visitor experience offer. Geoff holds an Architecture Degree from the University of NSW and has completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School.



Dr Judy West

Assistant Secretary,

Parks Island and Biodiversity Science Branch

Judy oversees Parks Australia's science, natural resource and knowledge-management activities; leads the Australian National Botanic Gardens; and manages the Commonwealth island reserves, namely Christmas, Pulu Keeling and Norfolk Island National Parks. Judy has more than 30 years experience in scientific research and policy as a research scientist in CSIRO Plant Industry and director of the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research and the Australian National Herbarium. She holds an adjunct professorial position at the Australian National University. For her contributions to Australian plant systematics and Australia's Virtual Herbarium, she was awarded the Nancy Burbidge Memorial Medal in 2001 and an Order of Australia in 2003. Judy's scientific expertise is in plant systematics and phylogenetics, biodiversity informatics and conservation biology. Using her skills developing partnerships that link science and policy, Judy is building an active science and knowledge-management network in Parks Australia.



Boards of management

Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks are managed jointly by the Director and traditional Aboriginal owners in accordance with the EPBC Act. Each park has a board of management established under the Act, with a majority of Indigenous members who are nominated by the traditional Aboriginal owners of land in the park. Details of Board members as at 30 June 2017 are below.

Booderee National Park Board of Management

Table 6: Booderee National Park Board of Management membership

Chair	Vacant as at 30 June 2017 - pending nomination by traditional owners
Members	<div>Ms Annette Brown (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mr Jeffrey McLeod (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mrs Beverley Ardler (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mr Darren Sturgeon (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mr Thomas Brown Sr (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mrs Julie Freeman (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Mr Clive Freeman (traditional owner nominee)</div> <div>Ms Wendy Hills (ecotourism expert)</div> <div>Captain Charles Huxtable (Commanding Officer HMAS Cresswell)</div> <div>Mr Rodgar Keogh (Regional Australia)</div> <div>Mr Todd Minchinton (conservation science expert)</div> <div>Ms Sally Barnes (Director of National Parks)</div>

Kakadu National Park Board of Management



Ryan Barrowei

Chair, Kakadu National Park Board of Management

Ryan Barrowei has been actively involved with the Kakadu Board of Management since 2008. Ryan is a senior traditional owner of the Wurrkbabar clan, one of the three clans of the Jawoyn people covering the Gunlom land trust area. Ryan's country stretches from southern Kakadu through to Pine Creek then eastwards towards Manyallaluk about 100 kilometres south of Katherine. Ryan has also served as Chair of the Jawoyn Association and Chair of Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Board. Ryan has also spent time as Cultural Advisor on the Nitmiluk Tours Board, a position he held from 2008. Ryan is currently employed as a Jawoyn Ranger undertaking land management on Jawoyn country.

Table 7: Kakadu Board of Management membership

Chair	Mr Ryan Barrowei (traditional owner nominee)
Members	Ms Maria Lee (traditional owner nominee) Mr Alfred Nayinggul (traditional owner nominee) Ms Mai Katona (traditional owner nominee) Mr Sampson Henry (traditional owner nominee) Mr Jeffrey Lee (traditional owner nominee) Mr Jonathan Nadji (traditional owner nominee) Mr Michael Bangalang (traditional owner nominee) Ms Yvonne Margarula (traditional owner nominee) Ms Bessie Coleman (traditional owner nominee) Ms Kathleen Noonan (tourism representative) Ms Sally Barnes (Director of National Parks) Vacant (Parks Australia Joint Management Branch) Mr Alastair Shields (Northern Territory Government nominee) Prof Michael Douglas (nature conservation expertise)

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management



Sammy Wilson

Chair, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management

Sammy Wilson is an *Anangu* man and traditional owner of the park. He lives in the local community of Mutitjulu and is a Senior Guide with Uluru Aboriginal Tours. Sammy is a Director and Chair of the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation, and a member of the Central Land Council.

Table 8: Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management

Chair	Mr Sammy Wilson (traditional owner nominee)
Members	Mr Stephen Clyne (traditional owner nominee)
	Mr Harry Wilson (traditional owner nominee)
	Mr Vincent Nipper (traditional owner nominee)
	Ms Judy Trigger (traditional owner nominee)
	Ms Daisy Walkabout (traditional owner nominee)
	Ms Kunbry Pei Pei (traditional owner nominee)
	Ms Rene Kulitja (traditional owner nominee)
	Mr John King (Minister for Tourism nominee)
	Dr Sue Jackson (Minister for the Environment nominee)
	Mr Grant Hunt (Northern Territory Government nominee)
	Ms Sally Barnes (Director of National Parks)

CASE STUDY 2

Working together to respect sea country

Indigenous Australians have been managing their sea country for tens of thousands of years.

As we moved forward on draft management plans for 44 Commonwealth marine reserves, we wanted to ensure that the cultural responsibilities, values and rights of traditional owners were not only respected, but recognised. We are committed in working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to manage sea country within our marine reserves to deliver multiple benefits back to their traditional owners.

A National Indigenous Forum held in 2016 led to the development of a framework for Parks Australia to work together with traditional owners to manage marine reserves in the future. Over the past 12 months, Parks Australia has continued to engage with sea country traditional owners to incorporate cultural values in the plans.

In many places, Indigenous communities have established ranger groups and dedicated Indigenous Protected Areas, making a significant contribution to the management of their sea country. Our aspiration is that these rangers will work with us to understand and protect sea country values in marine reserves. The draft plans set out actions that will be implemented nationally and in each individual network to work with these rangers in the management of our marine reserves.



Delegates attending the 2016 National Indigenous Forum in Darwin. (Photo: Parks Australia)

Our draft management plans for Commonwealth marine reserves include a clear set of principles, which traditional owners and Parks Australia employees have drafted together. These eight principles are key to our work into the future:

- Principle 1:** It is recognised that Indigenous people have been sustainably using and managing their sea country, including areas now included within Commonwealth marine reserves, for thousands of years, in some cases since before rising sea levels created these marine environments.
- Principle 2:** Management of Commonwealth marine reserves should be undertaken on the basis that native title exists in sea country within Commonwealth waters.
- Principle 3:** Indigenous people should be engaged in planning and managing Commonwealth marine reserves on the basis of their nationally and internationally recognised rights and cultural interests, not as a 'stakeholder' group.
- Principle 4:** Maximise opportunities for Indigenous people to enjoy the management and use of their sea country.
- Principle 5:** Maximise opportunities for the development of Indigenous livelihoods, consistent with national 'closing the gap' commitments.
- Principle 6:** Governance and management activities within Commonwealth marine reserves should respect and complement local Indigenous governance arrangements, plans, capacities and activities.
- Principle 7:** Indigenous engagement in managing Commonwealth marine reserves should be undertaken through good faith negotiations, seeking to build on the common ground that exists between Indigenous people and the Australian Government to protect and sustainably use Australia's sea country environments and resources.
- Principle 8:** Third party investment in management activities in Commonwealth marine reserves (e.g. through environmental offset investments) should include support for Indigenous people's interests, capacity-building and development of livelihoods, consistent with all other principles outlined above; such third party investments must not impact on native title compensation negotiations or on the right to compensation.





Annual Performance Statement

4

Annual Performance Statement

From 1 July 2015, Section 39 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) requires Commonwealth entities to prepare annual performance statements. The aim is to provide a clear link between planned non-financial performance for the financial year—as outlined in the portfolio budget statements and our corporate plan—and actual non-financial performance in 2016-17, as presented in our annual report. Chapter 6 presents our financial performance information for 2016-17.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

I, Gillian Sally Barnes, as the accountable authority of Director of National Parks, present the 2016-17 annual performance statement of the Director of National Parks, as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. In my opinion, these annual performance statements are based on properly maintained records, accurately reflect the performance of the entity, and comply with subsection 39(2) of the Act.



Sally Barnes
Director of National Parks

Portfolio Budget Statements 2016-17

The Director of National Parks was included in the Department's 2016-17 portfolio budget statements. Outcome 1 of the Department's statement is:

The conservation and protection of Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems through supporting research, developing information, supporting natural resource management, regulating matters of national environmental significance and managing Commonwealth protected areas.

Our Director's contribution to meeting the Department's Outcome 1 is through:

Conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves through the provision of safe visitor access, the control of invasive species and working with stakeholders and neighbours.

As listed in the portfolio budget statements, the purpose of our program is to:

- protect and conserve the natural and cultural values of Commonwealth reserves
- support the aspirations of traditional owners in managing their land and sea country
- contribute to social, economic and local community well-being while protecting natural and cultural values of Commonwealth reserves
- offer world class natural and cultural experiences, enhancing Australia's visitor economy.

Our Corporate Plan 2016-2020

The *Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020* was prepared in accordance with the PGPA Rule and paragraph 35(1)(b) of the PGPA Act.

The corporate plan is the primary planning document of the Director and Parks Australia. It incorporates the key performance indicators and deliverables under the portfolio budget statements, and is supported by systems and processes in place for monitoring achievements.

In August 2016 we reviewed our previous corporate plan and made adjustments to our vision, goals and ways of working. Our revised 2017-18 portfolio budget statement outcome statement is:

Management of Commonwealth reserves as *outstanding natural places that enhance Australia's well-being* through the protection and conservation of their natural and cultural values, supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in managing their traditional land and sea country, and offering world class natural and cultural visitor experiences.

Our 2016-20 corporate plan reflects this change, reducing our original four goals down to three, moving 'ecologically sustainable use' to 'ways of working'. Our remaining three core goals now seamlessly align with our 2017-2021 corporate plan vision. The now four 'ways of working' set out how we will achieve the goals.

Table 9: Vision, goals and objectives, ways of working

Vision	Outstanding natural places that enhance Australia's well-being			
Goals	Resilient places and ecosystems	Multiple benefits to traditional owners	Amazing destinations	
Objectives	To protect and conserve the natural and cultural values of Commonwealth reserves.	To support the aspirations of traditional owners in managing their land and sea country.	To offer world-class natural and cultural experiences, enhancing Australia's visitor economy.	
Ways of working	Evidence based management	Ecologically sustainable use	Partnerships and co-investments	Responsive organisation
	Science, research and traditional knowledge are used to make management decisions.	Parks Australia acts to enhance Australia's social and economic well-being through ecologically sustainable use of our places, through awareness of our own environmental footprint.	Partnerships and working together with our stakeholders to support delivery of innovative programs that achieve our goals.	Parks Australia is an efficient and effective agency with a proud and motivated workforce, supported by efficient business systems.

The *Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2017-2021* provides details on the corporate priorities and result areas for the 2017-18 reporting period. A copy of the plan is available at: environment.gov.au/topics/national-parks/parks-australia/publications.

Operating environment

Our estate is vast, diverse and remote. Country and culture is dynamic. Operating in nature often presents specific challenges such as extreme weather events and isolation. Because of this we can face logistical difficulties in delivering our programs. For example, this year a planned second island wide cat-baiting program on Christmas Island was severely hampered by record rainfall. In response, we refocused on other control methods including targeted trapping which proved effective in these circumstances and we were able to deliver a good outcome for the park.

We made strategic decisions throughout 2016-17 to respond to emerging priorities and to support our adaptive management approach. Our work programs remain flexible so we can appropriately adjust our focus to changing circumstances. The preparation of operational plans for all of the reserves gives our Executive an overview of all projects. The plans mean that the Executive make informed decisions on where best to place our efforts across our estate. There were no significant activities or changes that affected the operations or structure of the entity during the reporting period.

We rely on the considerable expertise, experience and dedication of our Parks Australia staff to deliver programs that are grounded in sound planning coupled with agile, innovative thinking. We also nurture our long-standing and valued collaborations with traditional owners, communities, scientists, technical and tourism partners. Together we work hard to focus on solutions, achieve results in the short-term that will collectively achieve our long term vision—to maintain outstanding natural places that enhance the Australia's well-being.

Performance against goals and objectives

See Table 2 in Chapter 2 for an overview summary of our performance against the performance measures contained in the Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-20 and Portfolio Budget Statements (p.209).

Our Corporate Plan presents a consistent hierarchy linking our goals and objectives to our corporate priorities for the financial year, identifies strategies to deliver these priorities and individual result areas that are nested under the strategies. All the corporate priorities and result areas are mapped to reserve/section annual operational plans and to individual performance agreements with our employees.

RESILIENT PLACES AND ECOSYSTEMS

*To protect and conserve the natural and cultural values
of commonwealth reserves*

Performance measure:

Populations of threatened and significant species are increasing.

Source:

- Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020
- 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements
Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

On track. To prioritise internal and external resources across the large number of threatened species on the terrestrial reserves, we began to collate and analyse data centrally in 2015-16 to replace park by park reporting.

Using only robust data, we have improved our understanding of the trends in threatened species and—importantly—the level and nature of the management activities being undertaken for each species.

Our target for 2016-17 was to have both a clear understanding of the trend in our threatened species populations based on robust monitoring data and begin to increase the number of those species that are stable or increasing due to effective management.

The proportion of threatened species that are actively managed has risen from 64 per cent to 73 per cent since 2015-16. The additional species actively managed include threatened bird and mammal species from Kakadu National Park that are benefiting from improved fire, weed and feral species management.

The proportion of threatened species that are monitored and the population trends are known has risen from 31 per cent to 51 per cent for species that are monitored. This rise has occurred due to an assessment of past and present monitoring results that, for example, informed employee observations of threatened plant trends on Norfolk Island.

The proportion of threatened species that have population trends that are stable or increasing has risen from 15 per cent to 30 per cent. This rise has occurred because the trends for a greater number of plant species from Norfolk Island are now known. The number of species that have increasing populations has risen from seven to 17, the number of species that have stable populations has risen from 12 to 22. However, the number of species with declining populations has also risen from 21 to 27 species. See Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Overall trends for threatened species — management, monitoring and population trends

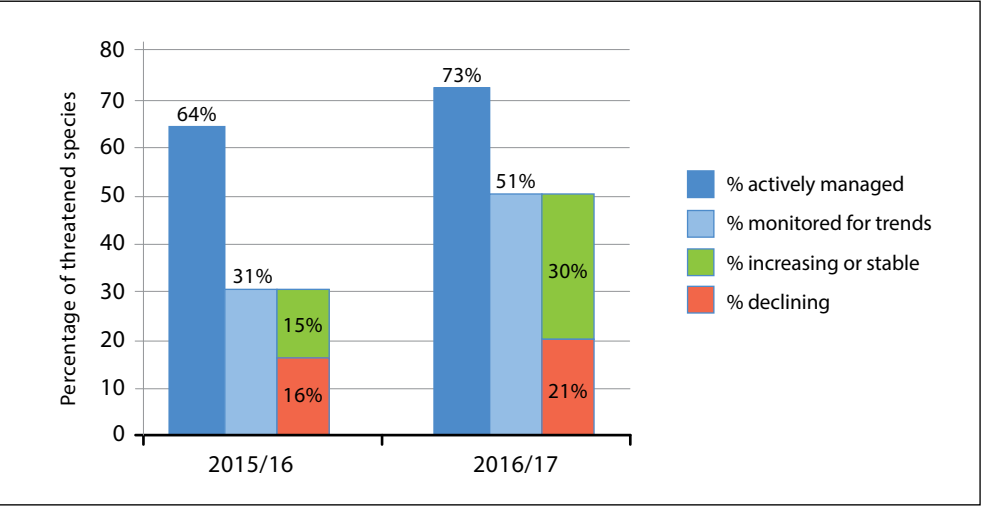
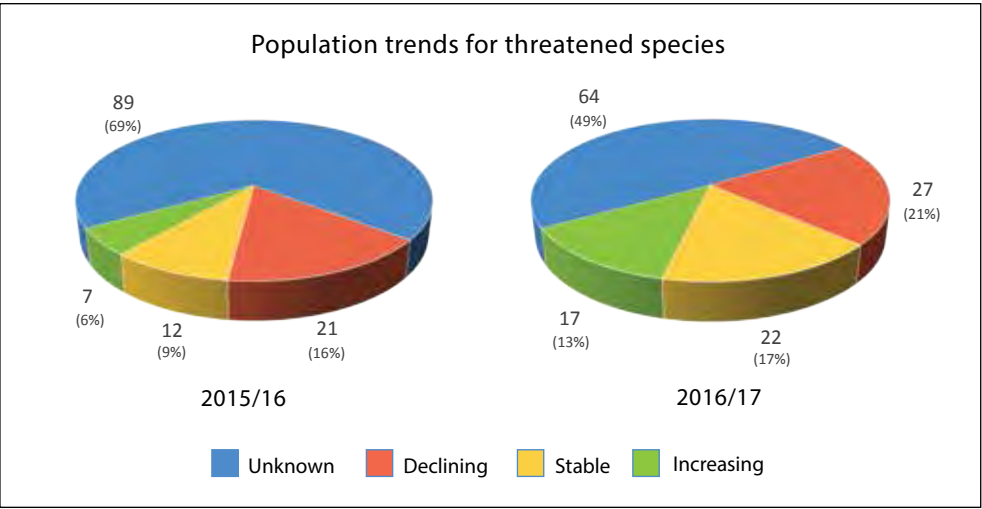


Figure 4 Population trends for threatened species — number of populations declining, stable, increasing and unknown



Source of data: Park level monitoring programs

Performance measure:	Populations of priority invasive species are reduced.
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020 • 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

On track. Similar to our efforts to increase our understanding of threatened species trends based on robust data, we have been undertaking a process to confirm priority invasive species and management actions.

Working closely with staff at each place, we revised our list of priority invasive species to ensure that we targeted those of most concern.

This has seen a reduction in the invasive species that we classify as priority species from 88 in 2015-16 to 75 in 2016-17.

In 2016-17 we increased the number of invasive priority species being actively managed from 28 to 45 species. A proportion of this increase is due to improved reporting from the parks and the remaining increase is due to increased active feral animal management in Kakadu National Park.

Similarly, the proportion of priority species with declining or stable populations has improved from 14 per cent to 23 per cent. This is due to the improved weed and feral animal control programs in Kakadu National Park changing the trajectory of many invasive species from stable to declining. See Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5: Overall trends for invasive species—management, monitoring and population trends

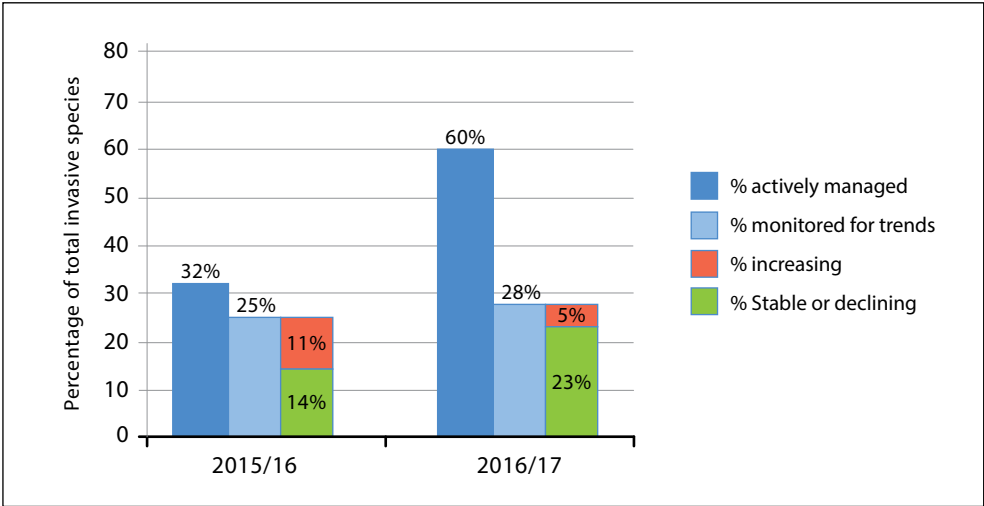
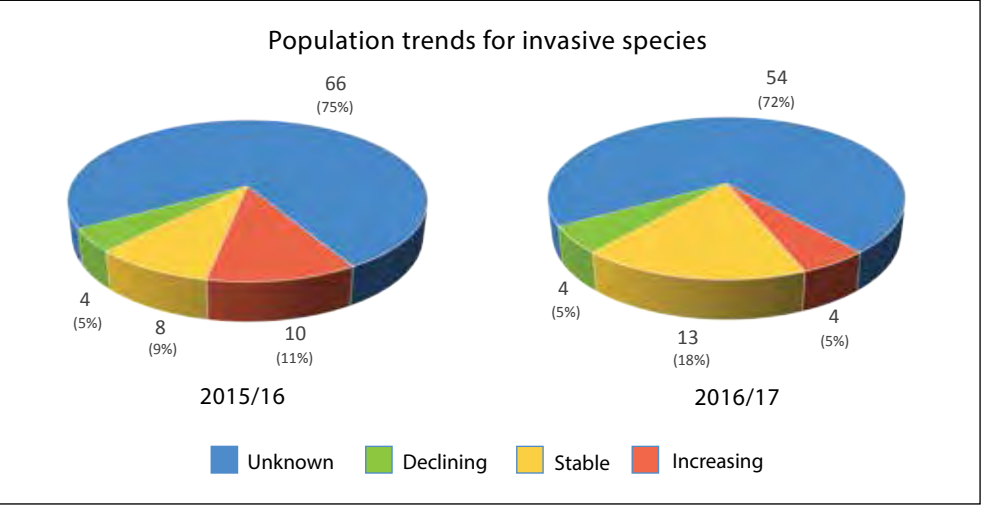


Figure 6: Population trends for invasive species — number of populations declining, stable, increasing and unknown



Source of data: Reserve level monitoring programs.

Performance measure:	New management plans for Commonwealth marine reserves in effect and implemented.
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

In progress. The two-stage statutory consultation process to prepare new management plans has commenced. The first statutory consultation process was completed on 31 October 2016, and the second consultation process was announced on 21 July 2017 and will conclude on 20 September 2017. Following the completion of statutory consultations, management plans will be finalised, approved and tabled in Parliament, and are expected to take effect in 2018. Marine reserves are managed in accordance with transitional management until new management plans come into effect.

Source of data: Number of management plans

Performance measure:	Increase in the number of marine reserve long term monitoring sites.
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020• 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

A new baseline was established in 2016-17. Currently there are long term monitoring sites on corals reefs and some coral cays or islands at the Coral Sea, Ashmore, Mermaid, Elizabeth and Middleton/Lord Howe, Cod Grounds and Solitary islands Commonwealth marine reserves. There are also monitoring sites for the Freycinet, Flinders, Huon and Great Australia Bight Commonwealth marine reserves. A range of biophysical measures including habitat type and abundance of fish, invertebrates and seabirds are being monitored. The results will provide improved understanding of the ecological condition, pressures and trends over time to help support an adaptive and evidence-based management approach and for periodic reporting. Data from the monitoring sites is generally made public and any reports that Parks Australia commissions are made public.

Long-term monitoring sites include all known sites (regardless of how they are funded) that have two or more data points in time and could form part of a longer time series of data. Parks Australia does not collect or store the bulk of this data. It is appropriately stored in publicly accessible databases and we use the information derived from this monitoring to inform management of the marine reserves.

Source of data: Number of long term monitoring sites



The Australian Government is committed to developing a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas in partnership with the states and Northern Territory, which protects the vast range of marine habitats occurring in Australian waters. (Photo: Carl Charter)

Analysis of performance

Our goal is to protect and conserve the natural values and living culture of our reserves and, where appropriate, restore the health and integrity of the natural and cultural values.

The State of the Environment 2016 confirms that mammal populations have continued to decline in northern Australia and that our biodiversity faces a complexity of individual and collective threats such as invasive species, habitat loss, marine debris, increased use demands and pressure from a changing climate.

In 2016-17 we invested significant resources to support the protection, conservation and restoration of listed threatened and ecologically important species, such as through appropriate fire management at Kakadu to reduce threats to small mammals. While ecological outcomes from our programs may not be fully realised for many years, the continuing collective action across our reserves, focusing on ecosystem health with traditional knowledge together with appropriate monitoring, is expected to deliver an enduring long-term return on our investments.

Translocation is one conservation tool that has been increasingly used by protected area managers to ensure the ongoing viability of rare species to supplement existing in-situ management. Please see the case study 1 on page 12 for an overview of our ex-situ species conservation approach. The results of specific projects for 2016-17 are presented below.

In 2016-17 we also made significant progress in refining how and what we monitor across our reserves. More performance monitoring plans are now in place to track the trajectory of key species that reflect the health of our reserves. Ongoing monitoring will inform management actions and increase the level of knowledge of species in our reserves.

Protected areas support resilience and recovery in the face of pressures from a changing climate. Climate change is expected to exacerbate existing threats and introduce new challenges in how we manage species, ecosystems, infrastructure and visitors. The first tranche of climate change strategies covering our terrestrial reserves spanned 2009-2017. To direct future action and investment, in 2016-17 we progressed development of a 15-year divisional climate change statement. The statement will set out the principles and key objectives that will guide preparation in 2017-18 of the first of three, five-yearly action plans spanning the Parks Australia estate, including our marine reserves. In 2016-17 we continued to deliver complementary programs to secure the valuable contribution our protected areas make as reservoirs of biodiversity nationally.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Implement projects to reverse the decline of threatened species and reduce the impact of threats
- Establish ecological baselines to detect changes within Commonwealth reserves
- Develop an integrated framework for monitoring effectiveness of management actions and ecosystems health and resilience with a view to improving adaptive management
- Understand, respect and protect living culture and cultural heritage values in Commonwealth reserves
- Develop a divisional approach to monitor and address the impacts of climate change.

