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# Wilderness Conservation in Australia: Eight Governments in Search of a Policy

## ABSTRACT

*Australia is a continental landmass with limited population located principally at or near the coastal rim. It is tempting to assume that substantial tracts of wilderness remain, but the rate of attrition is extremely high, engendered in part by political expediency in a situation where the States and Northern Territory are in competition for economic development. The principal catalyst for wilderness conservation has been the substantial and well-organized environmental movement. A variety of domestic and international circumstances are now forcing more federal intervention, with High Court judgments shifting the constitutional balance in favor of the national interest in wilderness protection.*

## CONTEXT

On July 1, 1983 the High Court of Australia ruled by a 4 to 3 majority that the Commonwealth of Australia could prevent the State of Tasmania from proceeding with construction of the Gordon-below-Franklin hydroelectric project, in an area designated the Western Wilderness World Heritage National Parks.<sup>1</sup> More recently, legal challenges have been threatened or have arisen with regard to the enlargement of Kakadu National Park, in the Northern Territory nomination of the wet tropical rainforests of north Queensland for inclusion on the World Heritage list and forestry operations in various parts of Tasmania.<sup>2</sup> In a nation where recourse to judicial intervention is rare, such actions epitomize the conflict between national and provincial governments over areas identified as wilderness, and typify the struggle between development interests and the voluntary conservation movement over relatively pristine tracts of country that have now occupied center stage in Australian politics during

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1. Commonwealth of Australia v. Tasmania 46 ALR 625 (C6, 1983) (popularly known as the Tasmanian Dams Case); see also THE SOUTH-WEST DAMS DISPUTE: THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES (M. Somarajah ed. 1983) (Faculty of Law, Univ. of Tasmania).

2. See the 1987 issues of *ACF Newsletter*. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) is a voluntary environmental organization founded in 1965. It is generally regarded as the principal "national" conservation body, although it has never sought this title. ACF publishes a journal, *Habitat*, and the bi-monthly *Newsletter* of current issues. The newsletter was retitled in 1987, now being called *Conservation News*.

the past two decades. The paradox is that long and bitter controversies have erupted over terrain that few Australians have seen, but which have come to symbolize untrammelled nature, while other less attractive but nonetheless remote country has been totally ignored.

Given that no government in Australia has yet enacted wilderness conservation legislation, such turmoil is not surprising, but why has such a hesitant and negligent attitude prevailed in what is essentially an important aspect of land-use planning and decisionmaking? The answer has to do with the government's political preoccupation with the cult of development, images of progress, and political expediency in natural resources management,<sup>3</sup> but also reflects marked conservatism in the engineering, mining and forestry professions of Australia. These professions are oriented towards the belief that nature must be subdued, or at least modified for the service of mankind.<sup>4</sup> In the tension between eco-centric and technocentric perspectives of the world, development has often been applauded, while conservation has been construed as an impediment to economic growth and a threat to lucrative consultancies or cherished projects.<sup>5</sup> Such attitudes are not easily eradicated or changed.<sup>6</sup>

### AMBIGUITY ABOUT WILDERNESS RESOURCES

Australia is a continental landmass of 7.68 million square kilometers, with a highly urbanized population of 15.7 million people, principally located in eight cities at or near the coastal rim. Given the arid and somewhat hostile character of much of the interior, one might assume that isolation and sparsity of settlement would provide protection for whatever wilderness remains, but this is not the case. Some of the landscape has been modified by earlier aboriginal inhabitants, whose culture goes back at least 40,000 years and whose affinity with nature is highly spiritual and complex.<sup>7</sup> Much of the vegetation pattern is the result of fire-adapted ecology and the continent, overall, is one of the least forested and driest on Earth. However, there is an immense variation in climate, terrain and biota, ranging from coral reefs and tropical rainforests to desert tracts, rich pastoral and agricultural land, cool temperate eucalypt forests and alpine zones with jagged peaks and mountain tarns. During the past two hundred years of European settlement, wilderness has become a scarce resource because of the impact of off-road vehicles, coupled

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3. Sandercock, *From Faust to the Hydro-Electric Commission: The Cult of Development*, ISLAND MAG., June 1983, at 43 (Hobart, Austl.).

4. L. WINNER, *AUTONOMOUS TECHNOLOGY: TECHNICS-OUT-OF-CONTROL AS A THEME IN POLITICAL THOUGHT* (1977).

5. T. O'RIORDAN, *ENVIRONMENTALISM* (1976).

6. Davis, *Beyond Cost-Benefit Analysis: Project Evaluation in the Caring Society*, in 1986 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING CONFERENCE (Institution of Engineers, Canberra, Austl.).