Strategies and result area achievements

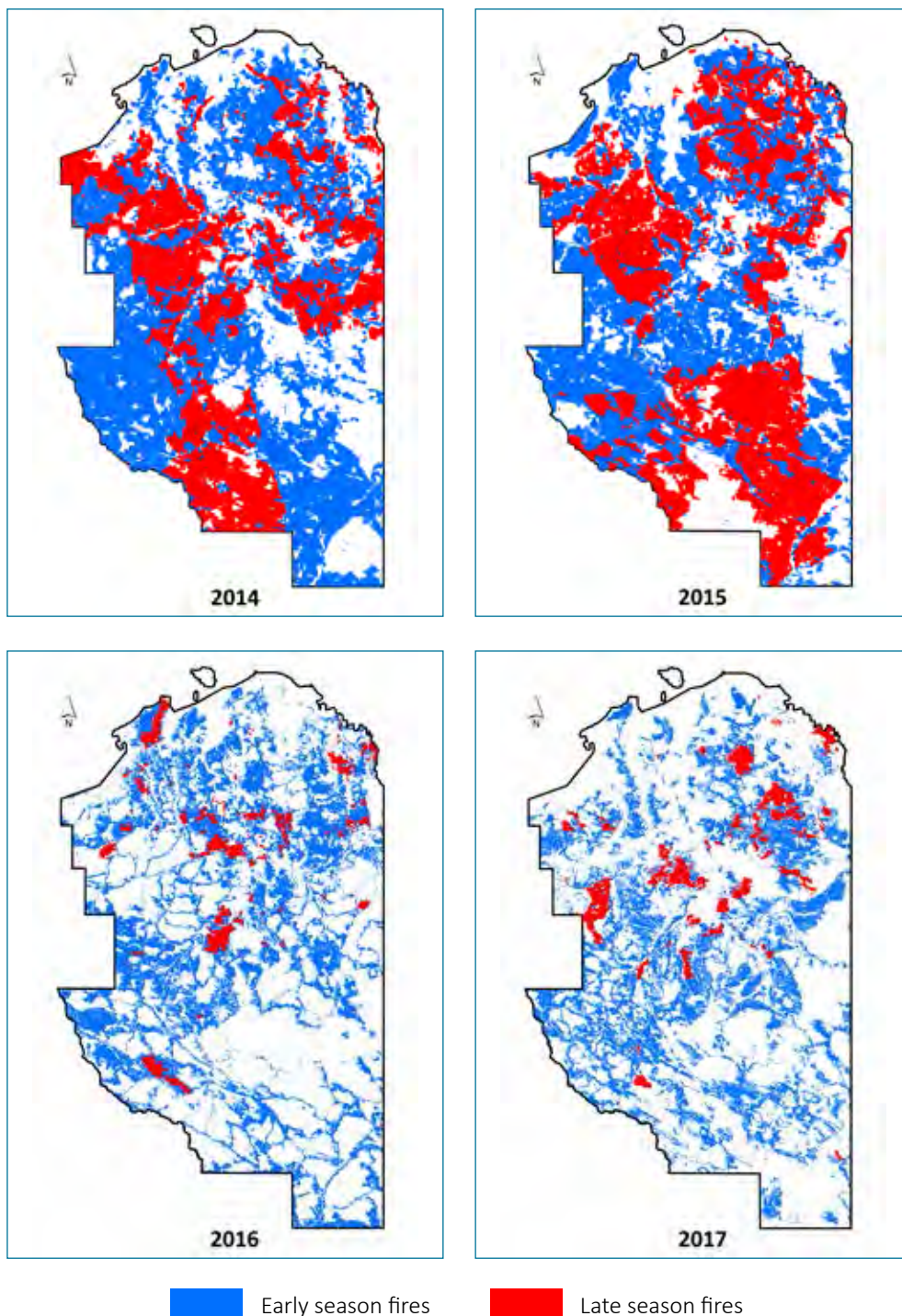
1. *To continue to reduce the overall impact of feral animals, weeds and inappropriate fire on natural and cultural values and increase our intervention in populations of threatened and significant species where necessary.*

Kakadu National Park

- The Director and Kakadu Board of Management actively support improvements in fire management to protect biodiversity and rock art in the park and to provide opportunities to generate employment for traditional owners. The park's new fire strategy will be presented to the Board of Management in September 2017. The draft strategy is the culmination of extensive consultation between Parks Australia employees and key stakeholders including traditional owners and regional fire authorities.
- In 2016 the park undertook more early dry season burning, aerial burning and broad scale patch burning together with on-country 'fire walks' with communities and traditional owners. With this approach less country was burnt as the early burns help to stop late season fires from spreading too far and burning large areas of country. Successful fire management helps us to maintain habitat diversity, especially in the sensitive sandstone heath community of the Arnhemland Plateau. Thirteen *Bininj/Mungguy* were employed to assist with the fire-burning program in 2016, and we aim to increase this number across 2017.
- Savanna fires release two strong greenhouse gases—methane and nitrous oxide—into the air. Appropriate fire management, such as early season burns, can reduce emissions because fires are less intense and less country needs to be burnt each year. Two savanna burning projects in the southern Jawoyn and Mirarr areas of the park were successfully registered with the *Clean Energy Regulator under the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011*. Agreement negotiations with respective Traditional Owners and Trusts are underway. These savanna fire management projects, complementary to those undertaken by Parks Australia, are expected to offer future economic and cultural benefits for communities.

- Building on planning work in 2015-16, we put into action preparatory work on Field (*Gardangarl*) Island, including a successful wet season burning by helicopter in February 2017 to create a mosaic of different stages of burning, to ensure appropriate habitat to accommodate translocated Brush-tailed rabbit rats (*Conilurus penicillatus*). In May 2017 trapping was unsuccessful with no individuals caught after a two-week trapping period on Coburg Peninsula. We have scheduled additional trapping for August and September 2017 and, if successful, we will translocate individuals to Field Island and monitor the founder population. To improve conditions on the island we will also carry out control of small weed infestations of Mission grass (*Pennisetum polystachion*).
- Nine “toad-smart” northern quolls (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) were released into the Mary River District in May 2017. The release site was different to last year, being well away from areas frequented by people, and believed to be less frequented by dingoes. Unfortunately, of the nine animals released, seven died. Of these seven, preliminary autopsies performed by vets at Darwin’s Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries have suggested that five died of toxicoses (assumed to be cane toad ingestion); a sixth animal died from dingo predation after leaving the stone country and heading down onto savannah woodland and one appeared to have died after becoming wedged in a rock crevice. Two female quolls remain alive and are being radio tracked weekly by Parks Australia employees. Although this release represented a small sample size of quolls, and it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, the results cast doubt over the efficacy of toad avoidance training in areas like Kakadu. While we will not pursue it further as a conservation tool at this stage, we remain open to using the approach in the future.
- Feral animal control was also carried out at each of the plots and in other areas of the park across 2016-17 targeting buffalo, cattle, donkeys, horses and pigs. This effort, together with a large feral animal culling program undertaken in southern Kakadu in early 2017, resulted in approximately 6,000 feral animals culled from the park, increasing from 2,107 in 2015-16. Meat from culled animals was distributed to Indigenous communities throughout Kakadu.
- The park is also trialling a range of cat eradication methods, such as soft jaw leg hold traps, and is using the existing cat exclusion fences to further investigate the impact of cats on savanna ecosystems of northern Australia.
- Biodiversity across northern Australia has been declining in recent decades. Inappropriate fire regimes and introduced plants and animals are among the key drivers. In work partly funded by the Threatened Species Commissioner, we have been investigating if intensive management of fire, feral animal and invasive weed control can reverse small mammal declines. An extensive program of early dry season burns to reduce late season wildfire and feral animal control have been implemented over the past two years across the park in general and also concentrated in three trial plots. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Fire scars across Kakadu National Park - 2014 to 2017 comparison



- Tackling invasive weed species in Kakadu is an ongoing focus to protect the natural and cultural values of the park. We continued our successful management program for the Giant sensitive tree (*Mimosa pigra*), treated the three main infestations of Gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*) in the park.

Norfolk Island National Park

- The park has maintained a predator-free network of eighty green parrot (*Cyanoramphus cookii*) nest sites within the Mount Pitt section of the national park for 2016-17. Maintenance has been ongoing and the whole network is still available to birds. Cat trapping has been ongoing for the whole year with about fifty cats trapped. We expanded our rodent baiting network increasing our active bait stations from 800 in 2015-16 to 1,800.
- The population of the endangered green parrot on Norfolk Island is increasing with an estimated 2016 adult population of 350-400 birds (an increase from 200-250 in 2015) and 77 successfully fledged chicks (up from 61 in 2015). This includes fourteen active nests as at May 2017, which is good news for increasing the parrot population.
- A trial translocation to establish an insurance population of green parrots on Phillip Island commenced in 2017. All the infrastructure needs and planning for the translocation of green parrots to Phillip Island were completed on time such as temporary aviaries, watering stations and transport boxes. The first green parrots (eight individuals) were transferred to Phillip Island in April 2017. After a successful first three weeks, seven of the birds died the following month, the cause of which is currently unknown. The final bird was returned to Norfolk Island but also died. Following discussions with partner organisations on the Green Parrot Advisory Panel, the next lot of chicks will spend more time on Norfolk Island before transferring to Phillip Island. This will ensure they are closer for more intensive monitoring and veterinary care if required.

Christmas Island National Park

- A planned second island wide cat baiting program was severely hampered by record rainfall of twice the average (greater than five metres was recorded). The longevity of baits was negatively affected due to the unseasonably wet conditions. The program refocused on other control methods including targeted trapping which proved effective in these circumstances.
- Supercolonies of the introduced yellow crazy ant (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) kill red land crabs in the rainforest. This has a huge impact on the entire rainforest ecosystem on Christmas Island. The indirect biocontrol micro wasp (*Tachardiaephagus somervillei*) was imported into Christmas Island in December 2016 and first released into the environment in January 2017. The micro wasps reduce the food source of the yellow crazy ants. As at June 2017, 15,000 wasps had been produced in the breeding facility on island and had been released at four monitoring sites. Please see case study 3 on page 45 for details on our efforts to control tramp ants in our reserves.

- One of the largest baby red crab returns on record occurred in December 2016 to January 2017. With a prolonged very wet “dry” season and onset of the wet season the migration continued for an extended period. Road closures, road underpasses and crab fencing, along with public support, acceptance and adherence to the mitigation measures meant the seasonal migration was very successfully managed. For the first time, the migration went ‘live’ to an internet audience. Please see case study 4 on page 46 for details on this exciting initiative.



A handful of tiny red crabs. Millions of tiny crabs return to Christmas Island each year, riding the ebb and flow of ocean currents. (Photo: Parks Australia)

Booderee National Park

- The eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*), also known as the eastern native cat, is a medium-sized carnivorous dasyurid marsupial native to Australia. Booderee National Park represents the habitat that typified the last eastern quoll strongholds on the mainland. It is important for this species to be part of Booderee’s ecosystem. In planning translocations, close consultation with experts and careful consideration needs to be given to address a range of complex issues, such as appropriate genetics of source populations and reduction of threats in the receiving environment, such as foxes and cats. A detailed translocation plan for this species is in preparation.
- We had much to celebrate in June with the discovery of the first Southern brown bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*) born in the park in more than a century. As a result of collaboration with the Australian National University, the Forestry Corporation of NSW, the National Environment Science Program Threatened Species Recovery Hub and the Taronga Conservation Society, the project translocated its first population of bandicoots to Booderee from near Eden, in south-east NSW. The discovery is a promising sign that Booderee’s new residents are settling in to their new home. It is intended that Booderee will welcome another 15 bandicoots in 2018. Regular fox control activities in the park will help to keep the bandicoots—and long-nosed potoroos (*Potorous tridactylus*)—safer from predation and improve their chances of survival.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

- Mala (*Lagorchestes hirsutus*), a small marsupial hare-wallaby with reddish-orange fur and is a listed threatened species. It is also culturally significant to the traditional owners of the park. Successful control of rabbits and other threats in the park has produced one of the most resilient mala populations and greatly improves the long-term outlook for the species. Surveys in 2016-17 indicate that the population trend of the mala population is increasing. Initial discussions have commenced with NT Parks and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy about any future relocation of mala. Developing a forward strategy to cater for an expanding population is a priority for 2017-18.

Pulu Keeling National Park

- The endangered Cocos buff banded rail (*Hypotaenidia phillippensis andrewsi*) continues to flourish under the Parks Australia reintroduction project on the Cocos Keeling islands. On Horsburgh Island, the original founder population is thriving, increasing from 39 individuals in 2013, to 97 in 2016. The most recent count of 140 individuals in 2017, which is near carrying capacity population for the island, confirms the program's success. Parks Australia employees have detected individuals occurring on three other southern atoll islands with increased frequency. This confirms the birds are steadily extending their distribution through self-dispersal. Parks Australia employees will continue to actively monitor this species. Future management action will focus on threat abatement activities for the short to medium term to give the birds the best chance of recovery.

Australian National Botanic Gardens

- Successful Gardens' partnership projects resulted in the translocation of several threatened species including *Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*, *Pomaderris delicata* and *Hakea pulvinifera*. In addition for *P. delicata*, ex-situ plants at the Gardens have successfully produced over 9,500 seeds that are banked in the Garden's National Seed Bank. The Gardens has developed a genotype collection method to provide a better mechanism to understand and track genetic composition of ex-situ conservation collections of seed and other plant material held in the Gardens and National Seed Bank.

Commonwealth Marine Reserves

- Coral reefs occur in many Commonwealth marine reserves and in the Christmas Island and Pulu Keeling (Cocos Island) National Parks. Coral bleaching occurs when unusual conditions, such as high sea temperatures, stress the coral and kill the organisms that give the coral its colour. Bleached corals often die if the stress persists. Coral reefs that have high rates of coral death following bleaching can take many years or decades to recover.
- Parks Australia, in collaboration with research partners, undertakes regular assessments of coral bleaching in our marine reserves. High ocean temperatures in summer 2017 triggered coral bleaching in the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve. Preliminary indications are that this bleaching event was more widespread but less severe than bleaching recorded in the Coral Sea in 2016. Bleaching in the Coral Sea is generally consistent with bleaching occurring in the adjacent Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In the north-west, Mermaid Reef and Ashmore Reef Commonwealth marine reserves experienced minor bleaching in 2016. No coral bleaching assessments were undertaken the first half of 2017 and there are no reports of bleaching to date. Planning is underway for the Australian Institute of Marine Science to survey coral health at Mermaid Reef and Ashmore Reef Commonwealth Marine Reserves in late 2017.
- Parks Australia continues to liaise with the Australian Institute of Marine Science to prepare for and coordinate research around future coral bleaching events in the north-west.

- On Christmas Island, Parks Australia continues to support the University of Western Australia's research into reef changes over time, including the bleaching event in 2016. Preliminary results from recent monitoring shows some reef recovery in many sites around Christmas Island, with the exception of Flying Fish Cove. On the Cocos Keeling islands, our collaboration with the Western Australia Department of Fisheries will continue to monitor marine sites for bleaching impacts.
- Parks Australia continues to work with researchers to understand and manage the impacts of tropical fire ants at Ashmore Reef Commonwealth Marine Reserve. Researchers undertaking surveys of marine turtles and sea snakes in April 2017 completed observations of tropical fire ants. The ants appeared to have little impact on turtle nests examined over the 10-day period, in contrast to observations during a previous visit to the park. Options for the future management of this invasive ant will be considered following consultation with experts in 2017.
- The Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve and locations at Pimpernel Rock within the Solitary Islands Commonwealth Marine Reserve protect significant aggregation sites for the critically endangered east coast population of Grey nurse sharks (*Carcharias taurus*). Over many years, Parks Australia has monitored this species at these locations. In 2017 the project was adapted in response to analysis of the project data compiled to date. Additional acoustic listening stations will be installed in August 2017 with a report on project outcomes expected in November 2018.
- Vessel monitoring systems are an efficient and cost effective tool to help fishers to do the right thing. In the coming years, the Director of National Parks will collaborate with industry to investigate innovative technologies and systems—including vessel monitoring systems—that can assist marine users to follow the rules in marine parks. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority already requires operators accessing Commonwealth fisheries to have vessel monitoring systems. Vessel monitoring systems can include an alert service to tell fishers when they are entering a zone where their fishing method is not allowed. This has proven to be highly effective in assisting businesses and individuals to comply with marine park zones. The fishing industry will be consulted before any new requirements for vessel monitoring systems are implemented.

2. Deliver a consistent approach to planning and implementation of fire and emergency response programs across the estate.

- Parks Australia's fire management responsibilities include fire management planning, fire risk management, prescribed burn planning and implementation, visitor safety and fire response. The Director of National Parks maintains fire response capabilities at Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks. Park employees have primary responsibility for fire response in these national parks. In addition to statutory functions under the EPBC Act, the Director also has a range of obligations under the leases for the three jointly managed parks: Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta.

- In 2016-17 the Parks Australia Executive Board approved a 10-year Fire Management Statement that provides the overarching framework to guide policy and operational actions across our reserves.
- To avoid operational confusion, we have separated fire and emergency response policies and procedures.

3. Develop a system for evaluating ecosystem health and resilience across the range of ecosystems in Commonwealth reserves.

- In 2016-17 we made good progress towards establishing ecological baselines against which to monitor future trends in the reserves. Results of research and long-term monitoring conducted by employees and research partners has provided a clearer idea of the abundance and distribution of a range of important species (both threatened species and invasive species) in many terrestrial reserves. Examples included populations of mammals in Booderee National Park, locations of yellow crazy ant supercolonies on Christmas Island and status of other important ecological assets, such as the number and size of patches of vegetation in Kakadu that are not affected by fire each year.
- For the marine estate, a variety of work is being undertaken to establish ecological baselines and monitor the condition over time. In particular, this includes shallow reef ecosystems (including both coral and rocky reefs) that provide representative examples of diverse reef habitats, species and marine ecological communities. As well as their high biodiversity values, shallow reefs are generally highly valued by society for conservation, nature-based recreation and tourism, as well as other uses.
- Our reserves represent an extremely diverse set of ecosystems and continued research, monitoring and analysis is required in 2017-18 to further improve our understanding. This is an area of ongoing work.
- Knowledge about ecological baselines will be used to report on different aspects of ecosystem condition across our reserves. This will enable us to set more specific management targets and to monitor the status of individual threatened species.
- We have collated and reviewed information about methods for evaluating ecosystem condition from Europe, North America and Australia. This information is used to design an integrated report-card framework for monitoring ecosystem condition across our terrestrial and marine reserves. Factors for consideration include the status of priority species and ecological communities, the condition and quality of wildlife habitat such as vegetation and water, the functioning of ecological processes, and the presence of threats.

4. Cultural action plans will underpin cultural heritage management at the jointly managed parks

- The cultural values of Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee are diverse and include rock art, cultural knowledge and practices, other cultural sites and historic sites. Cultural Heritage Action Plans will underpin cultural heritage management for each of the jointly managed parks and will guide our employees to support traditional owners and communities looking after culture.
- Kakadu National Park continues to implement activities from its Cultural Heritage Action Plan. The annual rock art program continued and the park has developed a women's ranger team to assist with park management activities relating to looking after culture. A cultural awareness induction and training program is being prepared for Board approval and a cross-cultural training program is run for all park employees and stakeholders.
- While a review of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Cultural Heritage Action Plan was postponed for 2016-17, the park continued to prioritise conducting and documenting more cultural on-country activities, guided by senior *Anangu* through the revised Board of Management's Cultural Heritage and Scientific Consultative Committee.
- Development of a cultural heritage strategy for Booderee National Park is currently on hold pending the Board's consideration of the structure and function of a dedicated Office of Joint Management. We anticipate that the office will include a team of employees to support joint management and that it will be a responsibility of this team to progress development of the strategy for the park.

5. Management plans for all Commonwealth marine reserves are in place.

- The first of two statutory consultations for the making of management plans was completed on 31 October 2016. The comment period on the intention to prepare management plans ran from 5 September to 31 October and resulted in 54,322 submissions. These submissions included 212 individual submissions and 54,110 submissions from 16 different petitions. The comments have been taken into account in the preparation of draft management plans. The second statutory process on draft management plans commenced on 21 July 2017.

Tackling invasive ants in our reserves

Invasive, foreign tramp ants pose one of the biggest challenges to Australia's biodiversity. We are tackling the yellow crazy ant on Christmas Island, the tropical fire ant at Ashmore Reef and the African big-headed ant at Cooina in Kakadu National Park. These ants are highly successful invaders, requiring new and novel solutions.

Three hundred micro-wasps were introduced to Christmas Island from Malaysia to combat yellow crazy ants in December 2016. These wasps kill the food source of introduced yellow crazy ants and by doing so prevent the formation of supercolonies that kill red land crabs and other species that inhabit the island's rainforest. To date we have over 15,000 wasps released into four supercolonies. We monitor monthly to determine the scale of the impact wasps have on the ants.



Yellow crazy ants on Christmas Island tending to sugary scale. Micor-wasps released on the island will target scale insects, reducing the availability of scale deposits upon which the ants rely. (Photo: Parks Australia)

Researchers discovered that tropical fire ants had little impact green turtle nests at Ashmore Reef Marine Park in April 2017. But as we've learned from other invasive ants, that's no reason for complacency. In July 2017 the National Environmental Science Program brought together a range of experts—from ant, seabird and turtle biologists to biosecurity experts to workshop intervention options. Next steps are likely to involve monitoring of ants and seabirds and to trial a cost effective baiting dispersal method.

The African big-headed ant is recognised as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species. In 2016, rangers were alerted to an infestation of these ants at Cooina, a popular visitor area in Kakadu National Park. Rangers found the size of the infestation was much larger than first thought at around 4.5 hectares. We immediately commenced an eradication programme using baiting and undertaking follow up-surveys. Our quick and effective response was a success and no African big-headed ants have been detected at Kakadu since August 2016.

CASE STUDY 4

Cameras, lights, action - sharing the Christmas Island Red Crab Migration with the world

In the past, the only witnesses to mass crab spawning on Christmas Island were a couple of dedicated researchers, some of our employees and islanders.

Now, thanks to an initiative from Parks Australia employees, the world-famous annual red crab spawning can be viewed by anyone with a desktop or mobile phone.

Presented by Parks Australia's Jason Turl, the spawning was streamed live on the mornings of 24 and 25 November 2016 via the social media platform *Periscope*. Viewers were able to engage with the broadcast in real time by posting messages or sending 'hearts' to show their appreciation of being able to be part of this incredible sight.

Following the success of the live streaming, we plan to repeat and extend the live feeds for the 2018 migration.

This great natural event has grown in popularity in recent years, and attracts many visitors to the island and many more 'virtual' visitors to our Christmas Island National Park website, wanting to learn more about this unique island ecosystem. This is good news for our park and for tourism on the island.

You can download the *Periscope* app and follow @Parks_Australia or find us at: www.periscope.tv/Parks_Australia.



Jason Turl from Christmas Island National Park presenting a live stream of the red crab migration via the *Periscope* social media platform. (Photo: Parks Australia).

MULTIPLE BENEFITS FOR TRADITIONAL OWNERS

To support the aspirations of traditional owners in managing their land and sea country

Performance measure:	Increase in the numbers of Indigenous employees and/or contractors directly or indirectly providing park services
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020 • 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

On track. On-park employment is a priority for our Director and the traditional owners in each park. Overall, Indigenous employment levels have increased in recent years. In 2016-17, 154 (29 per cent) of all Parks Australia ongoing and non-ongoing employees (including casuals) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, an increase from 116 (23.5 per cent) in 2015-16, 70 (17.5 per cent) in 2014-15 and 65 (16 per cent) in 2013-14.

At our jointly managed parks we have generally higher rates of employees who identify as being Indigenous. Sixty-two per cent of employees at Kakadu identify as being Indigenous and 66 per cent identify at Booderee. At Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park we still have work ahead of us to improve our rate of direct Indigenous employment (currently 26 per cent, noting this has increased by nine per cent in the past 12 months). In addition to positions within the Parks Australia structure, members of the Mutitjulu community at Uluru-Kata Tjuta participate in the Mutitjulu Community Ranger scheme, funded by the Director, sharing their traditional knowledge and understanding with Parks Australia and assisting in the management of culture and the unique heritage of the park.

The improved overall Indigenous employment rates are due to a significant increase in casual employment opportunities on the jointly managed parks. This can provide a career pathway for traditional owners to develop the relevant skills to transition to more permanent employment as opportunities arise. Our Director is committed to supporting a range of opportunities to assist this transition for Indigenous employees from non-ongoing to ongoing employment, including capacity building, career pathways and retention strategies. Through these initiatives, the Indigenous employment rate for permanent employees and the Australian Public Service classification of Indigenous employees, which tends to be at the lower levels, should improve over time.

Each of the three jointly managed national parks has a specified Aboriginal trainee position. These trainees complete secondary school through paid apprenticeships, gaining nationally accredited training in conservation and park management. Trainees are provided with on-the-job experience such as assisting with ranger duties and natural resource management. Trainee programs are designed to improve the skills of local people, particularly in conservation and land management.

In 2016-17 we continued to use our purchasing power to generate economic activity for Indigenous people and traditional owners. In addition to Indigenous employees and contractors directly employed by Parks Australia, we also retain Indigenous contractors under the Australian Government's Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy that commenced on 1 July 2015. As at 30 June 2017, we had 99 reportable contracts and sub-contracts¹ to 28 Indigenous suppliers totalling over \$2.1 million. Ninety-three per cent of the contracts were for work in remote areas.

Details of 2016-17 procurements are reported in the Department's annual report that is available at environment.gov.au/about-us/accountability-reporting/annual-reports².

Source of data: Departmental Employee/Manager Self Service statistics and Indigenous Procurement register data. It is voluntary whether employees identify as Indigenous on the Department's Employee Self Service system.

¹ The Australian Government's Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy requires entities to report contracts and sub-contracts with Indigenous suppliers that were established in the previous 12 months and/or that are 'active' as at 30 June 2017

² The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet have advised that active contracts established before the commencement of the Indigenous Procurement Policy on 1 July 2015 can no longer be reported by Commonwealth Entities. The Director of National Parks has a number of longstanding arrangements with Indigenous businesses that will now be excluded from the Department's Indigenous Procurement Policy report. For this reason, there has been a substantial decrease in the number and value of contracts reported by the Director of National Parks.

Analysis of performance

Our outcome for this goal is that traditional owners receive a measurable economic benefit and a measurable culture and country benefit from management of their land and sea country.

Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks are jointly managed by the Director of National Parks and the traditional Aboriginal owners. Under these arrangements the traditional Aboriginal owners have granted long-term leases to the Director so their land may be protected as a national park and enjoyed by all Australians. Part of the agreement is that management of the parks should include traditional land management skills and the application of Indigenous knowledge, and that employees will work with traditional Aboriginal owners, local Indigenous communities and with schools to share knowledge and to encourage interest in working with Parks Australia and on country in the future. The results presented below reflect the Director's ongoing commitment to honour the lease arrangements.

In addition to ongoing major contracts for maintenance activities in Booderee and Kakadu, in 2016-17 we also facilitated new direct employment opportunities by hosting tourism events within our parks, such as the Taste of Kakadu food festival.

We employed 42 *Bininj* people, to conduct bush food harvesting, and painting and weaving demonstrations. We also contracted the services of several Indigenous businesses and engaged three Indigenous chefs to conduct bush food cooking demonstrations. Please see case study 8 on page 62.

We made significant progress in improving Boards of Management governance procedures that will further empower the Boards and traditional owners to make informed decisions in relation to looking after country.

Ongoing, prioritised support for on country trips and engagement in day to day management was extremely valuable for Parks Australia employees, by improving awareness of culture and country and nurturing understanding and trust between traditional owners and our employees. One such trip in 2016-17 was to *Patji* homeland south of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park that involved a significant number of park employees and senior *Anangu*.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Work with traditional owners to develop Indigenous employment pathways and associated mentoring, training and support
- Work with traditional owners to improve governance to better reflect and achieve their aspirations and priorities for park management
- Develop baselines for monitoring economic, social and cultural benefits of joint management in consultation with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Celebrate the role of joint management of our places

- In 2016, traditional owner representatives from Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee National Parks, together with traditional owners from other jointly management parks around Australia, led a highly engaging and successful workshop at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress. The chance to share experiences and approaches to land management with Indigenous people from places as diverse as Alaska and Easter Island was truly inspiring. Feedback from both traditional owners and workshop participants was overwhelmingly positive.

2. Work with traditional owners to develop Indigenous employment pathways and associated mentoring, training and support

- The Director of National Parks has commenced an Indigenous Pathways project to incorporate and formally recognise Indigenous peoples' traditional skills and knowledge in the management of jointly managed parks.

- The Indigenous Pathways project will include a review of Indigenous training and capacity building programs, and will consider options to improve or replace existing programs and partnerships, develop new and innovative programs, and establish new partnerships with external organisations if required.
- The project will also determine which Indigenous activities are most effective at increasing the level of Indigenous employment and engagement across the organisation. The resulting plan will recommend the most suitable pathway for each place based on Indigenous employment and engagement needs. It aims to increase participation under each pathway by providing an overview of local activities and monitor progress to ensure high level targets and reporting requirements are met. Local site-specific improvement plans will also be developed to support the overall plan.

3. Work with traditional owners to improve governance to better reflect and achieve their aspirations and priorities for park management.

- In close consultation with the Boards of Management, we implemented a range of improvements to enhance the decision-making capabilities of the Boards by improving governance systems and processes.
- At Kakadu, we incorporated two ‘*Bininj* days’ to improve engagement in Board meetings and to better address issues arising from traditional owner Board members. A standing agenda item is now incorporated into formal meetings to give traditional owners an opportunity to discuss issues in full Board meetings. The Kakadu Board is also making greater use of sub-committees to operate at the strategic level. There has been good participation in the three committees established to date—the Feral Animal Working Group, the Budget and Management Sub-Committee and the Fire and Carbon Committee.
- At Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the park will trial measuring Board satisfaction with governance improvements that occurred during 2016-17 in early 2017-18. If successful, this approach may be adopted by our other jointly managed parks, as appropriate. While not formally measured, the changes in governance at Kakadu have resulted in strong input from the Board members with the additional process for addressing *Bininj* issues.
- At Booderee, stage one of the Joint Management Futures project defined options for sole management and identified a range of recommendations to improve governance. The recommendations relate to sensitive and ongoing community discussions and will not be made public. Stage two of the project will seek to develop a roadmap towards selected options.
- On country trips across 2016-17 facilitated exchange of knowledge between employees and traditional owners. At Uluru-Kata Tjuta, several on-country trips were conducted over the last year. In addition to the Patji homeland trip a number of other smaller trips were also conducted between park employees and *Anangu*, including for the collection of ‘bush tucker’ for interpretive and cultural maintenance purposes.

- At Uluru-Kata Tjuta, policy-focused decision-making support structures were developed. This included the completion of Parks Australia and Central Land Council traditional owner consultation guidelines, the completion of the Board's operating rules and preparing new terms of reference for the Board's tourism and cultural heritage-scientific consultative committees. This will effectively make their functions more like that of working groups. A new approach to operational planning and reporting was also adopted, which has stronger links to the park's Management Plan and the Board's strategic priorities. More outcome and indicator focused Board reporting systems have also been developed and adopted, including for reporting on traditional owner employment. The format of Board meetings has also changed, which includes less reporting of routine activities and an *Anangu* agenda items section, where *Anangu* can raise specific items of concern without the need for Board papers.
- Our park planning processes, including management planning, incorporate traditional owner priorities that have been established through participatory planning, monitoring and reporting. For example, at Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the 2016-17 fire management program for the park was planned and implemented with *Anangu* and also conducted in collaboration with the Central Land Council in relation to fire management along park boundaries and the Indigenous Protected Area that surrounds the park. Preparation of the park's new management plan commenced with a participatory planning process conducted for the Board to prepare its vision statement for the plan.
- Parks Australia employees continued to engage traditional owners and traditional knowledge in day-to-day park management activities, with a strong focus on engaging young traditional owners, such as through traineeships and continuing the popular junior ranger programs. For example, at Booderee, 28 students participated in the program and we also hosted a student-based apprenticeship and participation in workplace programs on park. The park commenced planning for a 'Red Rock to Black Rock' trip occurred to facilitate students travelling to Uluru-Kata Tjuta from Booderee to participate in park activities and share knowledge. The trip is expected to occur in November 2017.
- Parks Australia also supported a women's culture camp, providing the opportunity to access remote sites of importance to a women's song line. This facilitated the maintenance and passing on of traditional knowledge from the elders to the younger women. This trip was attended by two employees and Parks Australia provided funding to support the project, delivered in partnership with the Mutitjulu Foundation and the Central Land Council, who coordinated the project. Please see case study 5 on page 53.
- Recommendations from phase 1 of the Joint Management Futures project to develop options for sole management were presented to Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council in June 2017. They will then be tabled with the Booderee Board of Management that will consider the best way forward during phase 2—developing a roadmap towards sole management.

- Developing appropriate approaches to monitor economic, social and cultural benefits to traditional owners from jointly managed parks takes careful consideration. We will continue our investigations in 2017-18.
- Multiple on-country programs for fire and general cultural activities including rock art were also undertaken at Kakadu.
- In 2016-17 traditional owner businesses attributed to six per cent of park services.
- In 2016-17 lease payments to traditional owners increased by 6.3 per cent.

4. Indigenous engagement program for establishment and management of Commonwealth marine reserves.

- Indigenous people have had cultural responsibilities for managing their sea country, including areas now in marine reserves, for thousands of years. Parks Australia is committed to working with Indigenous people to manage sea country within marine reserves. Parks Australia worked with representatives from land councils, native title representative bodies and Indigenous ranger groups at a National Indigenous Forum in 2016. At this forum a set of collaborative management principles to support Indigenous involvement in the management of our marine reserves was endorsed. These principles will inform our approach to implementing management plans for marine reserves, as well as the actions taken in each park. Parks Australia is also implementing a national Indigenous engagement program to build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with responsibilities for sea country in marine reserves over the long-term, and to support Indigenous ranger activities in marine reserves. Please see case study 2 on page 22.
- Cultural values are defined as living and cultural heritage values recognising Indigenous beliefs, practices and obligations for country, places of cultural significance and cultural heritage sites. In recognition of the importance of sea country to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and to help protect sea country values, the draft management plans for marine reserves networks in the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve outline what we know about cultural values for each marine reserve. Parks Australia is continuing to engage with traditional owners and Indigenous groups around the country to include more information in plans about cultural values and how we can work together to manage sea country.

Cultural Continuity at Uluru

Parks Australia worked together with the elder *Anangu* Women and the Central Land Council to put together the Connection to Country project—called *Kungka Kutjara Tjukurpa* Project: Continuing Connection to Country for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women. This project aims to enable the transferring of ceremonial and site related knowledge from elder women to younger generations of the *Kungka Kutjara* (two women) *Tjukurpa*. The project was a priority due to the knowledge potentially being lost with elder women. Various opportunities for funding this project were investigated, including approaching philanthropists and businesses. It would not have been possible without a real partnership approach between all the women, Parks Australia, the Central Land Council (CLC), Mutijulu Foundation, Northern Territory Parks and Digital Storytellers.

The trip took place in May 2017 with 50 women (aged nine to 90 years old) from Mutijulu, Ernabella, Areyonga, Pukatja, Alice Springs and the Watarrka area, two Parks Australia employees, seven Central Land Council staff, and a female film-maker from Digital Storytellers. We were also supported in the region by several rangers from Watarrka National Park.

The week involved two days of driving and walking and two days of flying in helicopters and walking to sites of importance to the *Kungka Kutjara* songline, where story was shared through song and inma. The women were happy to have the stories recorded for storage in a secure archive and will be edited by the women in coming months. The week's filming secures the knowledge for future generations. Some women were interviewed individually and there was discussion about a potential public product after editing of the archival material.

This type of work keeps culture strong, keeps culture alive, and ensures continuity for future generations.



Women on country for the *Kungka Kutjara Tjukurpa* Project. (Photo: Parks Australia)

We work together

Successive generations of traditional owners have managed our parks for tens of thousands of years. Improving employment opportunities for traditional owners, especially for younger and future generations, is an ongoing challenge in our jointly managed parks and a high priority in our agency. In late 2016, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management decided to host a regional employment pathways forum involving employers from across the red centre of Australia.

In May 2017, *Anangu* worked with the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation, Voyages Resort and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as well as senior Parks Australia management at a forum held at Uluru. Over 80 people attended.

Outcomes included:

- The importance of ‘two way’ (western and cultural ways) understanding and learning between *Anangu* and their employers.
- How to address well-being issues.
- Recognition that looking after country and culture is legitimate work.
- How to be better ‘job ready’—for both *Anangu* and employers.

The forum will help direct *Anangu* employment pathways within the park, as well as elsewhere in the Uluru region. It showed that we can find practical solutions that will make a difference when we sit down and talk together.



Regional Employment Pathways Forum held Yulara in May 2017. (Photo: Parks Australia)

AMAZING DESTINATIONS

*To offer world class natural and cultural experiences,
enhancing Australia's visitor economy*

Performance measure:	Maintain or improve the level of visitor satisfaction and number of visitors
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020 • 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

On track. Our target for 2016-17 was to achieve a five per cent increase in visitor numbers and maintain or increase levels of visitor satisfaction based on a new baseline set in 2015-16.

Visitation trends are sensitive to changing demographics and the global economic situation. Over 1.38 million people visited Commonwealth terrestrial reserves in 2016-17, an overall increase of four per cent compared to the previous year. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Gardens achieved increases in visitors of over nine per cent and just under seven per cent respectively while Kakadu National Park visitor numbers remained steady. These positive results reflect our continued efforts to build our marketing capability to increase visitation and provide new and exciting opportunities for visitors.

Table 10: Visitors to terrestrial reserves over five years

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of visitors to terrestrial reserves	1,300,309	1,291,000	1,279,600	1,328,535	1,383,979

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is an internationally recognised standard for measuring visitor satisfaction and customer loyalty. The NPS is one method we use to monitor visitor satisfaction in Kakadu National Park. The NPS for 2016-17 is 54.56 which equates to a very positive 88.2 per cent visitor satisfaction rating. This represents an increase of 6.56 from our score of 48 in 2015-16. Now that the NPS is established in Kakadu National Park, we plan to roll out the scoring methodology to other parks in the future.

In 2015-16 we contracted the University of Melbourne to undertake work on visitor survey and counting methodologies across Parks Australia's reserves and those in other states. In 2016-17 we implemented the recommendations of the report including improving how we develop standard visitor survey questions for all our reserves.

In 2016-17 we continued to review and update our brand to present a consistent and dynamic public 'face' for the Director and Parks Australia. For example, in July 2017 a new brand for marine parks was introduced, together with a proposal to formally change the name from 'Commonwealth marine reserves' to 'Australian Marine Parks', to help build awareness of these special places. Commencing in January 2016, we also invested in refreshing our website presence. The first pages for Kakadu National Park went 'live' in May 2017 and a new web presence for Australian Marine Parks went live in July. Scheduled upgrades will be rolled out to other parks in 2017-18.

Source of data: Visitor monitoring statistics, Net Promoter Score

Analysis of performance

We aim to maintain or increase our contribution to Australia's visitor economy. Our key strategy is to aim high and support our partners and commercial operators to develop new experiences and infrastructure by investing in tourism planning.

Our reserves offer an unparalleled diversity of visitor experiences in some of the most unique and precious natural and cultural places in Australia. In 2016-17 our reserves continued to draw significant numbers of visitors—in person and virtually via our websites and other media. In 2017 Kakadu National Park won the category of 'Major Tourist Attraction' in the Northern Territory Tourism Awards and Silver at the Australian Tourism Awards. The awards program recognizes excellence in tourism and the park enjoys a very positive 88.2 per cent visitor satisfaction rating.

Parks visitors are ever more connected to technology, social media and online information. Our Parks Australia social media channels reached an audience of over 30 million users, up from 17 million in 2015-16, representing a significant increase of 77 per cent on the previous year. Our website was visited by 13 per cent more viewers than in 2015-16 and 42 per cent more than in 2014-15.

Tour operators play an important role in helping visitors to access our parks, encouraging positive behaviour and in promoting the values of the reserves. There are 207 commercial tour operator permits or licences in place in Commonwealth terrestrial reserves. This is indicative of the total number of visitor experiences rather than operators as some operators hold multiple permits, particularly at Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta. Tour operators continue to bring over 40 per cent of visitors to Kakadu. We continue to work with these valued partners to improve standards in our campgrounds and on our walks.

A strong customer focus - best for business, best for visitors

We introduced a new system for visitors to Kakadu to purchase their passes online twelve months ago.

We are now seeing the results of the new system, and website sales have increased from three per cent, to 10 per cent, with nearly half the passes purchased on average 10 days prior to a visit.

By opening up sales opportunities to our business partners 74 per cent of all park passes are now distributed by tourism operators and sales agents.

An online satisfaction survey conducted in December 2016 reflected a high degree of satisfaction with the service.

Additionally, more people are accessing valuable safety information alongside their ticket purchase. People accessing our daily 'Road Report', which provides travellers with what they need to know about the park's roads has increased by 57 per cent. Downloads of our visitor guide app have increased by 31 per cent.

Being more digital means we can continue the conversation with our visitors and hear their feedback post travel. Our visitors are even taking time out to rate their visit, giving us an 88 per cent satisfaction score.

Development work to move Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park to online passes is well underway and expected to start early in 2018.



Screen shot of the Kakadu National Park home page parksaustralia.gov.au/kakadu/, a gateway for visitors to learn more about the park and to purchase their park passes.



Concept design by CHROFI for the new Ian Potter National Conservatory, to be constructed in the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Encourage increased visitation through opportunities for commercial operators to develop new, high quality visitor experiences
- Build and deliver our marketing capability to increase visitation
- Refresh and improve visitor infrastructure in high use areas
- Identify and pursue appropriate tourism opportunities within Commonwealth marine reserves.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Dream big and support our partners and commercial operators to develop new experiences and infrastructure by completing tourism planning.

- In April 2016, the Gardens commenced a competition to select an architect and their team to design the Ian Potter National Conservatory. An eminent jury chaired by award winning architect Richard Johnson AO judged the competition. Sydney firm CHROFI was judged the winner. See illustration on opposite page. The Minister announced the winning design in October 2016. CHROFI has commenced work on the next phase of the design with construction planned for 2018 and completed in 2019.
- A public art commission to develop a treehouse at the Gardens commenced with the selection of a concept developed by Cave Urban. Detailed design development was undertaken and construction will occur in the second half of 2017. Friends of the Gardens funded the project.
- The Bushland Nature Walk in the southern precinct of the Gardens was opened to the public in December 2016. The new walk provides access to the Black Mountain environment and includes interpretation signage that describes some of the flora and the impacts and influence of fire on the landscape. A surprising array of species flower in spring and there are fantastic views over Lake Burley Griffin and Parliament House from the viewing platform at the end of the walk.
- The Gardens developed a 'Being China Ready' plan for the Gardens. Implementation commenced with the production of a Mandarin Chinese language visitor guide and map and marketing brochure.
- The impending closure in 2021 of the Ranger uranium mine presents a risk and an opportunity for the local communities within the park, particularly in the town of Jabiru. The mine is surrounded by Kakadu National Park and operated by Energy Resources of Australia. Through 2016-17, Parks Australia continued to work with all stakeholders on the future of Jabiru, including the Northern Territory government, the tourism industry, the mine, traditional owners and relevant Australian Government agencies to stimulate and facilitate public and private tourism investment in the town.

- While we had aimed to complete and implement a Kakadu Tourism Master Plan in 2016-17, it was decided prudent to place the plan on hold pending a review of the implications of the mine closure and resolution of the future of the Jabiru township.
- Due to competing priorities for the park, full implementation of the Mary River Tourism Development Plan was delayed and will be revisited in 2017-18.
- In collaboration with the Northern Territory tourism industry, service level standards and guidelines for campgrounds and visitor amenities in Kakadu National Park were completed and uploaded onto the Parks Australia website in May 2017. These guidelines, coupled with the Park Opening Plan, have influenced the design of the new Access Report (replacing the previous Road Report) and have improved site information communicated daily to tourism operators.
- The Kakadu sign project was delayed to restructure the project prior to accelerating the roll out. A project manager was employed by the park to progress the project.
- The extension of an indigenous-owner safari tent business is in development. Precinct plans have been wrapped into a broader park-wide business plan.
- A project plan to help guide the preparation of a Cultural Centre master plan for the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park was completed and presented to the Board of Management. This project is a high priority for 2017-18. Extensive consultation is still underway and the final guidelines will be presented to the Board later in 2017.
- 'Swell Lodge' was chosen through an Expression of Interest process for eco accommodation in Christmas Island National Park and has been approved to set up eco lodges. Up to eight lodges will be set up near the Martin Point precinct of the Park. A 25-year lease with an extension option has been approved. Promotion of the eco-lodge has begun with the aim to open for business in 2018.
- In 2016-17 we continued to identify and pursue appropriate tourism opportunities within Commonwealth marine reserves. There are 154 active commercial tourism permits or approvals across the Commonwealth marine reserves. Commercial tourism activities in the marine reserves include charter fishing, nature watching, scuba diving and snorkelling.
- A pilot project to provide marketing support to existing Coral Sea tourism operators will be completed in 2017-18. Initial identification and scoping of potential tourism opportunities for Norfolk Island will be further developed as part of an ongoing Tourism and Visitor Experiences program.
- Parks Australia is working in partnership with Cairns Aquarium to profile the iconic Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve in the new attraction, due to open in late 2017. This is being delivered through a 10-year contract between Parks Australia and Cairns Aquarium to incorporate signage, 3D displays and educational material on the values of the Coral Sea reserve in both public and ticketed areas of the new aquarium facility.

- In 2016-17 we consulted with industry and stakeholders and completed scoping documents to support an e-ticketing system at Uluru-Kata Tjuta. We anticipate to begin Phase 1 of the roll-out in 2018. At Kakadu, the e-commerce system has been significantly enhanced based on user feedback. The system is even easier to use enabling reservations systems and the e-commerce system to ‘talk to each other’. An application program interface (API) integration with booking engines is due for release in late 2017. Online passes for Booderee National Park is scheduled for mid-2018.
- The Board supported three proposals from the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park expressions of interest process and these have commenced operations. As a result some employment opportunities have arisen, mainly with use of Segways. A by-product of the Expression of Interest process at Uluru-Kata Tjuta was the ‘Fork and View’ dining bus which has engaged a local indigenous food catering business to prepare food, increasing employment within that business.
- Parks Australia’s consumer website refresh is well underway with the staged roll-out of new content that started with Commonwealth marine reserves and Kakadu National Park. These changes are already seeing improvements in online performance and user experience. In the next phase, for terrestrial parks—with Uluru-Kata Tjuta initially—travellers will be presented with extensive trip planning information and will have the ability to search by interest and time. This will increase the conversion of potential visitors viewing the website ‘lookers’ to people booking their visit ‘bookers’ as a key barrier (confusion about what to do and where to go) has been overcome.
- Developing online resources that provide comprehensive information on Commonwealth marine reserves is a key deliverable. Online tools will provide useful information for those who have the opportunity to visit our reserves and a virtual visitor experience for those who cannot. The resources will enable researchers and tour operators to apply for their permits online. We anticipate that the site will go ‘live’ in 2018 for marine reserve content. We will track usage and reach of the tool.
- Arrangements to support an Indigenous tour guide training program at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park are in progress. We are confident the project is on track to launch in 2017-18.
- A Sustainable Business Plan is proposed for Booderee National Park. The purpose of the plan will be to identify and then implement priority opportunities to increase traditional owner revenue and employment generated from commercial enterprises operating within or in connection to the park.

CASE STUDY 8

A Taste of Kakadu

Food is a key part of modern tourism and it's one of the main reasons travellers from around the world choose a particular destination.

When culture and nature are combined, as it is at World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, a unique food style is created.

To showcase this, in May 2017 Kakadu proudly hosted an interactive food festival 'A Taste of Kakadu'. It ran for ten days and had over 50 events, all celebrating local food.

The festival sought to provide opportunities for Indigenous engagement and employment through tourism, raise the profile of the park and strengthen key business partnerships.

Tourism NT and Tourism Australia were both big supporters of the event, and the park worked closely with local indigenous corporations including Cooida and the Croc Hotel.

During the event, over 40 Indigenous people from the community were employed. An Indigenous food business, Kakadu Kitchen, was launched, and organisers partnered with two businesses owned and operated by local Aboriginal corporations.

Media coverage was very positive and had significant 'reach' with exposure on most major commercial TV stations, news.com.au, ABC Radio, local and national newspapers and the Tourism Australia blog. Over 600,000 people viewed our social media channels.

The festival was an outstanding success, with feedback from locals and visitors overwhelmingly positive—'we've never seen anything like this' and 'it's fantastic that the park is doing this sort of thing'.

With four renowned Indigenous chefs sharing their expertise with us, the future is bright for cuisine in Kakadu. We are hoping to see a rise in visitation to the park now the message is out about this unique experience.



Ways of working

Our 2016-20 corporate plan outlines four ‘ways of working’ that set out how we approach our business and in turn support how we achieve outcomes under the goals. Two of the performance measures—‘increase the knowledge base for long-term adaptive management of the marine reserves’ and ‘enhance level of active management of marine reserves and engagement of users and stakeholders’—are directly represented in portfolio budget statements.

Evidence based management

Evidence about performance in managing our places is used to adapt and make decisions

Performance measure:	Percentage of annual reserve report cards considered and responded to by Parks Australia Executive Board
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

On track. The Parks Australia Executive Board is made up of the Director, all Branch Heads, the Chief Finance Officer and the Manager, Protected Areas Policy and Planning Section. The Executive group meet every month to discuss issues affecting the Parks Australia division and the Director of National Parks. The standing agenda includes a roster for all reserves to provide in-depth reporting on operational plan progress, performance monitoring and to present annual reserve report cards. Actions arising from these meetings are minuted, followed up with responsible areas and reported at a subsequent meeting. The Board uses a ‘traffic light’ system to monitor performance, identify and prioritise issues and to address concerns about the progress of projects.

As for 2015-16, the Executive Board considered all annual reserve report cards submitted to it and responded at the meetings or out of session.

Source of data: count of plans in place and reporting to the Executive Board

Performance measure:	Percentage of annual reserve report cards produced and approved
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

On track. Annual report cards use place-specific indicators to describe the health of their natural, social, economic and cultural values, based on the best available data.

In 2016-17, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Pulu Keeling and Norfolk Island national parks joined the Gardens and Christmas Island in producing annual reserve report cards. Kakadu and Booderee national parks are advanced in preparing their plans that we expect will be approved and reported against in 2016-17. Annual reserve report cards for the marine reserves will be prepared when management plans are in place.

Source of data: count of plans in place reporting to the Executive Board

Performance measure:	Increase the knowledge base for long term adaptive management of the marine reserves
Source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020 • 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

On track. Parks Australia commissioned a review of all published marine science relevant to Commonwealth marine reserves, including work that we commissioned or were involved in. This review found that there had been a significant increase in publications such as journal articles and reports that are related to the marine environment that reserves are part of. The review found that between 2010 and 2016 the number of publications potentially relevant to Commonwealth marine reserves more than doubled.

Source of data: the Department's Species Profile and Threats Database, the Atlas of Living Australia, Bathymetry surveys, Geoscience Australia, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), Bush Blitz

Analysis of performance

The long-term outcome for this way of working is that evidence about performance in managing our places is used to adapt and make decisions.

Easily accessible and user-ready environmental information is a strategic asset of Parks Australia and the foundation from which we are able to make informed management decisions and accurately report our performance. Parks Australia's Biodiversity Science section continue to guide the direction and prioritisation of science activities across our estate. Regular meetings of science networks across all reserves and with the Department ensures we collectively stay informed and up to date on research activities, emerging trends and methods and opportunities for collaboration.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Increase our understanding of the values and use of natural places
- Promote consistency and coordination of scientific direction across Parks Australia
- Review Parks Australia's Knowledge Management Strategy and investigate broader application
- Innovation through the evaluation and expansion of remote technologies to monitor use, compliance and biological status of Commonwealth marine reserves.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Monitor and report on our management actions and use this information to review our priorities and adapt our practices.

- All our places and shared services sections had operational plans in place to cover the 2016-17 financial year. These plans link our goals to on-ground management and planned activity to the budget and employment levels. Operational plans bring legislative requirements and management plan implementation together, allowing activities to be tracked through to the performance agreements of individual employees. They also structure the range of reporting obligations, including to the Executive Board and the annual report. The 2016-17 'second generation' plans now being used improved the links between budgets, employment and operational planning.

2. Provide guidance, direction and prioritisation for science activities across Parks Australia.

- A Science Direction Statement is nearly completed for the ecological aspects of Parks Australia's scientific work across both marine and terrestrial parks. The statement sets out a series of principles to guide our approach to science and a list of priority science topics on which we would like to focus our efforts (including in partnership with other organisations) to support our goal of achieving 'resilient places'. The statement will help to encourage research that is aligned with our long-term goals and objectives and targeted to address our science priorities, facilitate stronger partnerships with other organisations, and ensure that robust and relevant scientific evidence is available to inform our management decisions.

3. Catalogue and mine existing literature for all Commonwealth reserves to inform new science directions.

- In 2016-17 we continued to address knowledge gaps and impediments to recovery that have been identified for priority threatened plant species in Commonwealth reserves. For example, the National Seed Bank conducted a review to analyse available data on seed storage behaviour and germination for threatened plants from Commonwealth reserves with a view to prioritising future seed banking and research efforts to support in-situ conservation of these threatened plants.
- Putting research into action, with support from the Threatened Species Commissioner, a report produced by the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research (CANBR) in 2016-17 on threatened plant species across Parks Australia terrestrial reserves, employees from Norfolk Island National Park have undertaken intensive field surveys of some critically endangered plant species and documented population sizes and status.
- The Gardens continued to collaborate with a range of partners and stakeholders to prioritise conservation actions, and to share and seek resources to deliver outcomes to help secure some of the 30 priority species for the Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy. The NSW South East Bioregion working group (a partnership between the Gardens, Booderee National Park, various botanic gardens and NSW threatened species officers and land managers) is focussing effort on *Banksia vincentia* and the magenta lilly pilli (*Syzygium paniculatum*).
- Another Threatened Species Commissioner supported project in the Gardens is assessing and enhancing ex-situ genetic diversity for conservation. The project has developed methodologies over two years for assessing genetic diversity in current stocks of threatened species that are held ex-situ in botanic gardens collections in order to prioritise species for collection. The recently completed project report presents detailed summaries of the outcomes of the analysis and profiles 17 species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* that were targeted in a fieldwork program, to enhance material held ex-situ for conservation and research purposes.
- Partly drawing on results of other work outlined in this report, significant progress has been made towards developing strategies for research and monitoring across our reserves. The new Science Direction Statement will set the overall direction and priorities for our science.
- The decision tool developed during National Environmental Research Program (2011-15) to transparently and logically prioritise management activities based on efficiency and likely effectiveness has been used to produce a prioritised list of conservation actions for threatened plants across all terrestrial reserves. The results have been used to shape corporate planning for 2017-18 and this prioritisation process will be extended to actions for threatened animals in 2017-18.

- Ex-situ conservation—including captive breeding, storage of genetic material, plant propagation, reintroducing species to areas in which they once occurred, or moving individuals to new areas to create additional populations—is an increasingly important part of our conservation efforts. We have produced guidelines for decision-making, planning and implementation of such programs. This will help to provide direction and transparency for future ex-situ conservation programs undertaken by Parks Australia, either with partner organisations or as sole species managers.
- In collaboration with external researchers and other experts, detailed research and monitoring priorities have been reviewed for several individual parks, including Booderee and Kakadu National Parks. This will continue for other reserves next year.
- Progress has been made in clarifying research and monitoring for the network of 14 Commonwealth marine reserves making up the South-east Network under the current (2013-2023) management plan. This has included discussions with the South-East Forum (advisory committee), National Environmental Science Program, and the National Marine Science Committee on science priorities and future directions.
- Work is underway to prepare an overarching strategy for science in marine reserves. This will be finalised in parallel with the completion of management plans for Commonwealth marine reserves.
- We now have a clearer strategic overview of science priorities in the different reserves and of relevant ways of addressing these priorities. This will help us both in deploying our resources in a more coordinated and effective way and in establishing and strengthening long-term collaborations with research partners.
- Managed by the Department, the National Environmental Science Programme (NESP) is a six-year program to assist decision makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia's environment by funding world-class biodiversity and science.
- Our strong partnership with the NESP continued in 2016-17. Collectively, the research being conducted by the NESP hubs, particularly Threatened Species Recovery, Marine Biodiversity and Northern Australia Environmental Resources, is addressing a wide range of important questions on Australian ecosystems and biodiversity, and will produce information that will benefit conservation management in our reserves. Parks Australia has engaged closely in NESP hubs to help guide priorities to be addressed. Employees have contributed to and commented on project proposals and research plans, and provided assistance to individual research projects in our reserves.
- Building on work by its predecessor, the National Environmental Research Program (NERP), NESP is developing and documenting standardised monitoring techniques for use across the marine environment. This includes survey design, how equipment is deployed and data analysis. This will allow Parks Australia and other organisations to collect monitoring data that can be compared across multiple reserves, and between areas in and outside individual reserves.

- In addition, several NESP projects are directly contributing to scientific knowledge in some specific Commonwealth reserves. These projects are making an important contribution to understanding the biodiversity of some of our reserves and how it can best be managed into the future. These projects include:
 - ▶ Enhancing threatened species outcomes for Christmas Island is a project in partnership between NESP and Parks Australia that aims to provide evidence to directly inform management of threatened species on Christmas Island. It includes studies on the ecology and conservation of the endemic Christmas Island flying fox, on how removing cats may affect the rat population on the island (and in turn whether this has effects on nesting birds), and investigating options for release or translocation of the two threatened reptile species that have been saved from extinction through a captive breeding program. It also includes detailed spatial mapping of the island to identify priority areas for conservation management.
 - ▶ A large-scale experiment in Kakadu National Park, a partnership between NESP, Northern Territory Government and Parks Australia and partly funded by the Threatened Species Commissioner, to investigate adaptive management of fire and feral animals to improve conservation of threatened species in Kakadu.
 - ▶ NESP is supporting the ongoing monitoring of mammals in Booderee National Park, part of a long-running partnership between Parks Australia and the Australian National University. This has given us a clearer picture of population trends of several priority species.
 - ▶ NESP collaborated with the Marine National Facility RV Investigator and Museums Victoria to undertake a voyage of discovery focussed on seven Commonwealth marine reserves along the Eastern coast of Australia. The 'Voyage to the Abyss' sampled and recorded species living down to 4,000 metres below sea level, many of whom were new records for the area and some of whom are likely to be new to science. This is the first time these deep sea environments have been researched in this area, which included seven marine reserves: Freycinet, Flinders, East Gippsland, Jervis, Hunter, Central Eastern and the Coral Sea Commonwealth marine reserves.
 - ▶ NESP has collated information on what bathymetry (seafloor mapping) data exists on Australia's continental shelf. The data is stored for reuse by many institutions, and the Hub collected data in a further seven marine reserves. Maps of all individual marine reserves that contain some area on the shelf will be produced.
- A detailed framework is being developed to monitor and report on ecosystem condition across all Commonwealth Reserves. Indicators will provide information on priority species and ecological communities, on the extent and condition of habitat, and on important ecological processes. Together these will provide a holistic overview of the condition and likely resilience of different ecosystems across our very diverse set of protected areas, enabling us to identify areas for more focused research and/or

management where necessary. The overall framework that will be used across all reserves has been completed and specific indicators identified so far for case study reserves. This work will be continued next year to include all our reserves.

- Managed by the Department, the National Environmental Research Programme (NERP) ran from 2010-2015 with the aim to deliver applied environmental research designed to engage with end-users and support decision-making by environmental managers and policy makers. A review of all NERP Northern Hub projects undertaken in Kakadu (and/or projects with direct relevance for the management of Kakadu) was undertaken by our science team in 2016-17, summarising results, collating outputs, and recording the management recommendations. A review of the projects undertaken by the other NERP Hubs conducting research on parks, such as the Environmental Decisions Hub and the Marine Hub, will be undertaken in the second half of 2017. A decision support tool designed through NERP research has been directly implemented in strategic planning for threatened species management.

4. Improve understanding of landscape scale health in Commonwealth reserves.

- The overall framework that will be used across all reserves has been completed and specific indicators have been identified for case study reserves. This work will be continued next year to include all our reserves.

5. Increase our understanding of the values and use of natural places

- Use of visitor surveys have been refined in agreement with the parks. Kakadu sends post-visit surveys to visitors who purchased their park passes online. This has meant that the number of surveys collected has increased from 70 in 2015 to 1,300 in 2016-17. Uluru-Kata Tjuta and the Gardens collect data via an iPad at the visitor centres and this is also proving an effective means of collecting valuable data.
- A state-of-the-art acoustic monitoring system has been designed under contract by Parks Australia for deployment in the Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve, for the purpose of monitoring vessels and other human uses and biological sounds. The acoustic monitoring system has undergone rigorous in-water testing in preparation for deployment in the reserve later in 2017. In-water testing using Defence Science and Technology Group premises has focused on optimising vessel detection and tracking scuba diving use. In May 2017 an underwater survey of the reserve was undertaken using a remotely operated vehicle loaned by the Group, with operational support by NSW Department of Primary Industries, to determine the best location for the deployment of the system. Once deployed, the system will be tested and commence monitoring of use over summer in 2017-18. Full implementation outcomes of the trial will be completed by mid-2018. This project was awarded the Secretary's Innovation Award in 2016.

- In June 2017, two Parks Australia employees attended the third joint meeting of the Acoustical Society of America and European Acoustics Association Conference in Boston. The attendance and associated meetings with world leaders in the field of acoustic monitoring helped to improve Parks Australia's expertise in this field for monitoring marine reserves, enhance the delivery of the marine parks acoustic monitoring program, and gain insight into new acoustic technologies and international progress in the field of acoustic monitoring.
- Eleven projects across five Commonwealth marine reserves, each involving a range of biodiversity surveys, were fully or partially funded by Parks Australia in 2016-17. The reserves were the Coral Sea (three), Solitary Islands (two), Cod Grounds (three), Ashmore (one) and Bremer (two). Following on from a successful voyage in June 2016, Parks Australia again engaged researchers to visit the Coral Sea reefs in April 2017 to assess coral bleaching, sea cucumber abundance and marine debris. Surveys assessed if sites within the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve were experiencing similar coral bleaching to the Great Barrier Reef, and also assessed sites where illegal harvesting of sea cucumber occurred over the last year. James Cook University scientists were engaged to continue work looking at the connectivity of Coral Sea reefs to resurvey sites visited last year to check levels of marine debris. In April 2017, researchers undertook surveys of sea snakes and marine turtles at Ashmore Reef Commonwealth Marine Reserve. The surveys recorded 400 green turtles and one species of sea snake. Turtle hatching success was estimated at approximately 90 per cent.
- Five Bush Blitz expeditions were held in South Australia, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland including a marine blitz off the coast of Victoria near the Croajingalong National Park. The Blitzs involved over 90 scientists from 15 institutions along with 16 BHP participants and five teachers. Please see case study 9 on page 72 for details of program outcomes.
- Eight senior students and three teachers from the Methodist Ladies College (MLC) joined the Marshmead Blitz in Victoria for three days, providing unique learning opportunities and building teacher capacity. Marshmead is part of the MLC campus.
- The Bradshaw Bush Blitz in the Northern Territory was conducted in partnership with the Department of Defence, filling an important gap in knowledge of this area while also providing valuable baseline data for the Bradshaw Military Training Area conservation management plan.
- The Quinkan Bush Blitz in Queensland, gained international media interest when over 50 new species of spiders were discovered, resulting in the story being covered by over 35 media outlets including print, online, radio and TV. The story was shared on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram multiple times with one online news site Mashable showing the story shared over 2,000 times. The story was also featured on Ten Eyewitness News and The Project.

- Diligent updating of taxonomy databases continued in 2016-17 as new species were found and named, including species from Bush Blitz expeditions. Examples include:
 - ▶ Digital imaging of type specimens in the Australian National Herbarium collections was progressed by the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research (CANBR), with all cryptogamic collections (lichens, mosses, fungi and relatives) completed during 2016-2017. All type specimens at the Herbarium have now been imaged. CANBR also commenced development of a new collections management system (Collective Access) for the Herbarium, in collaboration with CSIRO National Collections and Marine Infrastructure. Following a successful pilot implementation in CSIRO's Australian National Insect Collection, future work is aimed at migrating the Herbarium collections management system to Collective Access to provide modern capability for all collection management functions.
 - ▶ The Biodiversity Informatics team have continued development of National Species List online entry tools and provided enhanced statistical and audit reporting functionality. These enhancements in turn have made it possible to undertake training across all major State and Territory herbaria across Australia to implement remote, distributed editing of the Australian Plant Name Index. In 2016-17, a net addition of 19,447 instances was made to the Index (23,718 added–3,935 deletions). Modifications were also made to 34,989 existing records. As of 1 June 2017 the Australian Plant Census, administered by Parks Australia, delivered 22,185 accepted names at species rank for public use.



A new species of jumping spider from the genus *Jotus*. Discovered during the Quinkan Bush Blitz. (Photo: Rob Whyte)

Bush Blitz A home-grown success

Bush Blitz is the largest nature discovery program in Australia.

It has been seven years since a unique partnership between the Department of Environment and Energy, BHP Billiton Sustainable Ecosystems, Earthwatch Institute and Parks Australia began.

In seven years, we have undertaken 35 discovery expeditions, with five of those held in 2016-17.

Since 2010 Bush Blitz has involved more than 200 scientists, 65 BHP Billiton employees and 26 teachers directly engaging with over 5,000 students.

Bush Blitz has discovered over 1,350 new species since 2010 (that is a new species discovered every 42 hours), extended the known range of 250 species, generated more than 420 records of species listed as threatened, vulnerable or endangered, along with over 1,000 records of pest species; recorded more than 25,000 individual occurrences of plants and animals which can be accessed by land managers, scientists and the general public using online tools such as the Atlas of Living Australia.

In March 2017 spider experts on a Bush Blitz in the Quinkan country of Cape York Peninsula discovered over 50 new species of spider with the help of traditional owners and Indigenous rangers.

The story captured the world's interest with over 35 national and international media outlets publishing variations of the story, and the story was shared over 6,000 times on various social media channels.





During the life of the BushBlitz program,
our crews have discovered:

Over 1,350
new species
including...

410 new
true bugs



385
new spiders



31 new
vascular plants



BushBlitz has engaged:

- Over 200 Scientists
- 65 BHP Billiton employees
- 26 Teachers
- over 5,000 students.

Ecologically sustainable use

To contribute to social, economic and local community well-being while protecting natural and cultural values of commonwealth reserves

Performance measure:

Enhance levels of active management of marine reserves and engagement of users and stakeholders

Source:

- Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020
- 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements
Department of the Environment and Energy (p.209)

Result

In progress. While the process to prepare new management plans for the South-west, North-west, North and Temperate-east Networks and the Coral Sea is in progress, we continued to actively manage the 14 marine reserves in the South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network under the current management plan, together with 12 other marine reserves around Australia with pre-existing management arrangements.

Many members of the community use the marine environment, either for recreational activities including boating, diving and fishing, or for commercial activities such as tourism, charter fishing and commercial fishing. The Parks Australia website contains up-to-date information on management arrangements to help users understand the rules and restrictions that apply to them and to also understand how the reserves are being managed.

The CMR Alert Service continues to be successful in reducing non-compliance on the water by helping fishers determine the location of marine reserve boundaries and rules. In 2016-17 there were 978 alerts issued to operators, with a total of 2,581 alert issued in the three years since its introduction. As at 30 June 2017 have been only three incidents under investigation since the service commenced, delivering significant savings to government and industry in legal costs and, importantly, ensuring the protection of these important marine areas. In the South-east Network, complementary to the alert service, the online commercial fisher education course continued in 2016-17 with 115 fishers having completed the course since it started in 2015-16.

Source of data: Number of management plans.

Analysis of performance

Our outcome for this goal is that activities in Commonwealth reserves contribute to the social, economic and local community well-being while protecting natural and cultural values.

Protection of natural and cultural values, while allowing for ecologically sustainable use, is at the core of management arrangements for our reserves. The EPBC Act and Regulations, and our management plans set out management zoning and activities that are allowed, allowable or prohibited, that are supported by relevant policy guidance developed by Parks Australia and the Department.

All the terrestrial reserves, and the South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network, have management plans in place. This provides certainty for our users and visitors that our management arrangements support ecologically sustainable use.

In addition, we annually monitor our environmental footprint against the three main categories of energy, waste and water. Please see Appendix C for details of our performance in 2016-17.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Management arrangements for Commonwealth marine reserves reflect genuine and thorough consultation with stakeholders and are informed by the best available science
- Commonwealth marine reserve users have a clear understanding of management arrangements
- Principles developed to support ecologically sustainable use within our places.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Finalise management plans for Commonwealth marine reserves.

- To ensure appropriate management of Commonwealth marine reserves into the future, the Director of National Parks commenced preparing new management plans for marine reserves in the South-west, North-west, North and Temperate East Networks and the Coral Sea. These plans are currently in draft and have benefitted from extensive consultation and input, including feedback from various statutory public consultation processes about the reserves, the independent review of Commonwealth marine reserves released in 2016, the advice and expertise of traditional owners on managing sea country in marine reserves, the best available science, and the Government's policies and approaches to supporting competitive and sustainable fisheries.

- To support public understanding and engagement on draft management plans, Parks Australia developed a range of communication products, including refreshing the Parks Australia marine reserves website, developing factsheets and information products, an animation, a short video and a feedback form. These mechanisms and meetings with marine reserves users, conservation groups, peak bodies, traditional owners and government agencies are designed to ensure Australians are closely involved in the development of management plans, ensuring best practice regulations by encouraging input into these plans.

2. *Contribute to nature education outcomes*

- Developing a quality approach to nature education materials and experiences across reserves was not progressed as hoped due to competing priorities. This initiative will be pursued in 2017-18. In the meantime, our reserves offer many opportunities to engage the public in educational programs. For example, employees across our parks encourage interest from school children in park management and conservation through Junior Ranger programs. The programs introduce primary school students to aspects of park management including land management, plant and animal identification and working safely.
- The island parks also work closely with local schools to encourage appreciation of the national parks and their place in the local environment.
- We also have specific programs to engage with Indigenous youth to encourage participation in park management and transfer traditional knowledge, such as our ongoing junior ranger programs.

3. *Principles of the Healthy Parks Healthy People program implemented*

- Kakadu's reputation as a walking destination is strengthening, with walking opportunities in the park ranging from gentle short walks to art sites, moderate difficulty walks to plunge pools, to strenuous and largely unmarked day and overnight bushwalks through the rugged 'stone country'.
- Approved by the Board of Management, the Kakadu National Park Walking Track Strategy provides the basis for a consistent and sustainable approach to the planning, development, management and promotion of walking opportunities within the park. Like the Kakadu National Park Management Plan, the strategy is a joint management document, based on extensive consultation with traditional owners and other *Bininj/Mungguy* of Kakadu.

- The Kakadu National Park walking track strategy identifies Ubirr, Nourlangie and Maguk as the priority walks in the park. Ubirr is recognised as one of the major visitor attractions within the park. Images of people viewing the floodplain country, the escarpment of Arnhem Land and the rock art is integral to selling the Kakadu National Park experience. Like Ubirr, the Nourlangie area is one of the major visitor attractions within the Park, being one of the most accessible places to see a concentration of rock art. Maguk is a 'must do' short walk to a plunge pool. We will commence implementation of recommended improvements in July 2017, starting with Nourlangie, before moving on to Ubirr.

4. Contribute as appropriate to regional development planning elements of the Cities Agenda, particularly in relation to the future of Jabiru

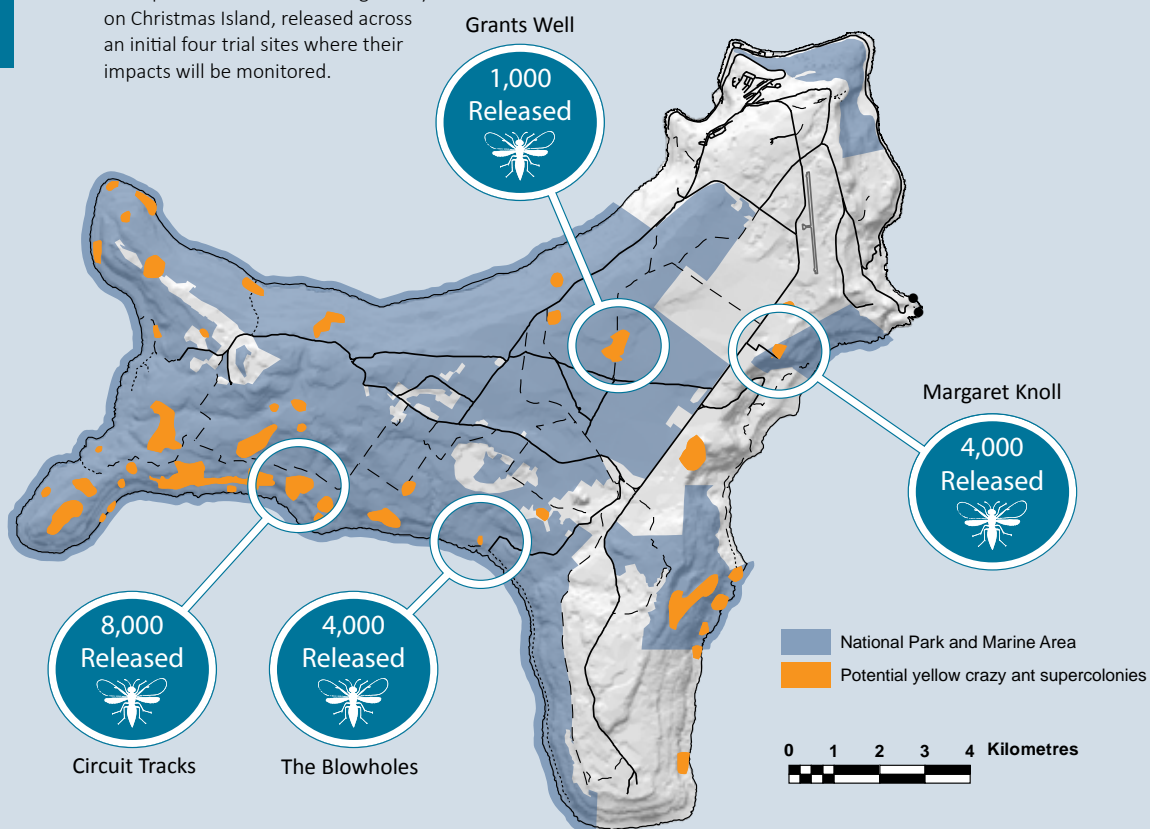
- #NatureForAll is a global movement to inspire people from all sectors of society to connect with nature and take action to support its conservation. The #NatureForAll website presents inspiring stories from around the world on how protected areas are successfully inspiring a new generation to connect with nature and take action to supports its conservation. We are keen to share our experiences and showcase what we are doing across the Parks Australia estate and will submit our story later this year.
- Parks Australia explored the possibility that the recreational, aesthetic and health values of local natural places be recognised and considered in City Deals. We'll continue to monitor the City Deals program for appropriate opportunities.

5. Ensure users understand and are engaged in management arrangements in Commonwealth reserves

- Education and online training varies across our reserves and is tailored to the diverse needs of users and regional advisory groups that dedicate substantial time and effort to assist park management.
- For example, at Pulu Keeling National Park, the park facilitates community management committee meetings twice yearly to discuss the park's operational plan, programs and activities. It draws together the Cocos buff banded rail reintroduction project advisory committee to discuss the program outcomes. The park employees also deliver school education programs on marine debris.
- Parks Australia currently has websites, online factsheets and user guides which provide information about using marine reserves, including management plans, zones and rules as they currently stand. Parks Australia has refreshed and will continue to develop its websites to make this information more targeted and useful to marine users.

- The South East Trawl Fisherman's Industry Association commercial fisher education course continued in 2017-18 from its start in 2015-16. In 2016-17, 66 fishers completed the course. This builds on the 49 fishers who completed the course in the previous year. More participants will complete the course in the 2017-18 financial year. Parks Australia is aware that at least on one occasion a vessel skipper self-reported that he had entered and fished in a reserve as a direct consequence of undertaking the online course. It eventuated that the fisher was not within the reserve, but it is a very good indicator that the training is improving awareness of reserves, in turn preventing unlawful activities.
- The Gardens developed a new on-line booking system for customers to book school programs and hire venue facilities. During the year the booking system was tested with tour operators booking school programs at the Gardens.
- We produced a detailed fact sheet on our management action to control invasive yellow crazy ants on Christmas Island, through the introduction of a micro-wasp that is expected to have a dramatic impact upon the main food supply for yellow crazy ants—honey dew produced by the yellow lac scale insect. We also created an animation to help explain why this project is so important to protect the ecosystem on the island and the values of the park. We are increasingly using short video productions and infographics to enhance traditional fact sheets and reach a greater range of users.

As at 30 June 2017, 15,000 wasps had been produced in the breeding facility on Christmas Island, released across an initial four trial sites where their impacts will be monitored.



Partnerships and co-investments

Partnerships and co-investments support innovation

Performance measure:	Partnerships and co-investments support in accordance with framework
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

On track. In 2016-17 Parks Australia strengthened existing partnerships and developed exciting new partnerships and co-investments across our parks. Examples of partnerships and co-investments pursued in 2016-17 were many and varied.

Parks Australia, Tourism NT and Google partnered to launch ‘Google Trekker’ at Uluru-Kata Tjuta. This was a significant event, as the virtual walk around the base of Uluru included a series of ‘story spheres’ that gave viewers insights into traditional song and stories and was a new venture for Google. The resulting media attention that Uluru-Kata Tjuta received was enormous, from national online and broadcast news to the biggest lifestyle, travel, technology and trend sites.

There have been over 200 articles to date with readerships of over 400 million people, including four national broadcasts from free-to-air media, three national News Corp and one national Fairfax syndication. The media campaign, paid for by Google, has reached five million Australians to date with 3.5 million social media impressions in the first 24 hours.

At Uluru-Kata Tjuta, there is concern, particularly amongst senior traditional owners, that *Anangu* youngsters are not engaged with culture, and not hearing about their forebears’ stories. Parks Australia worked together with the Elder *Anangu* Women and the Central Land Council to put together the Connection to Country project—called *Kungka Kutjara Tjukurpa* Project: Continuing Connection to Country for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women. This project aimed to enable the transferring of ceremonial and site related knowledge from elder women to younger generations. The detail of the cultural learning cannot be discussed, as it was secret women’s business. This type of work keeps culture strong, keeps culture alive and ensures continuity for future generations. The filming of the week secures the knowledge for future generations, but the cultural practice will also continue. It was a moving example of how joint management can work and a tripartite partnership between Parks Australia, the Central Land Council and the *Anangu* community.

The 'A Taste of Kakadu' food festival held in May 2017 employed over 40 indigenous people from community and launched an indigenous food business (Kakadu Kitchen). Media attention was significant, with exposure of Channel 9, SBS television and online, NITV, ABC radio, news.com.au and many other outlets. On Facebook alone we reached an audience of 500,000 viewers. Please see case study 5 on page 53.

Source of data: Internal reporting

Analysis of performance

Our aim for this way of working is that partnerships and co-investments support innovation.

The diversity of our reserves is matched by the diversity of our partners and co-investments. Co-investment in our parks, gardens and marine reserves can take many forms and may apply to large and small investments, focusing on different aspects of our operations. Our focus for co-investment with suitable partners is for an enduring relationship that delivers mutual benefits for the reserves and for our partners. In 2016-17 we welcomed new and exciting partnerships, particularly to deliver research and tourism projects. We continued to strengthen and nurture existing partnerships to deliver solid outcomes for the reserves and traditional owners.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Continue to develop and maintain effective partnerships, particularly in relation to threatened species and establishing viable populations marine biodiversity inventory and biodiversity activities, and delivery of world class visitor experiences
- Develop a Parks Australia direction statement for co-investment with partners across all reserves
- Establish and maintain effective consultation mechanisms to provide expert input from advisory and expert panels and committees
- Explore an extended Bush Blitz program beyond 2017.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Explore, establish and maintain partnerships that complement Parks Australia's progress towards corporate goals

- The National Seed Bank is located at the Gardens in Canberra. The work focuses on long-term storage of conservation seed collections, researching seed germination and establishment protocols, and supplying seed to conservation and research institutions.
- The National Seed Bank collaborated with scientists from across the world to organise a seed trait workshop in October 2016, which strengthened partnerships and raised Parks Australia's reputation and the National Seed Bank's profile in seed conservation internationally.

- In 2016-17 the National Seed Bank worked on 11 projects with 10 external partners to conserve and study seed biology of native plants to improve their conservation. An outcome of these partnership projects was collection and storage of 373 accessions of seeds from 173 species, including securing 145 maternal line accessions of seed from 12 threatened species. Reference images—787 of seeds from 344 species and their traits—were taken and made publically available on the web. These collections and data will help ensure the future of these species and provide material for future research or translocation. The collection numbers are on par with 2015-2016.
- Twenty-nine accessions of 22 species (including *Gardenia megasperma*, six *Acacia* species from Kakadu National Park, and the three kings cabbage tree (*Cordyline obtecta*) which is endemic to Norfolk Island) were tested for viability and germination and 1,302 seedlings were passed onto the Living Collections for display and ex-situ conservation at the Gardens, many of them to be grown in the new Ian Potter National Conservatory.
- Research results were shared with land managers and scientists through 12 scientific papers, articles and presentations to showcase Parks Australia's expertise in conservation of native Australian plants.
- The National Seed Bank worked with 29 volunteers across 2016-17. In the last 12 months, the Seedy Volunteer program has undertaken 18 field trips collecting over 45 plant species. This volunteer program is critical to the Garden's aim of having seed from all Australian Capital Territory plant species stored within the National Seed Bank by 2020. The volunteer program has maintained a high retention rate over the past five years. This is positive news in terms of building skills and knowledge as we continue this important initiative.
- The Co-ordinator of Australian Seed Bank Partnership together with the Director of the Gardens attended the Global Botanic Gardens Congress in Geneva in June 2017. The Congress involved 500 delegates from 70 countries. The team also visited Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in London establishing valuable partnerships and gained knowledge on conservatory design and operational issues. The trip concluded with a visit to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank where there is a significant partnership with the Australian Seed Bank Partnership to store seed from rare and threatened Australian plant species as a safety net for future conservation programs.
- A new partnership was established with an expert in controlling feral cats at Biosecurity Queensland's Pest Animal Research Centre. Feral cats are a major issue in many of our reserves and this partnership is providing valuable advice to our employees on the ground to help them identify and implement appropriate management actions.
- Planning is in progress for the development of funding opportunities to assist in the implementation of management arrangements for our marine reserves. The scope and style of opportunities will be developed in consultation with marine reserve users.

- A Partnership Development Manager was appointed in November 2016. A draft philanthropy and corporate engagement strategy has been developed for the Gardens and Parks Australia and will be considered in the second half of 2017 by the Executive. Discussions are occurring with potential corporate partners to partner with the Gardens in the first instance across a range of opportunities. Notwithstanding, a number of philanthropic grant opportunities were pursued in 2016-17. For example, a new partnership was initiated with the IMB Foundation sponsoring the 'Who Did That' children's interpretive walk at the Gardens.
- In 2016-17 Parks Australia made a first foray into innovative ways to engage partners and interested members of the public by pledging funding to accelerate important parks initiatives. In February 'Operation Green Parrot' went live on the *Pozible* website launching a crowd-funding campaign in partnership with Birdlife Australia. A target of \$77,000 was estimated for the project and \$86,259 pledged. These donations were used to build temporary aviaries for nestlings on Norfolk and Phillip Islands (part of the Norfolk Island National Park), vet fees and boat transfers.
- The Gardens participates in ClimateWatch, an initiative of the EarthWatch Institute. This Australia-wide citizen science program collects information on the timing of seasonal events of plants and animals. This information is used to understand whether and how these are being affected by climate change (for example, whether warming temperatures are causing plants to flower earlier than in the past). Volunteers follow the Garden's ClimateWatch Trail and record observations of selected plants and animals including: flowering and seeding of 23 native plant species; breeding and other behaviour of 13 species of bird, two species of frog and one species of lizard; the presence, breeding and development of eight insect species; and the presence of two species of mammal. This is contributing valuable information to help us understand how climate change is affecting the timing of seasonal events, as well as helping people gain a more detailed understanding of plants and animals in the Gardens and of the science of phenology. The National Seed Bank also worked with the *Mungguy* women in southern Kakadu National Park to initiate a program of seed collecting and assist with advice on setting up a nursery at Mary River Ranger Station.
- Bush Blitz is a globally unique cross-sector partnership drawing on the knowledge and expertise of government, non-government organisations, industry and science to document the biodiversity of the oldest continent on earth and provide an international benchmark for biodiversity knowledge. Since Bush Blitz began 1,139 new fauna species, 27 new vascular plant species, 26 new lichen species and four new fungi species have been discovered. In 2016-17 Bush Blitz undertook one marine Blitz off the coast of Victoria in partnership with Parks Victoria near the Croajingalong National Park. Results from the Coral Sea marine Blitz held as part of the Coral Sea-Clean up and Bio-discovery Voyage in 2016 have been compiled and will be available on the Bush Blitz website in August 2017. Please see case study 9 on page 72.

Responsive organisation:

Parks Australia is an efficient and effective agency supported by good business systems

Performance measure:	Proportion of reserve management plans in place.
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

In progress. As at 30 June 2017, management plans were in place for 100 per cent of terrestrial reserves and the Gardens. Plans are available on the Parks Australia website at: environment.gov.au/topics/national-parks/parks-australia/publications.

The Director is responsible for managing 59 Commonwealth marine reserves. As at 30 June 2017, 17 per cent of management plans were in place for marine reserves. The management plan for the South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network covers 14 reserves and is available on the Parks Australia website at environment.gov.au/topics/marine/marine-reserves/south-east.

The process to develop new management arrangements for the South-west (14 reserves), North-west (13 reserves), North (8 reserves) and Temperate East (8 reserves) Commonwealth marine reserves networks and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve is underway. As for the South-east, each network will have one management plan that covers all reserves within that network.

The Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve management plan is managed under delegation from the Director of National Parks by employees of the Department's Australian Antarctic Division. The management plan is available on the Australian Antarctic Division's website at: aad.gov.au.

Source of data: number of plans in place.

Performance measure:	Timeliness of response to incoming ministerial correspondence items, ministerial submissions, question time briefs, parliamentary questions on notice, and public enquiries to the Community Information Unit
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

In progress. The Director places a high priority on Parks Australia providing timely, quality support to the Minister, the government, our stakeholders and the public.

As at 30 June 2017 there were no outstanding items.

Parks Australia also responds to many enquiries through our email and social media channels, and most importantly, provides advice and guidance on the ground to visitors to our parks, gardens and reserves.

Table 11: Timeliness of responses prepared by Parks Australia

Type	Total received	Percentage on time	Percentage late	Percentage < one week late	Percentage > one week late
Briefs requested by Minister	14	93	7	7	N/A
Briefs generated by the Director	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ministerial correspondence - Minister reply	53	58	42	34	8
Ministerial correspondence - Director reply	19	47	53	16	37
Question Time Briefs	4	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Questions on Notice - Parliament	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Questions on Notice - Senate Estimates	64	98	2	N/A	2
Community Information Unit referrals	116	100	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source of data: Parliamentary Document Management System and Departmental Community Information Unit records.

Performance measure:	Achieve a risk maturity of 'advanced' in the annual Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking Survey.
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

On track. The annual Comcover Risk Management survey measures risk management maturity across nine elements of the Commonwealth Risk Management policy and is based on a six level maturity mode. Parks Australia ranked well in comparison to other regulatory entities and maintained an 'advanced' rating for 2016-17. The average maturity level of survey participants was integrated (one level below advanced).

Source of data: Comcover Risk Management Survey 2017

Performance measure:	Number of externally reportable breaches of the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i> .
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

On track. During 2016–17 no non-compliance was detected and no notifications required to be provided to the Minister or the Minister for Finance.

Source of data: Certificate of Compliance

Performance measure:	Variation from agreed cash operating result
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

The variation to agreed cash operating result for 2016–17 was two per cent.

Source of data: Annual financial statements

Performance measure:	Increase in gross return from commercial operations and activities listed in Director of National Parks Charges for Commonwealth reserves
Source:	Director of National Parks Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Result

The internal target for commercial operations and activities was exceeded by 7 per cent in 2016–17.

Source of data: Commercial operations and activities listed in Director of National Parks Charges for Commonwealth Reserves.

Analysis of performance

Our aim for this way of working is that Parks Australia is an efficient and effective agency supported by good business systems.

The corporate areas in Parks Australia provide an essential, ongoing contribution that underpins and complements work in the parks, gardens and reserves. These areas provide advice on a range of issues including planning and reporting, policy across the parks estate, work health and safety and regulation. The centralised functions allow for a consistent approach to policy, planning and reporting that strengthens our business systems and ability to deliver on ground. These areas also ensure our accountability and provide quality assurance in our interactions with the Minister, the government and the public.

Corporate priorities for 2016-17:

- Respond to regulatory direction and embed processes established under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
- Workforce planning to identify and fill capability gaps
- Implement a new strategic asset management strategy
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our business systems with a focus on digital technology to support customer service and visitor experiences.

Strategies and result area achievements

1. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our business systems with a particular focus on financial literacy, asset management and procurement processes

- Parks Australia undertook a scoping during 2016-17 of how we can better manage our large range of capital assets, including visitor sites, offices, workshops and employee housing. Through this process it has been identified that while there are individual processes within various locations and work units the requirements needed to formalise these into a whole of organisation process are not sufficiently mature to enable a simple purchase of a system solution and implementation. Parks Australia has undertaken an independent review of the financial operations including the asset management process and the results of this have been provided to the Board for consideration. A decision on how this will guide future management of assets is yet to be determined, it is however anticipated that additional work to fully align the asset management process within Parks Australia will be an extensive process.

2. Continue to support our people and increase skills to maximise workforce capability

- A Workforce Plan has been completed for Parks Australia. This will ensure the effective and efficient use of employee resources to address divisional priorities, including identifying relevant training needs. An employee mobility policy has been developed that will also support this goal.
- Parks Australia is committed to providing employees with the necessary skills to effectively and safely undertake their duties in the field and the office. Internal and external training is available on a range of subjects including conservation and land management, horticulture, Indigenous skills and languages, work health and safety, rescue skills, customer service, the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, fire control and suppression, leadership development, heavy vehicle and four-wheel drive operation, record keeping and business systems. The Department also offers a study support scheme for employees to complete formal external training.

3. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our business systems through a focus on digital technology to support customer services and visitor experiences

- Parks Australia employed an experienced website manager to develop our new customer-facing site. We engaged a small web development agency to assist with the site design and continue to work with GoSource on development of an online ticketing system for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park that is due to 'go live' in November 2017. Additional key services, such as entry tickets and permit applications are available to Parks Australia's customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

4. Continue to drive a culture of Work, Health and Safety to ensure all employees are safe

- The Director takes work, health and safety seriously. Parks Australia is committed to the philosophy is that one injury is one too many—for employees, our contractors, volunteers and visitors. We have sound practices in place to identify hazards before they arise, and how to report incidents if they happen. See Chapter 5 for more details of our work, health and safety governance, performance and continual improvements in 2016-17.

5. Provide clear direction for managers and users of our places by ensuring a current management plan is in place consistent with the requirements of the EPBC Act.

- In the last year of a management plan, a final technical audit of the implementation of the plan is conducted as part of the process of preparing the next management plan. The technical audit of the Norfolk Island National Park and Norfolk Island Botanic Garden Management Plan 2008-2018 has been completed.
- In 2016-17, 100 per cent of our terrestrial reserves had operational plans in place. Five out of seven terrestrial reserves had annual reserve report cards in place. Kakadu and Booderee national parks are well advanced in the preparation of their report cards. Our marine reserves will prepare annual report cards once management plans are in place.
- The purpose of implementation schedules is to reflect how actions and outcomes build towards achieving the long-term outcomes over the ten-year life of the management plans. The South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network was first in developing an implementation schedule, linked to the management plan, which sets out the initial four year 'foundation' activities (2013-14 to 2016-17). This will be followed by a 'consolidation' phase (years five to eight of the management plan) and a two-year review prior to preparation of a new management plan. Kakadu National Park's inaugural implementation schedule is close to being finalised for the Board's approval. The Director's intention is that all will have implementation schedules for management plans in place and we will continue to work towards this aim in the coming years.

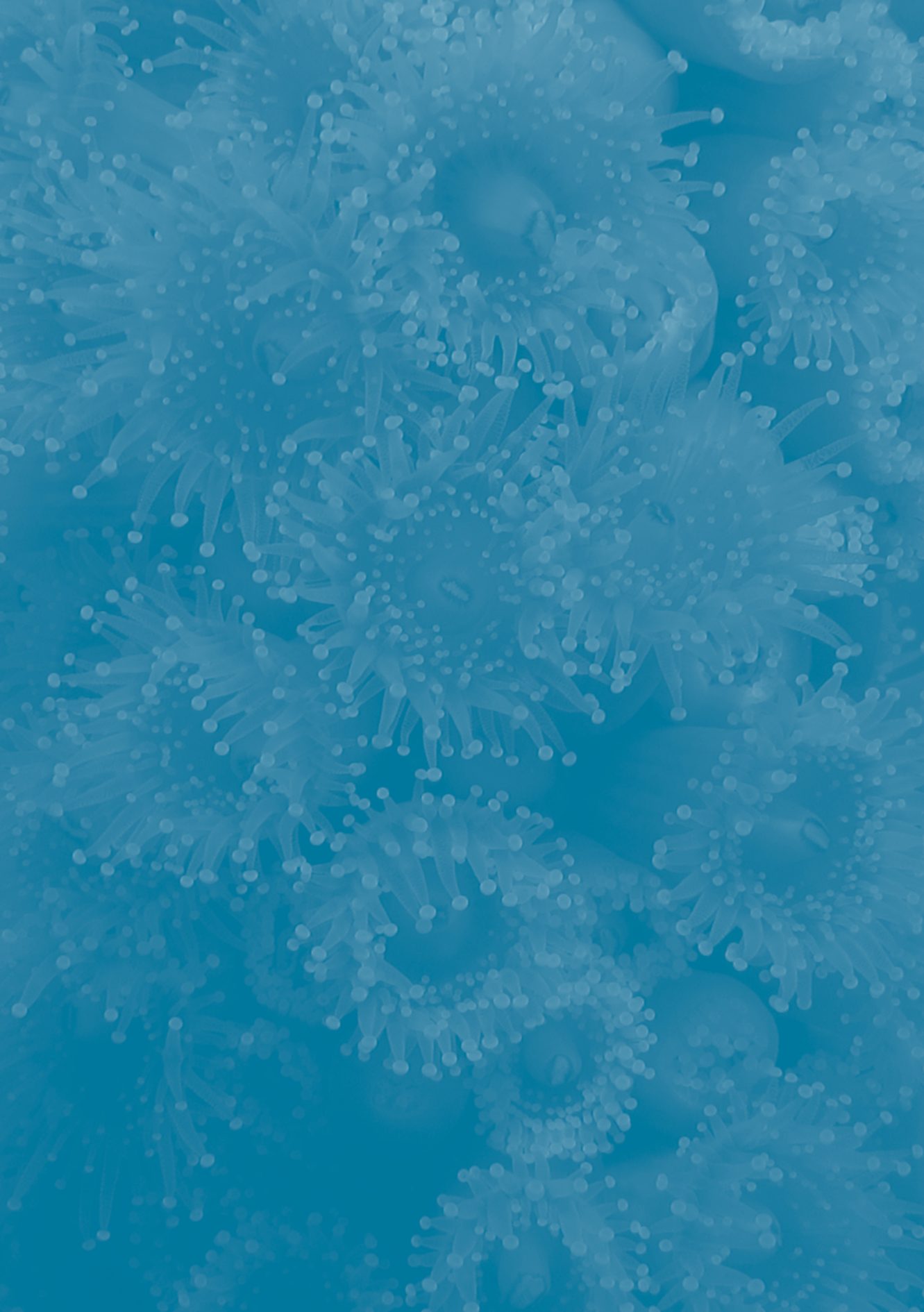
- The preparation of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park's new management plan commenced with Parks Australia providing an overview for the Board of Management of the EPBC Act requirements for management plans. This was followed by the facilitation of a participatory planning process with the Board to prepare its vision statement (vision and goals) for the management plan. This draft vision statement will guide the preparation of the management plan in 2017-18, including for consultations with key stakeholders and *Anangu*.
- We continued to develop digital services across our reserves to improve customer service and accessibility, reduce barriers for industry and increase our business efficiency. Buoyed by the successful introduction of online passes at Kakadu National Park, we commenced development to expand the service to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (due for release in early 2018). Planning is also underway for an online permits portal that will make it even easier for businesses and visitors to our parks to apply for commercial tourism operator, media, film and photography, camping and bushwalking permits.

6. Workforce planning

- Parks Australia has undertaken a workforce planning project in 2016-17 which included workforce mapping and examination of high level trends impacting our workforce capacity to deliver on Parks Australia outcomes. This project feeds into the broader departmental workforce planning initiative and has resulted in a four year Workforce Plan that will complement the Director of National Parks 2016-20 Corporate Plan.
- Workforce mapping is a process of allocating positions to occupational groups based on required skills, tasks or knowledge of the role. It provides a framework for identifying key skills, knowledge and capabilities and assist in identifying the critical job roles. Every position in Parks Australia has been mapped during this exercise and the functionality grouped into four tiers: job family, job function, job role and job title. Workforce mapping is the first step in enabling us to identify the key requirements of different roles, the learning and development opportunities available to enhance those required capabilities, and career pathways (both vertical and horizontal) in Parks Australia and the Department. The workforce mapping data will be maintained in a master database and ultimately uploaded into relevant Departmental systems.

7. Integration of marine and terrestrial shared services and divisional approaches to management

- In 2016-17, a review was commissioned to identify opportunities to improve employee financial literacy and the financial sustainability of the organisation, including potential efficiency gains. The Director is considering the recommendations.





Management and
accountability

5

Corporate governance

The Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks is a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). The Director is a corporation sole constituted by the person who holds the office that is also named the Director of National Parks. The current office holder is Sally Barnes, appointed by the Governor-General in January 2014 for a period of five years.

The Minister responsible for the PGPA Act could, under section 22 of the Act, make a General Policy Order specifying a general policy of the Australian Government that applies to the Director. No General Policy Orders were issued to the Director in 2016–17.

The Director is responsible to the Minister with responsibility for administration of the EPBC Act. As 30 June 2017, the responsible Minister was the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP. The EPBC Act requires the Director to perform functions and exercise powers in accordance with any directions given by the Minister unless the EPBC Act provides otherwise. During 2016–17 no ministerial directions were given to the Director and there were no directions continuing from previous years.

The Director is responsible under Divisions 4 and 5 of Part 15 of the EPBC Act for the administration, management and control of Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones and regulations made for the purposes of those divisions.

The functions of the Director as set out in subsection 514B(1) of the EPBC Act are to:

- administer, manage and control Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- protect, conserve and manage biodiversity and heritage in Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- contribute to the protection, conservation and management of biodiversity and heritage in areas outside Commonwealth reserves and conservation zones
- cooperate with any country in matters relating to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves in that country
- provide, and assist in the provision of, training in knowledge and skills relevant to the establishment and management of national parks and nature reserves
- carry out alone, or in cooperation with other institutions and persons, and arrange for any other institution or person to carry out research and investigations relevant to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves
- make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the establishment and management of Commonwealth reserves
- administer the Australian National Parks Fund
- undertake any other functions conferred on the Director under EPBC Act or any other Act
- do anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the functions mentioned above.

Senior executive management team

Our senior executive team comprises the Director of National Parks and three Assistant Secretaries; Mr Jason Mundy, Mr Geoff Bailey and Dr Judy West. See Chapter 3 for biographic details.

Team members are located close to the business of land and sea management with Jason located in Hobart, Geoff in Canberra with regular travel to our offices at Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Booderee national parks, and Judy in offices within the grounds of the Australian National Botanic Gardens located next to Black Mountain in Canberra.

The team meets regularly to consider strategic matters and monitor performance against the corporate plan and agreed recommendations and outcomes from audits and investigations related to Work, Health and Safety incidents.

The Parks Australia Project Board monitors and supports the delivery and spending in relation to priority projects, major capital works and Government commitments in line with our project management framework. The Board comprises the Director, Assistant Secretaries and the Chief Finance Officer. Meetings are held once a month and review priority project status reports. Mr Mundy joins these meetings through a video conferencing system.

Senior management team

Parks Australia faces a number of specific administration challenges including widely distributed workplaces located in remote areas, often in cross-cultural environments. Our reserve managers assist us all to keep connected to the interests and concerns of local communities and provide an opportunity to share knowledge and insights. Coordination and cooperation between the senior executive and senior management teams is vital.

The senior management team comprises terrestrial and marine reserve managers and senior section leaders who are specialists in their fields. These specialists are available to assist reserve managers deliver on priorities in management and operational plans.

The senior management team has fortnightly telephone meetings to discuss priorities, monitor performance and improve communication. These also provide an opportunity to discuss government and corporate priorities and initiatives.

Important communication activities include regular all-staff video phone link-ups and the annual Parks Australia forum involving all senior managers.

Our employees

Parks Australia employee numbers were as expected during 2016-17. Compared with 2015-16, there was a seven per cent net growth in employment numbers. This increase is largely due to finalising the recruitment of staff to vacant positions.

As at 30 June 2017, the Director employed 337.9 full-time equivalent staff, not including the 11.73 full-time equivalent staff engaged by the Department under company code 110. The majority are located at Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens. There are four small offices in Darwin and the remote locations of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The administrative office of Parks Australia is in Canberra. Staff engaged in the management of Commonwealth marine reserves are based in Hobart, Canberra and Brisbane. Parks Australia participates in the Department's graduate recruitment program and in 2016-17 hosted ten graduates in Canberra and on Christmas Island.

The following two graphs present the position level and location profiles of employees as at 30 June 2017. Figures represent individual employees, including those working part-time, and are not expressed as full-time equivalents. In summary total employees (full-time and part-time) in Parks Australia as at 30 June 2017 was 372. The total of employees at the APS1-6 classification was 292 (78 per cent), with 52 Executive Level 1 employees (14 per cent), 20 Executive Level 2 employees comprising park managers and section heads (five per cent), a total of five technical, legal, public affairs and specialist scientist officers (one per cent) and three senior executive employees (one per cent). Gender distribution of positions was relatively equal in 2016-17 with 51 per cent female and 49 per cent male employees.

Parks Australia is committed to providing employees with the necessary skills to carry out their duties in the field and the office safely and effectively. Internal and external training is available on a range of subjects including conservation and land management, horticulture, Indigenous skills and languages, work health and safety, rescue skills, customer service, the requirements of the EPBC Act, fire control and suppression, leadership development, heavy vehicle and four-wheel drive operation, record keeping and business systems. The Department offers a study support scheme for employees to complete formal external training. Employees participate in consultative committees in both regional and Canberra-based workplaces to support internal management.

Please see Chapter 4 for details on Indigenous employment in our jointly managed parks.

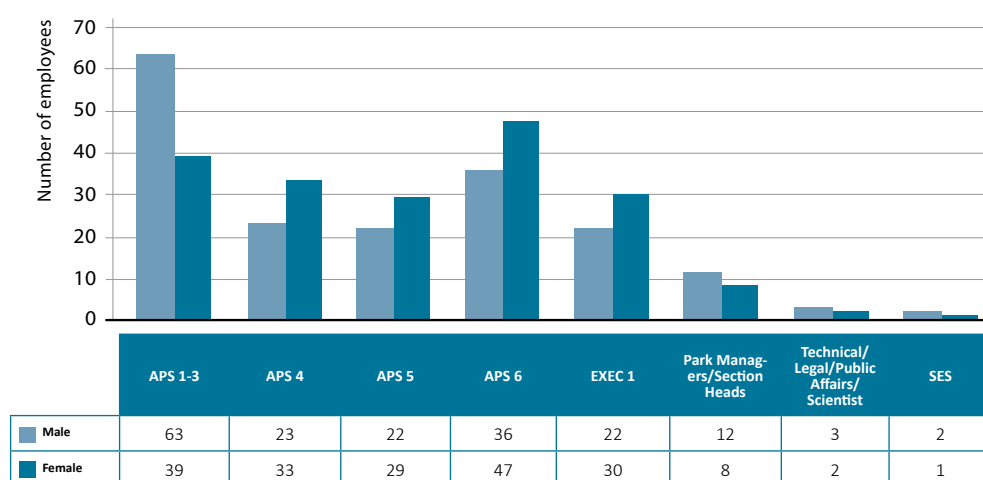
Table 12: Five year overview of employee numbers (full-time equivalent)¹

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Management of terrestrial reserves	260	269	262	275	288
Management of marine reserves ²	18.2	46.3	43.7	42.8	49.9

¹ In addition to employees paid by the Director of National Parks, as listed above, an additional 11.73 employees are paid by the Department. These employees are covered in the Department's employee statistics.

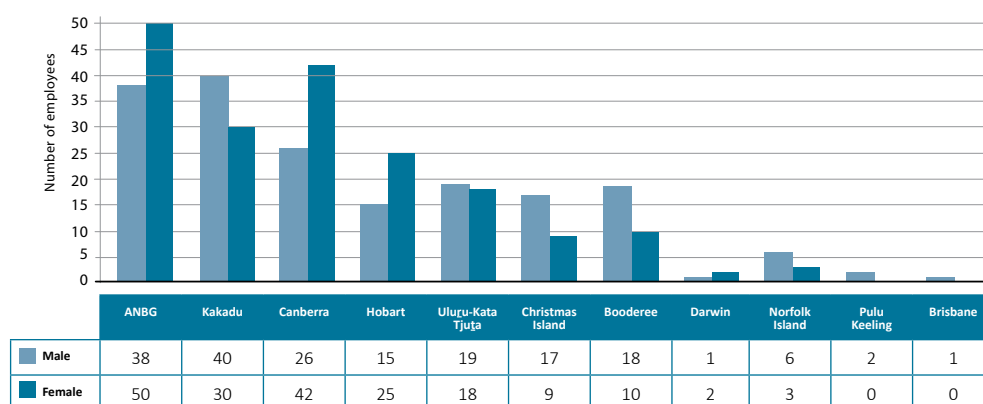
² Employee numbers for management of marine reserves increased in 2014-15 to include employee transferred to the Director from the Department in 2013-4.

Figure 8: Employees (full-time and part-time) position level profile as at 30 June 2017 (does not include casuals) ¹



¹ The Director of National Parks is not an SES officer and is not included in this table.

Figure 9: Employee (full-time and part-time) location profile as at 30 June 2017 (does not include casuals)



Consultation mechanisms

Boards of management and advisory committees

Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks are managed jointly by the Director and traditional Aboriginal owners in accordance with the EPBC Act. Each park has a board of management established under the EPBC Act, with a majority of Indigenous members who are nominated by the traditional Aboriginal owners of land in the park. The Boards are chaired by traditional owners. Membership of the boards also includes the Director, government representatives and members representing stakeholder groups or individuals with particular skills relevant to managing the park. Parks Australia employees provide secretariat support to each of the Boards. Park managers report to the Board at each meeting. See Chapter 3 for details of Board members as at 30 June 2017.

The principal functions of a Commonwealth reserve board of management is to prepare management plans for the reserve in conjunction with the Director, and to make decisions about management of the reserve consistent with its management plan. A Board, in conjunction with the Director, is also responsible for monitoring management of the reserve and advising the Minister on the reserve's future development.

Under the EPBC Act and the lease arrangements, Parks Australia employees undertake day-to-day management of the park and continuously liaise about decisions affecting the park with traditional owners and relevant Aboriginal people as advised by local land councils or associations.

Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and Pulu Keeling national parks have non-statutory advisory or consultative bodies that include community representatives and representatives of the Director.

We also report at least twice yearly to the South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network Forum on progress of management plan actions in line with the network's implementation schedule.

Other consultative mechanisms

The EPBC Act requires public consultation before the declaration of a Commonwealth reserve and in the preparation of reserve management plans.

For Commonwealth reserves that include Aboriginal owned land, the EPBC Act provides for both consultation with, and involvement of, representatives of the Aboriginal landowners about management of the reserve. The Director must consult with and have regard to the views of the chair of the relevant land council in relation to the performance of the Director's functions and exercise of powers in relation to the reserve. The land council chair must be specifically invited to comment on the preparation of management plans.

Additional consultation with traditional Aboriginal owners of Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee national parks takes place through cultural advisers, Aboriginal employees, community-liaison officers, Aboriginal organisations and special consultative committees.

The EPBC Act also requires the Northern Territory Government to be consulted in relation to the performance of the Director's functions and exercise of powers in relation to Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks, and to be invited to comment on the preparation of management plans for those parks.

Tourism industry interests are taken into account through the tourism consultative committees of the Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta boards of management and through ad hoc working groups.

Social inclusion

A number of the Director's responsibilities contribute to the Australian Government's Closing the Gap objectives for Aboriginal welfare. Parks Australia jointly manages three parks with their traditional owners and provides job opportunities for traditional owners and supports Indigenous businesses, especially in sustainable tourism. See Chapter 4 for further information.

Funding

The EPBC Act makes provision for funding the Director of National Parks. The Department allocates funding from its appropriation for the performance of the Director's function to manage Commonwealth reserves and the Director's other functions under the EPBC Act. This enables us to contribute to the Department's Outcome 1 through conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves through the provision of safe visitor access, the control of invasive species and working with stakeholders and neighbours. The Director is the sole agency with statutory functions and powers for managing Commonwealth reserves under the EPBC Act.

During 2016-17 the Department provided \$42.829 million to the Director of National Parks (see the audited financial statements in Chapter 6 of this report). This arrangement was effective, providing resources to enable the Director to meet the targets set in the Environment Portfolio Budget Statements 2016-17.

The Department also has an arrangement to provide corporate services to the Director.

Related entity transactions

The Director of National Parks is not an accountable authority or a director of the board of any other Commonwealth entity or company. As such there were no payments made to any related entities in 2016-17.

Control arrangements

Director of National Parks chief executive instructions

The chief executive instructions direct the employees of Parks Australia to assist the Director to carry out their functions under the EPBC Act and ensure that the corporation and its officers meet their obligations under both the EPBC Act and PGPA Act. The instructions draw on relevant corporate governance rules, policies and guidelines of the Australian Government. They are supported by policies and procedures that are subject to regular review.

Audit

The Director attends meetings of the Portfolio Audit Committee. The primary objective of the Committee is to provide independent advice and assurance to the accountable authorities under the PGPA Act that appropriate controls and systems are in place and are working effectively.

Members of the committee at 30 June 2017 were:

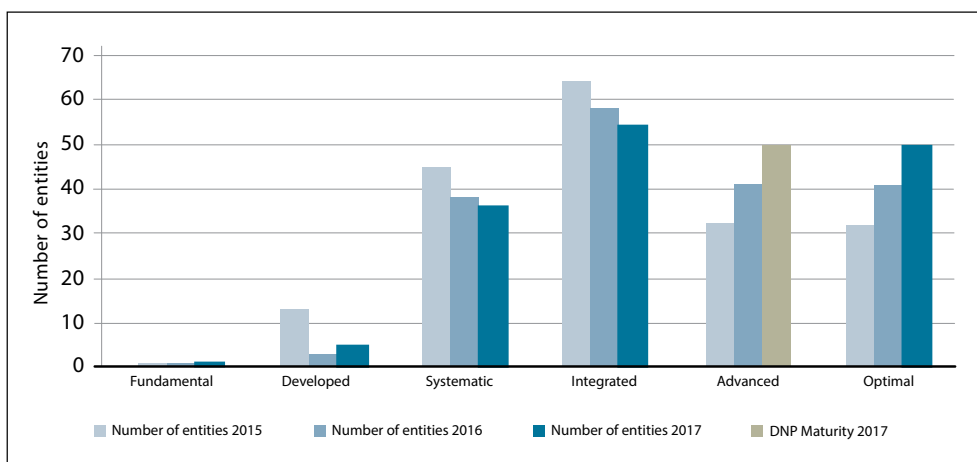
- Mr Geoff Knuckey, chair and independent member
- Mr Mick Roche, independent member
- Ms Caroline Spencer, independent member
- Mr Dean Knudson, deputy chair and member
- Ms Margaret Sewell, member

Risk management

The Director's Risk Management Framework includes policy, guidelines, and useful tools to assist employees in managing risk and identifying opportunities. The framework was reviewed and updated in 2016-17 to ensure that Parks Australia's approach to risk management is consistent across the agency.

The Director maintained an overall risk maturity level of 'advanced' in the 2017 Comcover Risk Management benchmarking program. The Benchmarking Program measures an agency's risk management maturity across the nine elements of the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and is mandatory for all Comcover fund members.

Figure 10: Risk management maturity level for the Director of National Parks in 2017 compared to all participating Australian Government agencies



Source: Comcover 2017

Indemnities and insurance

In 2016-17 the Director maintained comprehensive insurance cover for business operations through Comcover, the Australian Government's general insurance fund, including general liability, professional indemnity, and directors' and officers' liability. No incidents generated a major insurance claim during the year.

The Director also manages risk by requiring all commercial operators, contractors and scientific researchers in Commonwealth reserves to indemnify the Director and the Commonwealth and maintain appropriate levels of insurance for their activities.

Fraud control

As a Corporate Commonwealth entity, the Director of National Parks complies with the Fraud Rule. This ensures that there are suitable mechanisms in place to prevent, detect and respond to fraud. The Director has developed a Fraud Control Plan that is underpinned by a fraud risk assessment, which is reviewed regularly.

The Director reports data on detected, recorded and reported incidents of fraud or suspected fraud to the Australian Institute of Criminology through the institute's annual 'Fraud against the Commonwealth' questionnaire.

Advertising and marketing Research

Advertising, printing and publication production for Parks Australia are reported in the Department's annual report. In 2016-17 there was no market research, polling, direct mail or media advertising work undertaken through the Department on behalf of Parks Australia.

Parks Australia directly undertook specific advertising that exceeded the reporting threshold of \$13,000 (GST inclusive) as presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Advertising and marketing research expenditure in excess of \$13,000 (GST inclusive)

Agency	Purpose	Expenditure (GST inclusive)
Dentsu Mitchell Media Australia Pty Ltd	Statutory requirement under the EPBC Act to advertise a Notice of Intent to draft new Australian Marine Park management plans.	\$41,029.53

External review

Judicial decisions and decisions of administrative tribunals

There were no judicial decisions or decisions of administrative tribunals during the year that had, or may have, a significant impact on the Director's operations.

Report by the Auditor-General under section 43 of the PGPA Act

The Auditor-General issued an unqualified report for the 2016-17 financial statements of the Director of National Parks.

Reports by external bodies

Other than a report under section 43 of the PGPA Act that deals with the Auditor-General's audit of the annual financial statements (see above), the Auditor-General published one report relating to the Director of National Parks:

- Corporate Planning in the Australian Public Sector (published 31 August 2016)

The Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee presented the following reports in 2016-17 with content related to the Director of National Parks or responsibilities of the entity:

- Annual reports (No. 1 of 2017) (22 March 2017)
- Great Australian Bight Environment Protection Bill 2016 (30 March 2017)
- Oil or gas production in the Great Australian Bight (11 May 2017)

There were no reports on the entity during the reporting period by:

- the Commonwealth Ombudsman
- the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Work health and safety

This section provides information required under Schedule 2, Part 4 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. More detailed health and safety information related to Departmental employees undertaking the work of the Director of National Parks is contained in the Department's annual report.

The health, safety and welfare of workers, contractors, volunteers and visitors is of paramount importance to the Director. We hold a firm commitment to a 'zero harm' vision that injuries are preventable.

The Department's health and safety committee has oversight of all health and safety issues within the Environment portfolio. A member of the Parks Australia Executive represents Parks Australia on the committee. In addition, our Parks Australia Work Health and Safety advisor is an advisor to the Departmental committee.

Our Work Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly and provides reports to the Department's Work Health and Safety Committee and our Executive. As the peak consultative body for the agency, our committee considered reports from local health and safety committees operating in the three mainland national parks, in the Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands territories, Norfolk Island National Park and the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

ParkSafe (Parks Australia's Work Health and Safety Management System) is available to all Parks Australia employees on the Parks Australia intranet site. It provides advice and support to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for our employees and visitors.

A large proportion of Parks Australia employees face a diverse range of hazards while doing field work. These hazards include working in remote and often challenging locations, operating machinery, vehicles and vessels, using chemicals and hazardous substances, and managing incidents involving wildlife. The number of hazards reported by workers dropped to 21 in 2016-17 from 43 in 2014-15 and 34 in 2015-16. Parks Australia completed 41 workplace hazard inspections in 2016-17.

Our WHS advisor and an external consultant completed a chemical and hazardous substance audit of all parks. Managed by Parks Australia, the audit identified corrective actions that were added to the Corrective Actions Register and are being addressed progressively by each of the parks in consultation with our WHS team.

Comcare visited the Christmas Island and Cocos Island National Parks for a general inspection in early March 2017. Feedback from Comcare's inspectors was positive, commenting that 'Parks was near top of the organisations in relation to having quality WHS systems and procedures'. Comcare was invited to conduct a desk top assessment of ParkSafe. The assessment was undertaken in April and the initial result reflected a strong result at 80 per cent compliance. A report and details of the recommended corrective actions were submitted to our WHS Committee for information and consideration at the end of year wrap-up meeting. The necessary corrective actions were added to the Corrective Actions Register and are being addressed progressively by the WHS Advisor in consultation with our WHS Committee and Executive.

In total 60 Parks Australia workers sustained injuries during 2016-17. Of these injuries, 53 per cent were assessed as minor in nature, while 41 per cent were moderate in nature. Five worker incidents were classified as major during the year, including three workers being injured, and two incidents classified as near misses only—where no injury occurred. The cause of worker injuries are described in Table 14.

Table 14: Cause of Worker Injuries 2016-17

Cause	Quantity
Chemicals and other substances	2
Stress	3
Hitting objects with body (e.g. walking into equipment)	5
Medical conditions	2
Manual handling	15
Slips, trips and falls	9
Hit by moving object (e.g. insect or animal bites, doors closing on limbs, equipment hitting limbs)	22
Extreme temperatures	1
Electricity or radiation	2
Total	61

Initiatives and outcomes**Table 15: Work health and safety initiatives and outcomes for 2016-17**

Initiative	Outcome
Development of a Work Health and Safety strategic plan for 2017-2020	Three-year strategic plan to ensure safety remains of paramount importance, ensuring Parks Australia complies meets its health and safety obligations
Full implementation of the ParkSafe health and safety management system	A framework that guides Parks Australia to ensure compliance with relevant work health and safety legislation
Implementation of the recommendations from the chemical and hazardous substance audit	Findings and recommendations from the chemical and hazardous substance audit progressed and a new position resourced for the Kakadu National Park dedicated to the management of chemicals used by the park
Introduction of iAuditor	The mobile Work Health and Safety checklist application iAuditor was successfully introduced to the Australian National Botanic Gardens and Booderee National Park with a roll-out to the remaining parks to occur in 2017-18
Development and implementation of the Corrective Actions Register.	Provides a permanent record of workplace issues, including health and safety, that have been identified and the corrective/ preventative actions taken to address the issues.

Over the past five-year period the data reflects a general steady trend in incident reporting. Injury and near miss reports remained relatively constant overall, however the number of injuries for workers was down by more than 10 per cent and the number of hazards reported decreased by almost 40 per cent in 2016-17. The drop in the number of injuries sustained by workers and in the number of hazards encountered is indicative of an increasingly robust health and safety culture within Parks Australia.

A breakdown of the consequence rating for injuries and near misses to workers and visitors during this five-year period is provided in Tables 16 and 17.

Table 16: Consequence rating for injuries and near misses to employees and visitors during 2012-2017

Incident Classification	Incident type	Total Incidents over five years	Percentage of total incidents
Minor	Self treatment or by a first aid officer	343	51%
Moderate	Treatment by GP for non-life threatening injury or illness	283	42%
Major	Life threatening injury or illness	34	5%
Critical	Death	11	2%
Total 2012-2017		691	

Table 17: Five year overview of number and severity of safety incidents recorded

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Incidents recorded (includes Incidents affecting workers and visitors)					
Total incidents	122	140 ¹	157	189 ²	186 ³

Hazards recorded (includes hazards affecting workers and visitors)					
Total hazards	6	8	43	34	34

Injuries, deaths and near misses recorded for workers (includes employees, volunteers and contractors)					
Minor	44	31	24	54	42
Moderate	16	40	27	25	32
Major	0	1	6	0	5
Death	0	0	0	0	0
Total	60	72	57	79	79

Injuries, deaths and near misses recorded for visitors					
Minor	39	29	30	42	28
Moderate	13	26	18	25	33
Major	2	1	9	4	6
Death	2	2	3	3	1 ⁴
Total	56	58	60	74	68

¹ In addition to the above data, two (2) incidents involving traditional owner residents were recorded in 2013-14.

² In addition to the above data, three (3) incidents involving traditional owner residents were recorded in 2015-16.

³ In addition to the above data, three (3) incidents involving traditional owner residents were recorded in 2016-17.

⁴ The fatal incident reported involved Parks Australia employees as first responders to visitors at and surrounding park boundaries. The one incident involved two (2) deaths.

Implementation of the ParkSafe Work Health Safety Management System included the development and release of a number of new policy documents in 2016-17 including a Work Health and Safety Document Control Policy, Construction and Demolition Policy, Tree Safety Management Policy, Working with Children Policy and a Diving and Snorkelling Policy. These policy documents form an integral part of Parks Australia's comprehensive approach to work health and safety considerations in our parks, gardens and reserves.

Incidents and investigations

No investigations were conducted during 2016-17 relating to the operations of the Director. Under Schedule 1, Part 3 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), certain incidents must be notified to the regulator, Comcare, within specific time frames. Ten incidents were reported to Comcare in 2016-17, of which eight were notifiable under the WHS Act. Five of these incidents were dangerous incidents¹ and two related to serious injuries or illness sustained by visitors and one to an employee².

¹ The definition of a dangerous incident is in accordance with Section 37 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. Under this definition, a serious injury or illness is notifiable to the regulator, Comcare.

² The definition of serious injury or illness is in accordance with Section 36 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. Under this definition, a serious injury or illness is notifiable to the regulator, Comcare.

Compliance and enforcement under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

The EPBC Act and Regulations prohibit a range of activities in Commonwealth reserves unless authorised in accordance with the Act. Under the regulations, the Director may also prohibit, restrict or determine the manner of conduct of certain activities. Failure to comply is a criminal offence and for certain unauthorised actions civil pecuniary penalties may also be imposed.

Wardens and rangers are appointed under the EPBC Act to exercise compliance and enforcement powers in relation to the Act and its regulations. Members of the Australian Federal Police and officers of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service are ex officio wardens by force of the Act. In accordance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines and the Australian Government Investigation Standards, Parks Australia's wardens are trained in Certificate IV in Government (Investigations) and rangers are trained in relevant modules of the certificate.

A whole-of-government approach is taken to compliance and enforcement in Commonwealth marine reserves, supporting aerial and vessel patrols, vessel monitoring and enforcement investigations. In addition to the role of Australian Federal Police and customs officers, officers from other agencies, including the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, state and territory police, and fisheries and conservation agencies, can be appointed wardens under the EPBC Act after the required training. These arrangements greatly improve the Director's ability to enforce the Act in remote and infrequently visited Commonwealth marine reserves.

The following matters were determined by courts during 2016-17:

- On 7 July 2016, Sao Pedro Fishing Pty Ltd and Mr Christopher White were convicted and each fined \$5,000 in the Townsville District Court for offences against section S354A of the EPBC Act. Mr White was the skipper of the fishing vessel Sao Pedro, which was detected fishing in several Commonwealth marine reserves in November 2013.
- On 21 September 2016, a commercial lobster fisher was issued a civil penalty of \$28,000 and ordered to pay court costs for unlawfully fishing in the Tasman Fracture Commonwealth Marine Reserve in 2014.
- Between July 2016 and March 2017 eight masters and 107 crew from eight Vietnamese fishing vessels were convicted of offences under the EPBC Act relating to illegal fishing in the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve. The fishers were also convicted of offences under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. Penalties for the EPBC Act offences ranged from fines to five months imprisonment (suspended).

As at 30 June 2017, one matter concerning marine reserves is before the courts.

Table 18: Compliance and enforcement in terrestrial reserves during 2016-17

	Visitors	Tour operators	Other commercial operators
EPBC Act and Regulation incidents detected ¹	274	8	3
Warning notices issued	5	5	2
Infringement notices issued ²	5	0	0
Permit/Approval suspensions/ cancellations	0	0	0
Court actions commenced (criminal)	0	0	0
Court actions completed (criminal: successful)	0	0	0
Court actions ongoing at 30 June 2017 (criminal)	0	0	0

¹ Excludes notices of charges payable issued

² Multiple Infringement notices may be issued for each reported incident

Table 19: Compliance and enforcement in marine reserves during 2016-17

Compliance and enforcement actions	Number
EPBC Act and Regulations incidents detected ¹	93
Warnings notices issued	7
Infringement notices issued	3
Permit/Approval suspensions / cancellations	0
Court actions commenced (89 criminal; 0 civil) ²	89
Court actions completed (117 criminal: successful; 1 civil) ³	118
Court actions ongoing at 30 June 2016 (1 criminal; 0 civil)	1

¹ Incidents detected refer to all incidents in marine reserves, including those where no enforcement actions were required.

² Large number of Court actions reflects the prosecution of the masters and crew of eight Vietnamese fishing vessels for offences against section 354A(5) of the EPBC Act

³ Some Court actions completed or ongoing as at 30 June 2017 were commenced before 1 July 2016.

Table 20: Five-year overview of compliance and enforcement (terrestrial and marine reserves)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Compliance and enforcement - all reserves					
EPBC Act incidents detected	164	173	86	214	378
Warnings notices issued	39	64 ¹	6	62	19
Infringement notices issued	73	30	74	34	8
Cases taken to court ²	6	9	2	34	89
Court convictions	1	5	5	34	118
Court cases pending at year end	5	4	1	3	1

¹ Warning notices issued in 2013-14 include a number of verbal warnings issued

² Large number of Court actions reflects the prosecution of the masters and crew of eight Vietnamese fishing vessels for offences against section 354A(5) of the EPBC Act

Parks Australia takes our role as regulators seriously. We continually look for ways to ensure our approach to compliance and enforcement across the estate meets relevant best practice standards. In 2016-17 we commenced a project that will deliver an improvement plan to streamline how we regulate across our reserves, for example, updating our incident management templates and procedures and building the capacity of our employees through delivery of compliance training for our rangers and wardens.

The high number of incidents detected and warnings issued in 2016-17 compared to previous years reflects a renewed emphasis on information and guidance focusing on education of users, with a corresponding decrease in the number of infringement notices issued. For example, every day of the year rangers at Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park conduct guided interpretive walk for visitors called the Mala walk, which received positive visitor feedback in 2016-17. The Mala walk enhances visitor appreciation and understanding of the parks cultural significance from the perspective of the parks traditional owners (*Anangu*), thereby also helping visitors to act in culturally appropriate ways while in the park. This helps to reduce the incidence of inadvertent non-compliance.

Ecologically sustainable development and environmental performance

All of the Director's activities have an impact on ecologically sustainable development. Commonwealth reserves are managed to conserve and enhance their natural and cultural values for current and future generations. Only development activities consistent with primary management objectives may be permitted.

The provisions of the EPBC Act ensure that management plans for Commonwealth reserves properly integrate environmental, economic and social considerations, and that appropriate environmental monitoring and reporting regimes are in place.

The Director's statement under section 516A of the Act relating to the organisation's contribution to ecologically sustainable development and environmental performance is in Appendix C.

Regulatory Performance Framework

The Director contributes to the Department's reporting under the Regulatory Performance Framework for provisions relating to protected area management under the EPBC Act.

Freedom of information

Under section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), the Director of National Parks is required to publish a range of information online as part of an information publication scheme. This requirement is in Part II of the FOI Act and has replaced the former requirement to publish a section 8 statement in an annual report.

An agency plan that describes how the Director proposes to comply with its obligations under the information publication scheme—its structure, functions, appointments, annual reports, consultation arrangements and details of a freedom of information contact officer—must be published online. Information routinely released from freedom of information requests and routinely provided to Parliament must also be published online. This information is available at: www.environment.gov.au/parks/ips.html.

The Department handles requests by the public under the FOI Act on behalf of the Director. Contact details for the freedom of information contact officer are:

Phone: (02) 6275 9207
Fax: (02) 6274 2837
Email: foi@environment.gov.au

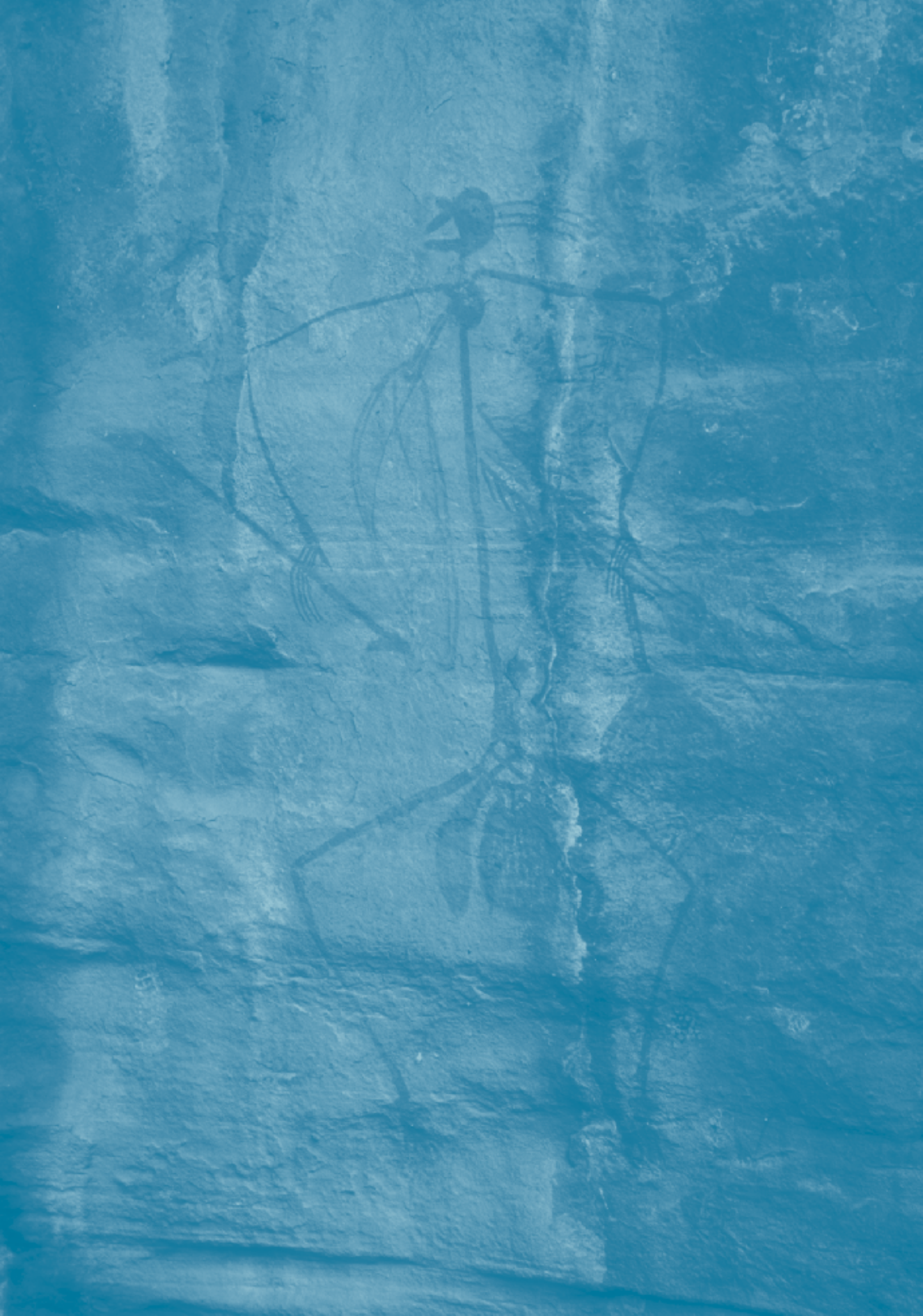
Formal freedom of information requests must:

- be in writing
- state that the request is an application for the purposes of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- provide information about the document(s) to assist us to process your request
- provide an address for reply.

Requests should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information Contact Officer
Legal Section
Department of the Environment and Energy
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

or by email to foi@environment.gov.au





Financial Statements

6

Independent Audit Report



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Minister for the Environment and Energy

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements of the Director of National Parks for the year ended 30 June 2017:

- (a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Financial Reporting) Rule 2015*; and
- (b) present fairly the financial position of the Director of National Parks as at 30 June 2017 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended.

The financial statements of the Director of National Parks, which I have audited, comprise the following statements as at 30 June 2017 and for the year then ended:

- Statement by the Accountable Authority and Chief Financial Officer;
- Statement of Comprehensive Income;
- Statement of Financial Position;
- Statement of Changes in Equity;
- Cash Flow Statement; and
- Notes to and forming part of the financial statements comprising a Summary of Significant Accounting Policies and other explanatory information.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Director of National Parks in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements for financial statement audits conducted by the Auditor-General and his delegates. These include the relevant independence requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* to the extent that they are not in conflict with the *Auditor-General Act 1997* (the Code). I have also fulfilled my other responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Accountable Authority's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

As the Accountable Authority of the the Director of National Parks, the person holding, or performing the duties of, the office of the Director of National Parks is responsible under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* for the preparation and fair presentation of annual financial statements that comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the rules made under that Act. The Accountable Authority is also responsible for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Accountable Authority is responsible for assessing the Director of National Parks' ability to continue as a going concern, taking into account whether the Director of National Parks' operations will cease as a result of an administrative restructure or for any other reason. The Accountable Authority is also responsible for disclosing matters related to going

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concern as applicable and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the assessment indicates that it is not appropriate.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

My objective is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control;
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Accountable Authority;
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Accountable Authority's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern; and
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Australian National Audit Office



Clea Lewis
Executive Director
Delegate of the Auditor-General
Canberra
13 November 2017

Statement by the Accountable Authority and Chief Financial Officer

In our opinion, the attached financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2017 comply with subsection 42(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), and are based on properly maintained financial records as per subsection 42(2) of the PGPA Act.

In our opinion, at the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Director of National Parks will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Signed



Gillian Sally Barnes
Accountable Authority

13 November 2017

Signed



Michelle Callaway
Chief Financial Officer

13 November 2017

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
for the period ended 30 June 2017

		2017	2016	Original Budget
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
NET COST OF SERVICES				
Expenses				
Employee benefits	2.1A	35,064	33,569	27,955
Suppliers	2.1B	31,936	33,135	29,291
Grants	2.1C	60	234	-
Depreciation and amortisation	2.1D	12,973	13,065	13,984
Write-down and impairment of assets	2.1E	1	195	-
Losses from sale of assets	2.1F	137	318	-
Other expenses		155	110	167
Total expenses		80,326	80,626	71,397
LESS :				
OWN-SOURCE INCOME				
Own-source revenue				
Sale of goods and rendering of services	2.2A	24,166	27,386	17,547
Contributions from Department of the Environment and Energy		42,829	40,470	42,829
Interest	2.2B	1,283	1,041	1,010
Other revenue	2.2C	5,132	5,901	665
Total own-source revenue		73,410	74,798	62,051
Gains				
Other gains		1,527	-	4,077
Total gains		1,527	-	4,077
Total own-source income		74,937	74,798	66,128
Net cost of services		(5,389)	(5,828)	(5,269)
Surplus (Deficit) attributable to the Australian Government		(5,389)	(5,828)	(5,269)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME				
Items not subject to subsequent reclassification to net cost of services				
Changes in asset revaluation surplus	3.2	15,509	1,044	-
Total other comprehensive income		15,509	1,044	-
Total comprehensive income (loss) attributable to the Australian Government		10,120	(4,784)	(5,269)

Accounting Policy

Revenue from Government

The Director of National Parks received no direct appropriation from the Government for Departmental outputs. Funds are received from the Department of the Environment and Energy (appropriated to the Department of the Environment and Energy as a corporate Commonwealth entity payment item for payment to the Director of National Parks) and are recognised as Revenue from Government by the Director of National Parks unless the funding is in the nature of equity.

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
as at 30 June 2017

		2017	2016	Original
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000	Budget
				\$'000
ASSETS				
Financial Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	3.1A	12,437	20,442	25,248
Investments	3.1B	36,846	26,122	18,142
Trade and other receivables	3.1C	1,503	1,545	1,971
Accrued revenue	3.1D	371	210	1,921
Total financial assets		51,157	48,319	47,282
Non-Financial Assets				
Land and buildings	3.2A	79,487	67,438	66,428
Infrastructure, plant and equipment	3.2A	151,964	154,828	150,388
Intangibles	3.2A	1,726	836	722
Other non-financial assets	3.2B	685	552	539
Total non-financial assets		233,862	223,654	218,077
Total Assets		285,019	271,973	265,359
LIABILITIES				
Payables				
Suppliers	3.3A	2,581	2,999	2,750
Other payables	3.3B	6,176	4,442	5,427
Total payables		8,757	7,441	8,177
Provisions				
Employee provisions	5.1	9,296	8,312	9,223
Other provisions		38	31	41
Total provisions		9,334	8,343	9,264
Total Liabilities		18,091	15,784	17,441
Net Assets		266,928	256,189	247,918
EQUITY				
Contributed equity		37,064	36,445	37,064
Reserves		189,115	173,606	172,562
Retained surplus		40,749	46,138	38,292
Total Equity		266,928	256,189	247,918

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
as at 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	Original Budget \$'000
CONTRIBUTED EQUITY				
Opening balance				
Balance carried forward from previous period		36,445	36,445	36,445
Adjusted opening balance		36,445	36,445	36,445
Transactions with owners				
Equity injection		619	-	619
Total transactions with owners		619	-	619
Closing balance as at 30 June		37,064	36,445	37,064
RETAINED EARNINGS				
Opening balance				
Balance carried forward from previous period		46,138	51,966	43,561
Adjusted opening balance		46,138	51,966	43,561
Comprehensive income				
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period		(5,389)	(5,828)	(5,269)
Total comprehensive income		(5,389)	(5,828)	(5,269)
Closing balance as at 30 June		40,749	46,138	38,292
ASSET REVALUATION RESERVE				
Opening balance				
Balance carried forward from previous period		173,606	172,562	172,562
Adjusted opening balance		173,606	172,562	172,562
Comprehensive income				
Revaluation increase	3.2	20,090	1,044	-
Other comprehensive income		(4,581)	-	-
Total comprehensive income		15,509	1,044	-
Closing balance as at 30 June		189,115	173,606	172,562
TOTAL EQUITY				
Opening balance				
Balance carried forward from previous period		256,189	260,973	252,568
Adjusted opening balance		256,189	260,973	252,568
Comprehensive income				
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period		(5,389)	(5,828)	(5,269)
Other comprehensive income		15,509	1,044	-
Total comprehensive income		10,120	(4,784)	(5,269)
Transactions with owners				
Equity injection		619	-	619
Total transactions with owners		619	-	619
Closing balance as at 30 June		266,928	256,189	247,918

Accounting Policy

Amounts appropriated which are designated as 'equity injections' for a year (less any formal reductions) are received directly by the Department of the Environment and Energy and are transferred to the Director of National Parks. These amounts are recognised directly in Contributed Equity in that year.

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS
CASH FLOW STATEMENT
for the period ended 30 June 2017

	Notes	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000	Original Budget \$'000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES				
Cash received				
Sale of goods and rendering of services		27,613	29,665	17,547
Receipts from Government		42,829	40,470	42,829
Interest		95	303	1,010
Net GST received		1,338	1,555	-
Other		624	1,633	921
Total cash received		72,499	73,626	62,307
Cash used				
Employees		34,003	34,251	28,211
Suppliers		31,236	31,616	25,214
Other		209	355	167
Total cash used		65,448	66,222	53,592
Net cash from operating activities		7,051	7,404	8,715
INVESTING ACTIVITIES				
Cash received				
Interest - Term Deposits		1,198	638	-
Proceeds from sales of property, plant and equipment		83	(231)	-
Total cash received		1,281	407	-
Cash used				
Investment in term deposits		10,724	7,980	-
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		5,202	4,378	9,334
Purchase of intangibles		1,030	259	-
Total cash used		16,956	12,617	9,334
Net cash used by investing activities		(15,675)	(12,210)	(9,334)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES				
Cash Received				
Equity Injection		619	-	619
Total cash received		619	-	619
Net cash used by financing activities		619	-	619
Net increase / (decrease) in cash held		(8,005)	(4,806)	-
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the reporting period		20,442	25,248	25,248
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	3.1A	12,437	20,442	25,248

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS
INDEX OF THE NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the year period 30 June 2017

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DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Overview

Objectives of the entity

The Director of National Parks is a Corporate Commonwealth Entity. It is a not-for-profit entity. The objective of the entity is to manage Australia's protected areas. The Director of National Parks is structured to meet the following outcome:

Conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves through the provision of safe visitor access, the control of invasive species and working with stakeholders and neighbours.

The continued existence of the Director of National Parks in its present form and with its present programs is dependent on Government policy and continuing funding by Parliament for the Director of National Parks' administration and programmes.

Basis of Preparation of the Financial Statements

The financial statements and notes are required by section 42 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability 2013* (PGPA Act) and are general purpose financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with:

- a) *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Financial Reporting) Rule 2015* (FRR) for reporting periods ending on or after 1 July 2015; and
- b) Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations – Reduced Disclosure Requirements issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that apply for the reporting period.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accrual basis and are in accordance with historical cost convention, except for certain assets at fair value. Except where stated, no allowance is made for the effect of changing prices on the results or the financial position.

The financial statements are presented in Australian dollars and values are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified.

New Accounting Standards

Adoption of new Australian Accounting Standard requirements

No accounting standard has been adopted earlier than the application date as stated in the standard.

No new or revised standards were issued after 30 June 2017 and prior to the signing of the Statement by the Director of National Parks and the Chief Finance Officer that were applicable to the current reporting period.

Taxation

The Director of National Parks is exempt from all forms of taxation except fringe benefits tax (FBT) and the goods and services tax (GST).

Revenues, expenses, assets and liabilities are recognised net of GST:

- a) except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office; and
- b) except for receivables and payables.

Events after the Reporting Period

There was no subsequent event that had the potential to significantly affect the ongoing structure and financial activities of the entity.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Departmental Major Budget Variances

The following tables provide a comparison of the original budget as presented in the 2016-17 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) to the 2016-17 final outcome as presented in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards for the entity.

The Budget is not audited and does not reflect additional budget estimates provided in the 2016-17 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) or the revised budget provided as part of the 2017-18 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS). However, major changes in budget have been explained as part of the variance analysis where relevant. The actuals are prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

Variances are considered to be 'major' based on the following criteria:

- The variance between budget and actual is greater than 10% of the relevant category (Income, Expenses and Equity totals); and
- The variance between budget and actual is greater than \$1 million of the relevant category.

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Explanations of major variances	Affected line items (and statement)
<p><u>Employee benefits</u></p> <p>Employee benefits are higher than expected due to the Commonwealth Marine Reserves agreement with The Department of the Environment and Energy not being included in the Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS). This has been included in the 2017-18 PBS. In addition, increased park fee revenue has enabled investment in operational resources throughout the financial year for the delivery of outcomes.</p>	<p><i>Employee benefits</i> (Statement of Comprehensive Income)</p> <p><i>Employees</i> (Cash Flow Statement)</p>
<p><u>Suppliers</u></p> <p>Supplier expenses are higher than expected due to the Commonwealth Marine Reserves agreement with The Department of the Environment and Energy not being included in the budget. This has been included in the 2017-18 budget. In addition, increased park fee revenue has enabled investment in operational resources throughout the financial year for the delivery of outcomes.</p>	<p><i>Suppliers</i> (Statement of Comprehensive Income)</p> <p><i>Suppliers</i> (Cash Flow Statement)</p>
<p><u>Depreciation and amortisation</u></p> <p>Depreciation and amortisation is lower due to changes to the useful lives and the incorporation of residual value as a result of processing the formal revaluation on non-financial assets undertaken in the prior year. The revaluation was conducted after the release of the budget. The useful lives and residual values primarily impacted the infrastructure asset class.</p>	<p><i>Depreciation and amortisation</i> (Statement of Comprehensive Income)</p> <p><i>Infrastructure, plant & equipment</i> (Statement of Financial Position)</p>
<p><u>Sale of goods and rendering of services</u></p> <p>Sale of goods and rendering of services are higher than expected due to the Commonwealth Marine Reserves agreement with The Department of the Environment and Energy not being included in the budget. This has been included in the 2017-18 budget. In addition, greater than expected park fee revenue was received due to revenue earning activities such as commercial licencing and a Food Fair in Kakadu National Park.</p>	<p><i>Sale of goods and rendering of services</i> (Statement of Comprehensive Income)</p> <p><i>Sale of goods and rendering of services</i> (Cash Flow Statement)</p>

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Comprehensive Income (Cont.)

Explanations of major variances	Affected line items (and statement)
<u>Other revenue</u> Other revenue includes a classification change for Resources Received Free of Charge (RRFOC) from Other gains reported in the 2016-17 budget. RRFOC represents the value of corporate services provided by the Department of the Environment and Energy under a Service Delivery Agreement. This variance also includes insurance revenue, assets recognised through the 2016-17 revaluation and greater than expected revenue from donations, recoveries and fuel tax credits which are not included in the PBS.	Other revenue (Statement of Comprehensive Income) Other gains (Statement of Comprehensive Income) Infrastructure, plant and equipment (Statement of Financial Position)
<u>Other comprehensive income</u> Other comprehensive income includes a surplus from the asset revaluation conducted in 2016-17 not included in the PBS.	Changes in asset revaluation surplus (Statement of Comprehensive Income) Reserves (Statement of Financial Position) Asset revaluation surplus (Statement of Changes in Equity)

Statement of Financial Position

Explanations of major variances	Affected line items (and statement)
<u>Cash and cash equivalents</u> Cash and cash equivalents are lower than budget due to increased investment. The variance is due to a combination of underspends in capital expenditure, a surplus cash transferred to investments and the use of unearned revenue and suppliers.	Cash and cash equivalents (Statement of Financial Position) Investments (Statement of Financial Position) Sale of goods and rendering of services (Cash Flow Statement) Net GST received (Cash Flow Statement) Investments in term deposits (Cash Flow Statement) Purchase of property, plant and equipment (Cash Flow Statement)
<u>Investments</u> Investments are higher than budget due to lump sum receipts of Contributions from the Department of the Environment and Energy being invested in term deposits.	Investments (Statement of Financial Position) Investments in term deposits (Cash Flow Statement)
<u>Land and Buildings</u> A formal revaluation was conducted in 2016-17 which increased the value of the DNP's Land and Buildings. The impacts of the revaluation were not included in the budget as the revaluation was conducted after the release of the PBS. Assets were also disposed of due to a fire in Kakadu National Park. This mainly impacted the Land & Buildings asset class.	Land and buildings (Statement of Financial Position)

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

<p><u>Infrastructure, plant & equipment</u></p> <p>A formal revaluation was conducted on all assets in 2016-17 which increased the value of the DNP's Infrastructure, plant and equipment assets. The impacts of the revaluation were not included in the budget as the revaluation was conducted after the release of the PBS.</p>	<p><i>Infrastructure, plant and equipment</i> (Statement of Financial Position)</p> <p><i>Reserves</i> (Statement of Financial Position)</p> <p><i>Asset revaluation surplus</i> (Statement of Changes in Equity)</p>
<p><u>Intangibles</u></p> <p>Intangibles are over budget due to an increase in computer software assets not previously included in the PBS.</p>	<p><i>Intangibles</i> (Statement of Financial Position)</p> <p><i>Purchase of intangibles</i> (Cash Flow Statement)</p>
<p><u>Reserves</u></p> <p>A formal revaluation was conducted on the all asset in 2016-17 which increased the value of the DNP's non-financial assets. The impacts of the revaluation were not included in the budget as the revaluation was conducted after the release of the PBS.</p>	<p><i>Reserves</i> (Statement of Financial Position)</p> <p><i>Asset revaluation surplus</i> (Statement of Changes in Equity)</p>

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Financial Performance

This section analyses the financial performance of the Director of National Parks for the year ended 30 June 2017.

Note 2.1: Expenses	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Note 2.1A - Employee Benefits		
Wages and salaries	26,936	25,230
Superannuation		
Defined contribution plans	2,656	2,418
Defined benefit plans	2,347	2,245
Leave and other entitlements	3,042	3,332
Separation and redundancies	62	344
Other employee expenses	21	-
Total employee benefits	35,064	33,569

Accounting Policy

Accounting policies for employee related expenses are contained in the People and Relationship section

Note 2.1B - Suppliers

Goods and services supplied or rendered

Professional services	6,637	7,014
Property expenses	2,567	2,361
Repairs and maintenance	3,358	4,068
Parks operation & maintenance	5,651	5,810
Employee related expenses	1,978	2,082
Information technology & communication	1,790	1,688
Service delivery charges	4,120	4,078
Other	903	1,409
Total goods and services supplied or rendered	27,004	28,510

Goods supplied	3,126	3,310
Services rendered	23,878	25,200
Total goods and services supplied or rendered	27,004	28,510

Other supplier expenses

Operating lease rentals:		
Minimum lease payments	915	769
Contingent rentals	4,017	3,856
Total other supplier expenses	4,932	4,625
Total supplier expenses	31,936	33,135

Supplier Commitments

Supplier commitments comprise of general consultancy services, utilities and maintenance works.

Within 1 year	6,045	5,321
Between 1 to 5 years	4,483	5,601
Total supplier commitments	10,528	10,922

Leasing Commitments

Leases for rent of national parks from Traditional Owners - The Director of National Parks in its capacity as lessee, leases Kakadu National Park, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and Booderee National Park from the parks' Traditional Owners. Annual rent is payable in advance. Terms of leases vary up to a maximum of 99 years.

The lease terms with Kakadu National Park and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Traditional Owners provide for a review of the annual rent amount every five years.

The lease terms with Booderee National Park Traditional Owners provide for an annual review of the rental amount.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 2.1: Expenses (Cont)

2017	2016
\$'000	\$'000

Commitments for minimum lease payments in relation to non-cancellable operating leases are payable as follows:

Within 1 year	1,158	1,152
Between 1 to 5 years	4,633	4,608
More than 5 years	72,417	73,113
Total operating lease commitments	78,208	78,873

Accounting Policy

Where an asset is acquired by means of a finance lease, the asset is capitalised at either the fair value of the lease property or, if lower, the present value of minimum lease repayments at the inception of the contract and a liability is recognised at the same time and for the same amount.

The discount rate used is the interest rate implicit in the lease. Leased assets are amortised over the period of the lease. Lease payments are allocated between the principal component and the interest expense.

Operating lease payments are expensed on a straight line basis which is representative of the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets.

The majority of operating lease payments relate to arrangements with traditional owners over Kakadu, Uluru Kata-Tjuta and Booderee National Parks.

Note 2.1C - Grants

Grants

Non-profit entities	60	234
Total grants	60	234

Note 2.1D - Depreciation and Amortisation

Depreciation:

Buildings	3,409	3,514
Infrastructure, plant and equipment	9,424	9,406
Total depreciation	12,833	12,920

Amortisation:

Intangibles	140	145
Total amortisation	140	145
Total depreciation and amortisation	12,973	13,065

Note 2.1E - Write-down and impairment of assets

Financial assets

Impairment of receivables	1	195
Total write-down and impairment of assets	1	195

Note 2.1F - Sale of assets

Land and buildings		
Proceeds from sale	(2)	-
Carrying value of assets sold	142	2
Infrastructure, plant & equipment		
Proceeds from sale	(95)	(231)
Carrying value of assets sold	92	461
Intangibles		
Proceeds from sale	-	-
Carrying value of assets sold	-	86
Net loss (gain) from sale of assets	137	318

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 2.2: Own-Source Revenue

2017	2016
\$'000	\$'000

Note 2.2A - Sale of goods and rendering of services

Sale of goods	62	125
Rendering of services	24,104	27,261
Total sale of goods and rendering of services	24,166	27,386

Accounting Policy

Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when:

- a) the risks and rewards of ownership have been transferred to the buyer;
- b) the seller retains no managerial involvement nor effective control over the goods;
- c) the revenue and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- d) it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Director of National Parks.

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised by reference to the stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date. The revenue is recognised when:

- a) the amount of revenue, stage of completion and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- b) the probable economic benefits with the transaction will flow to the Director of National Parks.

The stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date is determined by reference to the proportion that costs incurred to date bear to the estimated total costs of the transaction.

Receivables for goods and services, which have 30 day terms, are recognised at the nominal amounts due less any impairment allowance account. Collectability of debts is reviewed at balance date. Allowances are made when collectability of the debt is no longer probable.

Revenue from the sale of tickets, permits and goods are recognised at the time tickets/permits are issued or goods are delivered to customers. Refunds for ticket sales are accounted for when they occur. An estimate for these refunds is not provided for.

Note 2.2B - Interest

Deposits	1,283	1,041
Total Interest	1,283	1,041

Accounting Policy

Interest revenue is recognised using the effective interest method.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 2.2: Own-Source Revenue (Cont)

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Note 2.2C - Other revenue		
Resources received free of charge - service delivery charges	4,120	4,078
Sublease rental income	248	256
Other revenue	764	1,567
Total other revenue	5,132	5,901

Subleasing rental income commitments

Sublease rental income - The Director of National Parks in its capacity as lessor has the following four subleases:

- Cafe within the Australian National Botanic Gardens which is subject to an annual increase in line with the movement in consumer price index;
- Bookshop within the Australian National Botanic Gardens which is subject to an annual increase in line with the movement in consumer price index;
- Day Spa within the Australian National Botanic Gardens which is subject to an annual review to the consumer price index; and
- the Aurora Resort at Kakadu National Park which has no escalation clauses.

Commitments for sublease rental income receivables are as follows:

Within 1 year	1,145	1,019
Between 1 to 5 years	1,647	1,315
More than 5 years	6,652	6,856
Total sublease rental income commitments	9,444	9,190

Accounting Policy

Resources received free of charge are recognised as revenue when and only when a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would have been purchased if they had not been donated. Use of those resources is recognised as an expense.

The Department of the Environment and Energy provides corporate services under a Service Delivery Agreement to the Director of National Parks.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Financial Position

This section analyses the Director of National Parks' assets used to conduct its operations and the operating liabilities incurred as a result. Employee related information is disclosed in the People and Relationships section.

Note 3.1: Financial Assets

2017	2016
\$'000	\$'000

Note 3.1A - Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash on deposit	12,315	20,278
Cash on hand	122	164
Total cash and cash equivalents	12,437	20,442

Accounting Policy

Cash is recognised at its nominal amount. Cash and cash equivalents include:

- a) cash on hand; and
- b) deposits in bank accounts with an original maturity of 3 months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and subject to insignificant risk of changes in value.

Note 3.1B - Investments

Term Deposits	36,846	26,122
Total investments	36,846	26,122

All investments are expected to be recovered within 12 months.

Accounting Policy

Investments are recognised at their nominal amounts and interest is credited to revenue as it accrues. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate.

Note 3.1C - Trade and Other Receivables

Goods and services receivables

Goods and services	562	797
Total goods and services receivables	562	797

Other Receivables

Net GST receivable from ATO	389	372
Other receivables	742	566
Total other receivables	1,131	938
Total trade and other receivables (gross)	1,693	1,735

Less: Impairment allowance account

Goods and services	(190)	(190)
Total impairment allowance account	(190)	(190)
Total trade and other receivables (net)	1,503	1,545

All receivables are expected to be received in less than 12 months.

Accounting Policy

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that have fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market are classified as 'loans and receivables'. Receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 3.1: Financial Assets (Cont)

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Receivables (gross) are aged as follows:		
Not overdue	1,172	1,203
Overdue by:		
Less than 30 days	89	77
31 to 60 days	64	81
61 to 90 days	(12)	120
More than 90 days	380	254
	<u>521</u>	<u>532</u>
Total receivables (gross)	<u>1,693</u>	<u>1,735</u>
The impairment allowance account is aged as follows:		
Overdue by:		
More than 90 days	(190)	(190)
Total impairment allowance account	<u>(190)</u>	<u>(190)</u>

Reconciliation of the impairment allowance account:

Movements in relation to 2017

	Goods and services 2017 \$'000	Other receivables 2017 \$'000	Total 2017 \$'000
Opening balance	(190)	-	(190)
Amounts written off	-	-	-
Increase/(Decrease) recognition in net cost of services	-	-	-
Closing balance	(190)	-	(190)

Movements in relation to 2016

	Goods and services 2016 \$'000	Other receivables 2016 \$'000	Total 2016 \$'000
Opening balance	(339)	-	(339)
Amounts written off	339	-	339
Increase recognised in net surplus	(190)	-	(190)
Closing balance	(190)	-	(190)

Accounting Policy

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at the end of each reporting period.

Note 3.1D - Accrued revenue

Accrued Revenue	371	210
Total accrued revenue	<u>371</u>	<u>210</u>

Accrued revenue is expected to be recovered within 12 months.
No indicators of impairment were found for accrued revenue.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 3.2: Non-Financial Assets

3.2A: Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment and intangibles (2016-17)

	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Plant & Equipment	Computer Software ¹	Water Entitlements	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
As at 1 July 2016						
Gross book value	5,690	68,697	160,787	1,001	93	236,268
Accumulated depreciation and impairment	-	(6,949)	(10,541)	(258)	-	(17,748)
Total as at 1 July 2016	5,690	61,748	150,246	743	93	218,520
Additions						
Purchase	-	634	6,086	1,052	-	7,772
Revaluations and impairments recognised in other comprehensive income ²	6,841	8,092	5,179	(22)	-	20,090
Depreciation and amortisation	-	(3,409)	(9,424)	(140)	-	(12,973)
Disposals - by sale	-	(283)	(164)	-	-	(447)
Write-down and impairment recognised through the operating result	-	142	73	-	-	215
Transfers	-	32	(32)	-	-	-
Total as at 30 June 2017	12,531	66,956	151,964	1,633	93	233,177

Total as at 30 June 2017 represented by:

Gross book value	12,531	66,956	151,964	1,633	93	233,177
Accumulated depreciation, amortisation and impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total as at 30 June 2017	12,531	66,956	151,964	1,633	93	233,177

¹The carrying amount of computer software includes \$202,900 purchased software and \$1,430,280 internally generated software.

²A revaluation on all assets was conducted as at 30 June 2017 by an independent valuer. The revaluation was conducted in accordance with the revaluation policy stated at Note 6.3.

Contractual commitments for the acquisition of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets

Within one year

Total contractual commitments for the acquisition of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
	3,206	2,969
	3,206	2,969

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Accounting Policy

Assets are recorded at cost on acquisition except as stated below. The cost of acquisition includes the fair value of assets transferred in exchange and liabilities undertaken. Financial assets are initially measured at their fair value plus transaction costs where appropriate.

Assets acquired at no cost, or for nominal consideration, are initially recognised as assets and revenues at their fair value at the date of acquisition, unless acquired as a consequence of restructuring of administrative arrangements. In the latter case, assets are initially recognised as contributions by owners at the amounts at which they were recognised in the transferor entity's accounts immediately prior to the restructuring.

Asset Recognition Threshold

Purchases of infrastructure plant and equipment are recognised initially at cost in the Statement of Financial Position, except for purchases costing less than \$5,000, which are expensed in the year of acquisition (other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are significant in total).

The initial cost of an asset includes an estimate of the cost of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

Revaluations

Fair values for each class of asset are determined as shown below:

Asset class	Fair value measured at:
Land	Market selling price
Buildings including leasehold improvements	Market selling price and Depreciated replacement cost
Infrastructure, plant & equipment	Market selling price and Depreciated replacement cost

Following initial recognition at cost, infrastructure, plant and equipment are carried at fair value less subsequent accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. Valuations are conducted with sufficient frequency to ensure that the carrying amounts of assets do not materially differ from the assets' fair values as at the reporting date. The regularity of independent valuations depends upon the volatility of movements in market values for the relevant assets. A formal revaluation was conducted in the 2016-17 financial year.

Revaluation adjustments are made on a class basis. Any revaluation increment is credited to equity under the heading of asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that it reverses a previous revaluation decrement of the same asset class that was previously recognised through operating result. Revaluation decrements for a class of assets are recognised directly through operating result except to the extent that they reverse a previous revaluation increment for that class.

Any accumulated depreciation as at the revaluation date is eliminated against the gross carrying amount of the asset and the asset restated to the revalued amount.

Impairment

All assets were assessed for impairment at 30 June 2017. Where indications of impairment exist, the asset's recoverable amount is estimated and an impairment adjustment made if the asset's recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount.

The recoverable amount of an asset is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. Value in use is the present value of the future cash flows expected to be derived from the asset. Where the future economic benefit of an asset is not primarily dependent on the asset's ability to generate future cash flows, and the asset would be replaced if the Director of National Parks were deprived of the asset, its value in use is taken to be its depreciated replacement cost.

Depreciation

Depreciable infrastructure, plant and equipment assets are written-off to their estimated residual values over their estimated useful lives to the Director of National Parks using, in all cases, the straight-line method of depreciation. Leasehold improvements are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the lesser of the estimated useful life of the improvements or the unexpired period of the lease.

Depreciation rates (useful lives), residual values and methods are reviewed at each reporting date and necessary adjustments are recognised in the current, or current and future reporting periods, as appropriate.

Depreciation rates applying to each class of depreciable asset are based on the following useful lives:

	2016-17	2015-16
Artworks	10 to 100 years	10 to 100 years
Buildings	5 to 85 years	5 to 85 years
Infrastructure	7 years to Indefinite Life	7 years to Indefinite Life
Plant & equipment	2 to 60 years	2 to 60 years

Derecognition

An item of infrastructure, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when no further future economic benefits are expected from its use or disposal.

Heritage and Cultural Assets

The Director of National Parks has various heritage and cultural items which have not been recorded as assets in the financial statements, due to the difficulties associated with the reliable measurement of these items. The items include living collections in the Australian National Botanical Gardens and historic buildings which are managed as ruins.

The Director of National Parks has adopted, through consultation with boards of management, where relevant, appropriate curatorial and preservation policies for these items. The Director of National Park's curatorial and preservation policies can be found in the Plan of Management for each national park at <http://www.parksaustralia.gov.au>.

Intangibles

The Director of National Parks' intangibles comprise internally developed and purchased software for internal use and water entitlements. Internally developed software is carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Software is amortised on a straight-line basis over its anticipated useful life. The useful lives of the Director of National Parks' software are 4 to 5 years (2015-16: 4 to 5 years).

All software assets were assessed for indications of impairment as at 30 June 2017. Water entitlements are carried at cost where there is no active market. When an active market exists they are carried at fair value. These assets are assessed as having an indefinite useful life.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 3.2 Non Financial Assets (Cont)

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Note 3.2B: Other Non-Financial Assets		
Prepayments	685	552
Total other non-financial assets	685	552

All other non-financial assets are expected to be recovered in 12 months.
No indicators of impairment were found for other non-financial assets.

Note 3.3: Payables

Note 3.3A - Suppliers

Trade creditors and accruals	1,713	2,177
Operating lease rentals	868	822
Total supplier payables	2,581	2,999

Settlement was usually made within 30 days.

Accounting Policy

A distinction is made between finance leases and operating leases. Finance leases effectively transfer from the lessor to the lessee substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of leased non-current assets. An operating lease is a lease that is not a finance lease. In operating leases, the lessor effectively retains substantially all such risks and benefits.

Where an asset is acquired by means of a finance lease, the asset is capitalised at either the fair value of the lease property or, if lower, the present value of minimum lease repayments at the inception of the contract and a liability is recognised at the same time and for the same amount.

The discount rate used is the interest rate implicit in the lease. Leased assets are amortised over the period of the lease. Lease payments are allocated between the principal component and the interest expense.

Operating lease payments are expensed on a straight line basis which is representative of the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets.

The majority of operating lease payments relate to arrangements with traditional owners over Kakadu, Uluru Kata-Tjuta and Booderee National Parks.

Note 3.3B - Other Payables

Salaries and wages	187	86
Separation & redundancies	-	128
Superannuation	34	16
Unearned revenue	5,830	4,195
Other payables	125	17
Total other payables	6,176	4,442

All other payables are expected to be settled within 12 months.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Funding

This section identifies the Director of National Parks' funding structure.

Note 4.1: Appropriations

The Director of National Parks received no direct appropriation from the Government for Departmental outputs. Funds are appropriated directly to the Department of the Environment and Energy and transferred to the Director of National Parks. Funds transferred from the Department of the Environment and Energy included a \$42.829m Corporate Commonwealth Entity payment (2015-16: \$40.470m) and an equity injection of \$619K in 2016-17 (2015-16: Nil).

When received by the Director of National Parks, the payments made are legally the money of the Director of National Parks and do not represent any balance remaining in the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Note 4.2: Regulatory Charging Summary

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Amounts applied		
Departmental		
Own source revenue	12,272	10,788
Payments from portfolio agency	-	-
Total amounts applied	12,272	10,788
Expenses		
Departmental	12,272	10,788
Total expenses	12,272	10,788
Revenue		
Departmental	13,508	12,609
Total revenue	13,508	12,609
Receivables		
Not Overdue	128	636
Overdue by		
0 - 30 days	39	74
31 - 60 days	-	37
61 - 90 days	1	1
More than 90 days	37	22
Total receivables	205	770
Cost recovered activities:		
- Park entry and associated fees		
- Education services		
- Parking fees		

Documentation (Cost Recovery Impact Statement) for the above activities is available at
<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/director-national-parks-cost-recovery-impact-statement-january-2012-december-2016>

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

People and Relationships

This section describes a range of employment and post employment benefits provided to our people and our relationships with other key people

Note 5.1: Employee Provisions

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Leave	9,296	8,312
Total employee provisions	9,296	8,312
Employee Provisions are expected to be settled in:		
No more than 12 months	4,340	4,033
More than 12 months	4,956	4,279
Total employee provisions	9,296	8,312

Accounting Policy

The legal entity of the Director of National Parks has only one employee, being the Director herself. However, under an arrangement with the Department of the Environment and Energy, the Director of National Parks has a number of employees of the Department of the Environment and Energy that are assigned to assist the Director. For the purpose of these Financial Statements, such employees are treated as employees of the Director of National Parks.

Liabilities for 'short-term employee benefits' (as defined in AASB 119: Employee Benefits) and termination benefits due within twelve months are measured at their nominal amounts. The nominal amount is calculated with regard to the rates expected to be paid on settlement of the liability.

Other long-term employee benefits are measured as a net total of the present value of the defined benefit obligation at the end of the reporting period minus the fair value at the end of the reporting period of plan assets (if any) out of which the obligations are to be settled directly.

Leave

The liability for employee benefits includes provision for annual leave and long service leave. No provision has been made for sick leave as all sick leave is non-vesting and the average sick leave taken in future years by employees of the Director of National Parks is estimated to be less than the annual entitlement for sick leave.

The leave liabilities are calculated on the basis of employees' remuneration at the estimated salary rates that will be applied at the time the leave is taken, including the Director of National Parks' employer superannuation contribution rates to the extent that the leave is likely to be taken during service rather than paid out on termination.

The liability for long service leave has been determined using the short-hand method in accordance with the FRR for reporting periods ending on or after 1 July 2014. The estimate of the present value of the liability takes into account attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation.

Separation and Redundancy

Provision is made for separation and redundancy benefit payments. The Director of National Parks recognises a provision for termination when it has developed a detailed formal plan for the terminations and has informed those employees affected that it will carry out the terminations.

Superannuation

Employees of the Director of National Parks are members of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS), the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSS) or the PSS accumulation plan (PSSap).

The CSS and PSS are defined benefit schemes for the Commonwealth. The PSSap is a defined contribution scheme.

The liability for defined benefits is recognised in the financial statements of the Australian Government and is settled by the Australian Government in due course. This liability is reported by the Department of Finance as an administered item.

The Director of National Parks makes employer contributions to the Australian Government at rates determined by an actuary to be sufficient to meet the cost to the Government of the superannuation entitlements of the Director of National Parks' employees. The Director of National Parks accounts for the contributions as if they were contributions to defined contribution plans.

The liability for superannuation recognised as at 30 June represents outstanding contributions for the final fortnight of the year.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 5.2: Key Management Personnel Remuneration

Key management personnel are those persons having authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the entity, directly or indirectly (whether executive or otherwise) of that entity. The Director of National Parks has determined the key management personnel to be the Director, three Assistant Secretaries, the Chief Finance Officer, the Park Managers of the three jointly managed national parks and the General Manager of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Key management personnel remuneration is reported below:

	2017 \$'000
Key management personnel remuneration expenses	
Short-term employee benefits	1,643
Post-employment benefits	264
Other long-term employee benefits	155
Termination benefits	10
Total key management personnel remuneration expenses¹	2,072

The total number of key management personnel that are included in the above table are 10 individuals.

¹ The above key management personnel remuneration excludes the remuneration and other benefits of the Portfolio Minister. The Portfolio Minister's remuneration and other benefits are set by the Remuneration Tribunal and are not paid by the Director of National Parks.

Note 5.3: Related Party Disclosures

Related party relationships:

The Director of National Parks is an Australian Government controlled entity. Related parties to the Director of National Parks are the Key Management Personnel as disclosed in Note 5.2 including the Portfolio Minister and other Australian Government entities.

Transactions with related parties:

Given the breadth of Government activities, related parties may transact with the government sector in the same capacity as ordinary citizens. Such transactions include the payments or refunds, receipt of Medicare rebate or higher education loans. These transactions have not been separately disclosed in this note.

Giving consideration to relationships with related parties, and transactions entered into during the reporting period by the Director of National Parks, it has been determined that there are no related party transactions to be separately disclosed.

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Managing uncertainties

This section analyses how the Director of National Parks manages financial risks within its operating environment.

Note 6.1: Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets

There were no quantifiable contingent assets, contingent liabilities or significant remote contingencies identified for 30 June 2017.

Accounting Policy

Contingent liabilities and contingent assets are not recognised in the Statement of Financial Position but are reported in the notes. They may arise from uncertainty as to the existence of a liability or asset, or represent an existing liability or asset in respect of which settlement is not probable or the amount cannot be reliably measured. Contingent assets are reported when settlement is probable but not virtually certain and contingent liabilities are recognised when settlement is greater than remote.

Note 6.2: Financial Instruments

		2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Note 6.2A - Categories of financial instruments			
Financial Assets			
Loans and receivables			
Cash	3.1A	12,437	20,442
Trade and other receivables	3.1C	1,114	1,173
Accrued revenue	3.1D	371	210
Total Loans and receivables		13,922	21,825
Held-to-Maturity			
Cash in term deposits	3.1B	36,846	26,122
Total Held-to-Maturity		36,846	26,122
Carrying amount of financial assets		50,768	47,947
Financial Liabilities			
At amortised cost			
Supplier payables	3.3A	2,581	2,999
Other payables	3.3B	125	17
Carrying amount of financial liabilities		2,706	3,016
Note 6.2B - Net gains or losses on financial assets			
Loans and receivables			
Interest revenue	2.2B	1,283	1,041
Write down - financial assets	2.1E	(1)	(195)
Net gain from loans and receivables		1,282	846
Net gain from financial assets		1,282	846

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Accounting Policy

Financial Assets

The Director of National Parks classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- held-to-maturity investments; and
- loans and receivables.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. Financial assets are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Effective Interest Method

The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and of allocating interest income over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset, or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

Held-to-Maturity Investments

Non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments and fixed maturity dates that the Director of National Parks has the positive intent and ability to hold to maturity are classified as held-to-maturity investments. Held-to-maturity investments are recorded at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment, with revenue recognised on an effective yield basis.

Loans and Receivables

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that have fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market are classified as 'loans and receivables'. Receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate.

Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at the end of each reporting period.

Financial assets held at amortised cost - if there is objective evidence that an impairment loss has been incurred for loans and receivables or held to maturity investments held at amortised cost, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate. The carrying amount is reduced by way of an allowance account. The loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are classified as either financial liabilities 'at fair value through profit or loss' or other financial liabilities.

Financial liabilities are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss

Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss are initially measured at fair value. Subsequent fair value adjustments are recognised in profit or loss. The net gain or loss recognised in profit or loss incorporates any interest paid on the financial liability.

Other Financial Liabilities

Other financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value net of transaction costs. Other financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, with interest expense recognised on an effective yield basis.

The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial liability and of allocating interest expense over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments through the expected life of the financial liability, or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

Supplier and other payables

Supplier and other payables are recognised at amortised cost. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 6.3: Fair Value Measurement

Accounting Policy

A revaluation is conducted in accordance with the revaluation policy stated at Note 3.2A. The Director of National Parks has a policy of having non-financial assets revalued every three years unless there are significant changes in economic and physical indicators. A full revaluation was conducted by an independent valuer in 2016-17 which considered these factors.

The Director of National Parks has deemed transfers between levels 2 and 3 of the fair value hierarchy for the 2016-17 reporting period. This was assessed through the revaluation process by an independent valuer in accordance with AASB 13: Fair Value Measurement.

The Director of National Parks deems transfers between levels of the fair value hierarchy to have occurred when there has been a significant change in the volume or level of activity for the asset and where observable and unobservable inputs change due to the lack or presence of market- corroborated inputs. This is assessed once every 12 months with a formal revaluation undertaken once every three years.

Note 6.3A - Fair Value Measurement

	Fair value measurements at the end of the reporting period	
	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Non-financial assets		
Land	12,531	5,690
Buildings	66,956	61,748
Infrastructure, plant & equipment	151,964	154,828
Computer Software	1,633	743
Total non-financial assets	233,084	223,009
Total fair value measurement of assets in the statement of financial position	233,084	223,009



Appendices

7

Appendix A: Overview of individual reserves

Our seven terrestrial reserves cover a combined area of 2,132,002 hectares. Our 59 marine reserves cover a vast combined area of 283,402,751 hectares.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area classification system comprises seven management categories, not all of which have been applied to reserves declared under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Sections of some reserves are zoned a different IUCN category from the reserve as a whole, to reflect the management strategy for those sections.

Table A1: Individual terrestrial reserves

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category
Jointly managed national parks			
Booderee National Park	6379	1992	II
Kakadu National Park	1,980,995	1979	II
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	132,566	1977	II
Other Commonwealth terrestrial reserves			
Australian National Botanic Gardens	85	1991	IV
Christmas Island National Park	8,719	1980	II
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	656	1986	II
Pulu Keeling National Park	2,602	1995	II

Table A2: Individual marine reserves

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category
North Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network¹			
Arafura	2,292,416	2012	VI
Arnhem	712,486	2012	VI
Gulf of Carpentaria	2,377,453	2012	II, VI
Joseph Bonaparte Gulf	859,704	2012	VI
Limmen	139,919	2012	VI
Oceanic Shoals	7,174,328	2012	VI
Wessel	590,807	2012	II, VI
West Cape York	1,601,223	2012	II, VI

¹ All Commonwealth marine reserves in the North network were under transitional management arrangements in 2016-17.

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category
North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network²			
Argo-Rowley Terrace	14,609,910	2012	II, VI
Ashmore Reef (formerly Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve)	58,337	1983	Ia, II
Carnarvon Canyon	617,669	2012	IV
Cartier Island (formerly Cartier Island Marine Reserve)	17,237	2000	Ia
Dampier	125,158	2012	II, IV
Eighty Mile Beach	1,078,521	2012	VI
Gascoyne	8,176,611	2012	II, IV, VI
Kimberley	7,446,857	2012	II, IV, VI
Mermaid Reef (formerly Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve)	53,987	1991	Ia
Montebello	341,279	2012	VI
Ningaloo (formerly Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters))	243,513	1987	II
Roebuck	30,370	2012	VI
Shark Bay	744,254	2012	VI
South-west Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network³			
Abrolhos	8,812,598	2012	II, IV, VI
Bremer	447,230	2012	II, VI
Eastern Recherche	2,057,403	2012	II, VI
Geographe	97,665	2012	II, VI
Great Australian Bight (includes former Great Australian Bight Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters))	4,592,550	2012	II, VI
Jurien	185,089	2012	II, VI
Murat	93,777	2012	II
Perth Canyon	740,923	2012	II, IV, VI
Southern Kangaroo Island	62,994	2012	VI
South-west Corner	27,189,789	2012	II, IV, VI
Twilight	464,131	2012	II
Two Rocks	88,225	2012	II, VI
Western Eyre	5,794,609	2012	II, VI
Western Kangaroo Island	233,533	2012	II, VI

² Only Ashmore Reef, Cartier Island, Mermaid Reef and Ningaloo Commonwealth marine reserves were actively managed in 2016-17. All other reserves in the North-west network were under transitional management arrangements.

³ Only the area corresponding to the former Great Australian Bight (Commonwealth Waters) was actively managed in 2016-17. All other reserves in the South-west network were under transitional management arrangements.

Reserve name	Area (hectares)	Year declared	IUCN category ^(a)
South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network			
Apollo	118,360	2007	VI
Beagle	292,758	2007	VI
Boags	53,748	2007	VI
East Gippsland	413,664	2007	VI
Flinders	2,704,306	2007	II, VI
Franklin	67,077	2007	VI
Freycinet	5,794,248	2007	II, VI
Huon	999,074	2007	IV, VI
Macquarie Island	16,189,466	1999	II, IV
Murray	2,580,312	2007	II, VI
Nelson	612,311	2007	VI
South Tasman Rise	2,770,437	2007	VI
Tasman Fracture	4,250,056	2007	II, VI
Zeehan	1,989,697	2007	VI
Temperate East Commonwealth Reserves Network⁴			
Central Eastern	7,005,406	2012	II, IV, VI
Cod Grounds (includes former Cod Grounds Commonwealth Marine Reserve)	407	2012	II
Gifford	582,851	2012	IV
Hunter	625,737	2012	VI
Jervis	247,342	2012	VI
Lord Howe (includes former Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters) and Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve)	11,013,878	2012	II, IV, VI
Norfolk	18,844,343	2012	II, IV, VI
Solitary Islands (includes former Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth Waters))	15,232	2012	II, VI
Other Commonwealth Marine Reserves			
Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve ⁵ (includes former Coral Sea Conservation Zone, Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve and Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve)	98,984,225	2012	II, IV, VI
Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve ⁶	7,095,260	2002	Ia

⁴ Only the area corresponding to the former Cod Grounds Marine Reserve, Solitary Islands Marine Reserve (Commonwealth waters), Lord Howe Island Marine Park (Commonwealth waters) and Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve were actively managed in 2016-17. All other reserves in the Temperate-east network were under transitional management arrangements.

⁵ Only the area corresponding to the former Coral Sea Conservation Zone, Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserve and Lihou Reef National Nature Reserve were actively managed in 2016-17. All other parts of the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve were under transitional management arrangements.

⁶ Managed by the Australian Antarctic Division under delegation from the Director.

Appendix B: 2016-17 Agency Resourcing Statement

The Agency Resourcing Statement was introduced to Portfolio Budget Statements in 2008-09 to provide information about the various funding sources that the Director of National Parks may draw upon during the year.

The Director of National Parks is required to publish the Agency Resourcing Statement in the annual report that reconciles to cash reserve in the financial statements.

Source	Actual available appropriation \$'000	Payments made \$'000	Balance remaining \$'000
Opening balance/Reserves at bank	46,564	8,006	38,559
REVENUE FROM GOVERNMENT			
Ordinary annual services¹			
Outcome 1	-	-	-
Total ordinary annual services	-	-	-
Other services			
Non-operating	-	-	-
Total other services	-	-	-
Total annual appropriations	-	-	-
Payments from related entities²			
Amounts from the portfolio department	42,829	42,289	-
Total	42,829	42,289	-
Total funds from Government	42,829	42,289	-
FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES			
Interest	95	95	-
Sale of goods and services	27,613	27,613	-
Other	13,967	3,861	10,724
Total	42,294	31,569	10,724
Total net resourcing for DNP	131,686	82,404	49,283

All figures are GST exclusive.

As per the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the department is directly appropriated the Director of National Parks (DNP) appropriations, which are then allocated to the Director by the Secretary of the department.

¹ Appropriation Bill (No.1)

² Funding provided by a Government body that is not specified within the annual appropriation bills as a payment to the Commonwealth Corporate Entity under the Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act.

Appendix C: Ecologically sustainable development and environmental performance

Section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* requires Australian Government organisations to include in their annual reports, details of their contribution to ecologically sustainable development and their environmental performance. Section 516A also promotes the development of a framework that integrates environmental, economic and social considerations and helps improve environmental performance and the ecologically sustainable development of Australian Government agencies.

The following is a summary of activities by the Director of National Parks in 2016-17 in accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Ecologically sustainable development

1. **How the activities of the organisation, and the administration of legislation by the organisation, accord with the principles of sustainable development (section 516A(6)(a))**

In accord with the principles of integrating environmental, social and economic considerations and with the objective of ensuring the long-term sustainability of biodiversity, the Director:

- managed biodiversity in Commonwealth terrestrial and marine reserves in accordance with management plans prepared under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, which explicitly recognises the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- managed the reserves in consultation with boards of management and advisory committees
- undertook monitoring and assessment programs for plants and animals within the reserves
- undertook compliance operations resulting in detection and fines against illegal activities in the reserves
- worked with Indigenous owners to implement traditional management and use of resources
- prepared tourism master plans which provide for safe and memorable visitor experiences, while improving benefits to local communities and ensuring the environmental values of the reserves are not adversely affected.

The Director followed the principles of ecologically sustainable development, in particular the precautionary principle in order to:

- comply with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (sections 324 to 390A)
- comply with the decision-making and environmental-impact assessment procedures for works and new developments in Commonwealth reserves.

The Director worked in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development to promote conservation of the environment for the benefit of future generations by:

- promoting enjoyment and understanding of protected areas and their conservation objectives as set out in management plans for each reserve
- working with Indigenous owners to ensure traditional knowledge about management and use of the land is incorporated into park-management activities, and that opportunities are created for young Indigenous people to learn about and contribute to park management.

For a summary of activities undertaken in 2016-17 refer to chapter 4 of this annual report.

The following activities accord with the principles of ecologically sustainable development by ensuring that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity is a fundamental consideration in decision-making:

- Commonwealth reserves are managed in accordance with management plans established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area categories that have as their primary purpose the long-term conservation of nature.
- Management plans set out clear decision-making and environmental assessment procedures for works and new proposals in Commonwealth reserves to ensure the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.

For a summary of activities undertaken in 2016-17 refer to Chapter 4 of this annual report.

The following activities accord with the principles of ecologically sustainable development by aiming to improve valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms:

- Tour-operator workshops and tour-guide accreditation aim to improve the quality and consistency of visitor experiences.
- Entry and park-use fees at heavily visited reserves ensure visitors contribute to the cost of park management.

2. How the outcomes specified in the relevant Appropriations Act contribute to ecologically sustainable development (section 516A(6)(b))

The Director of National Parks' key outcome as identified in the 2016-17 Department of the Environment Portfolio Budget Statements is:

Conservation and appreciation of Commonwealth reserves through the provision of safe visitor access, the control of invasive species and working with stakeholders and neighbours.

Activities undertaken during 2016-17 to achieve this outcome are described in Chapter 4 of this annual report.

3. Effect of the organisation's activities on the environment (section 516A(6)(c))

The Director is responsible for managing Australia's Commonwealth reserves. Three of these reserves are managed jointly with their Indigenous owners.

Potential large-scale threats to the reserves are managed by statutory protective mechanisms and decision-making and assessment processes set out in management plans. Through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and Regulations and in accordance with the management plan for each reserve, the Director manages commercial activities (such as tourism and camping) in terrestrial reserves, and regulates access and practices of a number of sectors that operate within multiple use Commonwealth marine reserves (such as commercial fishing and aquaculture).

4. Measures being taken by the organisation to minimise the impact of its activities on the environment (section 516A(6)(d))

The Director maintains a strong commitment to continuous improvement in environmental performance by conducting environmental audits of operations to maximise efficient use of resources, reduce waste, and build environmental awareness among its employees and volunteers.

Each terrestrial reserve management plan identifies actions to reduce the ecological impact of the reserve's operations. Office paper, toner cartridges and organic waste are recycled and office machines (photocopiers and printers) are automatically programmed to save power. Where possible, printers are programmed to produce duplex (double-sided) documents to reduce paper use.

For a summary of activities undertaken in 2016-17 refer to chapter 4 of this annual report.

5. Mechanisms for reviewing and increasing the effectiveness of these measures (section 516A(6)(e))

In accordance with the Australian Government's policy on energy efficiency in government operations, the Director reports publicly on annual energy performance in both the Department's annual report and in this report. Public reporting provides a number of benefits to the Director including:

- increasing awareness of energy and greenhouse issues
- measuring relative performance
- providing a benchmarking tool
- tracking changes over time
- identifying high-intensity areas
- encouraging improvement through transparency.

A summary of environmental performance related to greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption is provided in tables C1 and C2, for paper consumption in table C3, and for water consumption in table C4.

Environmental performance

The environmental performance of Parks Australia's metropolitan (Canberra, Darwin and Hobart) office-based employees is included in the Department's environmental performance report. This report covers Parks Australia's operations in the following locations:

- Kakadu National Park
- Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
- Territory of Christmas Island (Christmas Island National Park)
- Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands (Pulu Keeling National Park)
- Jervis Bay Territory (Booderee National Park)
- Territory of Norfolk Island
- Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Operational requirements at each site—such as electricity, transport, developing new infrastructure and managing waste—contribute to our carbon footprint. Some properties have specialised needs, for example the Gardens maintains climate-controlled conditions in many of its glasshouses. The remote location of some reserves limits opportunities to reduce their environmental impact.

Reserve management activities such as revegetation projects and fire and pest management may also have implications for the carbon cycle. Conserving biodiversity is a primary objective for all our reserves. Careful management of the use of fire and vegetation can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Two savanna burning projects were successfully registered with the Clean Energy Regulator. See Chapter 4 for more details.

Environmental performance—energy use

Environmental, economic and social objectives and considerations are either in place, or being prepared for integration into management plans and climate-change strategies for all Parks Australia sites. These include:

- maintaining greenhouse gas emissions from park operational activities to at or below 2015-16 levels
- developing environmental management plans identifying actions to reduce the carbon footprint of park operations and the level of carbon emission reductions associated with each mitigation action
- changing existing electric hot water systems to solar hot water, instantaneous gas or heat pumps, as replacement becomes necessary
- installing energy-efficient light fixtures and light-controlling devices (such as motion sensors) in all park facilities
- replacing older vehicles with more efficient vehicles.

There were slight decreases in stationary energy consumption (5.5 per cent), and in transport energy use (1.6 per cent) that resulted in an overall decrease in total greenhouse emissions from energy consumption by the terrestrial parks and the Gardens of three per cent compared with the average over the past three years (Tables C1 and C2).

Parks Australia staff continue to make a conscious effort to minimise business-related travel, while recognising that face-to-face contact and visits to remote locations are sometimes necessary, particularly for the three parks that are managed jointly with their traditional owners. Parks Australia increasingly uses alternatives to air travel such as tele- and video-conferencing.

A number of factors affect the use of stationary and transport energy within the parks and at the Gardens such as the needs of new conservation programs (for example on Christmas Island, increased cat eradication work activities and additional bug sucking devices for feeding a growing captive reptile population led to a five per cent increase in stationary energy use) or adjustments to infrastructure, for example changes in the vehicle fleet at the Gardens reduced gasoline usage by 36 per cent.

Table C1: Director of National Parks terrestrial reserves greenhouse gas emissions 2013-14 to 2016-17 (stationary energy use)

	2013-14 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2014-15 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2015-16 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2016-17 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	Annual average 2013-16	% change compared with average
Australian National Botanic Gardens	1,143.50	689.81	704.82	754.97	846.04	-10.8
Booderee National Park	141.20	125.57	130.45	119.21	132.41	-10.0
Christmas Island National Park	57.40	48.12	54.73	56.39	53.42	5.6
Kakadu National Park	1,050.20	1,094.76	1,085.72	932.02	1,076.89	-13.5
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	3.60	3.55	7.72	9.32 ¹	4.96	88.0
Pulu Keeling National Park	11.90	10.10	9.47	11.2	10.49	6.8
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	1,320.50	1,373.80	1,581.43	1,622.57	1425.24	13.8
Total	3,773.6	3,779.8	3,574.34	3,505.68	3,709.25	-5.5

¹ The higher figure for Norfolk Island National Park reflects the first complete financial year of data for stationary energy use for the new Discovery Centre.

Table C2: Director of National Parks terrestrial reserves greenhouse gas emissions 2013-14 to 2016-17 (transport energy use)

	2013-14 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2014-15 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2015-16 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	2016-17 (tonnes of CO ₂ e)	Annual average 2013-16	% change compared with average
Australian National Botanic Gardens	21.00	23.00	22.09	20.30	22.03	-7.9
Booderee National Park	51.20	49.85	47.94	50.35	49.66	1.4
Christmas Island National Park	84.90	82.51	95.45	100.76	87.62	15.0
Kakadu National Park	452.20	569.50	582.98	488.13	534.89	-8.7
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	11.40	13.99	10.21	9.57	11.87	-19.4
Pulu Keeling National Park	3.60	3.65	4.30	2.31	3.85	-40.0
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	128.20	150.22	140.66	151.95	139.69	8.8
Total	752.50	892.74	864.20	823.37	836.48	-1.6

Table C3: Director of National Parks terrestrial reserves paper consumption 2013-14 to 2016-17 (reams of paper)

	Reams of paper 2013-14	Reams of paper 2014-15	Reams of paper 2015-16	Reams of paper 2016-17	Average reams of paper 2013-16	% change compared with average
Australian National Botanic Gardens	146	169	167	180	161	12.0
Booderee National Park	180	150	85	159	138	14.9
Christmas Island National Park	30	25	20	25	25	0.0
Kakadu National Park	280	420	210	200	303	-34.1
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden	35	30	10	20	25	-20.0
Pulu Keeling National Park	3	2	1	0	2	-100.0
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	46	50	42	40	46	-13.0
Total	720	846	535	624	700	-10.9

Environmental performance—waste

Obtaining accurate measurements of greenhouse emissions from waste remains challenging and estimates were not available in 2016-17 for all reserves.

The Director adopts environmental best-practice principles for resource use and the management of waste products. Management plans are in place or in preparation for all sites, and include provisions to minimise waste production across park operations. Such provisions include:

- establishing guidelines to formalise waste-reduction strategies into standard park practises (such as reducing consumption, duplex printing, recycling)
- sourcing consumable items such as office paper from renewable sources
- where possible, providing recycling facilities to visitors or promoting ‘rubbish-bin free’ sites that encourage the public to take their waste home for recycling
- for island sites such as Norfolk Island, arranging for mainland recycling of consumables such as used printer cartridges.

Ongoing efforts are focused on providing web-based visitor and interpretative materials, which will further reduce printing and paper consumption. The amount of paper purchased decreased by 10.9 per cent in 2016-17 compared with the average number of reams purchased over the previous three years. This is attributable to the stage on the management planning cycle, with all terrestrial reserve management plans in place.

Excluding metropolitan office-based employees whose paper use is reported in the Department’s annual report, the terrestrial reserves operate with an average of around three reams per person, well below the 10 reams per person target set for the Australian Public Service (Table C3). Several reserves use 100 per cent post-consumer recycled paper for printing. Technology upgrades at all locations are now providing more opportunities to print double-sided, thereby reducing paper wastage further.

Access to regional recycling facilities is gradually improving for more remote locations such as Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks and external territories. Basic recycling facilities are available on Norfolk Island and office paper is being sourced from renewable sources when available. Kakadu National Park is participating in a regional recycling and resource recovery program, and will continue its recycling programs for paper, glass and aluminium in and around offices. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is operating the Mutitjulu waste site facility in line with the Waste Management Guidelines for Small Communities in the Northern Territory—Working Towards Best Practice 2009 and has engaged the services of an appropriate provider to manage the facility.

Recycling facilities continue to be available in all Australian National Botanic Gardens offices and on-site facilities, including composting of organic kitchen waste. The Gardens is a rubbish-bin-free site for the public and they are encouraged to take home their waste for recycling. In 2016-17 the volume of plant material that was recycled (mostly as mulch on site) increased by 17 per cent to approximately 360 cubic metres.

Environmental performance—water

Protecting water quality is a high priority for Parks Australia. Management plans are in place or in preparation for all sites to ensure that water use is minimised and water quality maintained. These plans may include:

- auditing water use in Commonwealth reserves and implementing actions to provide efficiencies and improvements
- implementing water-saving initiatives such as rainwater harvesting, water recycling, the use of water-saving devices and upgrading water-reticulation infrastructure
- providing information to visitors on how to protect water quality.

The quality of surface water, groundwater and water holes in our reserves is monitored regularly and activities in each reserve must not interrupt the natural flow of water. The capacity to measure water consumption at each reserve is improving but consistent data is not yet available for the sites.

A 26 per cent increase in water use recorded across the reserves in 2016-17 above the average of the previous three years was in part due to increased numbers of visitors to our parks. The seasons and the weather remain a significant factor in the level of water use in any year. For example, in 2016-17 Booderee increased irrigation in the botanic gardens due to low rainfall.

Table C4: Director of National Parks terrestrial reserves: water consumption 2012-13 to 2016-17

	2013-14 (kL)	2014-15 (kL)	2015-16 (kL)	2016-17 (kL)	Average (kL) 2013-16	% change compared with average
Australian National Botanic Gardens	175,540	77,392	129,481	174,786	12,7471	37.1
Booderee National Park	8,403 ¹	12,503 ²	10,211	14,486	10,372	39.7
Christmas Island National Park	15,438	6,900	4,083	4,126	3,661	12.7
Kakadu National Park	57,000	60,057	64,490	64,340	60,516	6.3
Norfolk Island National Park and Botanic Garden ³	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulu Keeling National Park	18	17	46 ⁴	21	27	-22.2
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	73,824	72,347	93,821	94,352	79,997	17.9
Total	314,785	229,216	292,167	352,111	278,723	26.3

¹ Water usage for Booderee National Park in the 2013-14 Annual Report for the Director of National Parks was incorrectly reported as 5,857 kilolitres due to difficulties in obtaining correct water readings.

² Water usage for Booderee National Park was significantly higher in 2014-15 as a result of an undetected water supply leak that took significant time to detect and rectify.

³ Norfolk Island operates entirely on harvested rainwater.

⁴ A new reticulated water system for the micro nursery at the Cocos headquarters was installed in January 2016 which initially used water from the island water supply. This has now been rectified and the system now relies on captured rainwater.

Appendix D: Compliance index

This annual report has been prepared in accordance with section 46 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and Subdivision B of Division 3A of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Corporate Commonwealth Entity Annual Reporting) Rule 2014*. The requirements for annual reports for non-corporate Commonwealth entities were approved on behalf of Parliament by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit on 2 May 2016.

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Maps: Environmental Resources Information Network

Map data sources

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