7. Mulvaney, *The Aboriginal Heritage*, in AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION, *THE HERITAGE OF AUSTRALIA* (1981).

with considerable modification of ecosystems caused by agricultural, mining and forestry activities, water resource development and urbanization.<sup>8</sup> Conserving unique or representative terrain, given the various types of land utilization, is *not* a simple assignment.

Overall, it is rather difficult to specify what wilderness remains, given lack of agreement about its definition and criteria. Moreover, there is no systematic evaluation of land-use modification across the nation.<sup>9</sup> This omission is rather surprising, given the sophisticated use of satellite imagery and remote sensing adopted for some other types of land-use decisionmaking. The central problem may be succinctly stated: although there is much discussion about wilderness retention, there is little or no agreement among key decisionmakers regarding assessment methods, nor have wilderness values been legitimized in project evaluation procedures or development controls.<sup>10</sup> Predictably, the principal advocates of wilderness preservation can be found among national parks officers and the voluntary conservation movement. However, powerful countervailing forces exist among mining and forestry corporations, as well as politicians who act ambiguously towards natural resources, since it gives them more room to maneuver among interest groups.<sup>11</sup>

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), a non-governmental agency, first drew attention to the rapid rate of wilderness attrition across the nation in the 1960s and early 1970s. In a series of workshops and conferences conducted between 1977 and 1979, ACF attempted to chart the situation in each state and territory, but few figures were available and the compilation was therefore somewhat impressionistic. Nonetheless, 27 major wilderness zones were identified in various parts of Australia, threats to many such areas were categorized, and it was evident that prompt action would be required if some regions were to be safeguarded via protected area legislation.<sup>12</sup> During approximately the same period (1976–1981) various state land-use agencies also initiated wilderness assessment, but usually on a rapid appraisal basis, with diverse methodologies and purposes in view.<sup>13</sup> Useful as such studies were in assembling wilderness inventories and estimating rates of annexation and

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8. A. GILPIN, *ENVIRONMENT POLICY IN AUSTRALIA* (1980).

9. J. KIRKPATRICK & C. HARWOOD, *FORESTRY AND WILDERNESS IN THE SOUTH-WEST* (1978) (Tasmanian Conservation Trust, Hobart).

10. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA, *NATIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY* (June 1984).

11. A. GILPIN, *THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT: TWELVE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES* (1980).

12. *AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS* (J. Mösley ed. 1978) (Austl. Conservation Foundation, Melbourne).

13. See, e.g., P. HELMAN, A. JONES, J. PIGRAM & J. SMITH, *WILDERNESS IN AUSTRALIA: EASTERN NEW SOUTH WALES AND SOUTH-EASTERN QUEENSLAND* (1976) (Univ. of New England, Armidale, Austl.); G. Rundle, *Wilderness Progress in Dedication and Care of the Resource in Western Australia* (1977) (unpublished manuscript); M. FELLER, D. HOOLEY, T. DREHER, J. EAST & R. JUNG, *WILDERNESS IN VICTORIA: AN INVENTORY* (1979) (Geography Dep't, Monash Univ., Melbourne); J. KIRKPATRICK & C. HARWOOD, *supra* note 11; P. WATERMAN, *WILDERNESS—SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA* (South-West Resources Survey, Hobart, Working Paper No. 10, Jan.–May 1981).

destruction, they constituted only a portion of the total picture of land-use determination, and even to this day we lack a comprehensive overview of what wilderness acreages may exist in Australia, or the relative degree of threat or protection each region faces.

In two senses, however, the studies of the late 1970s were catalytic. First, they forced governments and the environmental movement to recognize that urgent action was required to establish more national parks and protected areas. Second, conservationists became convinced that wilderness cores required substantial surrounding buffer zones as additional protection—a view which had powerful political implications in land-use allocation, but was questioned by multiple-use advocates, such as the Australian Mining Industry Council (AMIC). Also, the adoption of undisturbed sightlines, a specified travel distance from road-head, and unmodified ecological characteristics as criteria for wilderness identification meant that substantial tracts of country would have to be preserved, on the order of 25,000 hectares minimum. This assumption was also strongly disputed by critics. Nonetheless the tempo of advocacy and action to save remaining wilderness was heightened by such perceptions. Even among the well-intentioned, however, it was recognized that a number of major bureaucratic and political obstacles would have to be overcome before much of the nation's valuable wilderness resources could be conserved.

### **Jurisdiction and Procedures**

Central to the issue of administrative action is the question of who has jurisdiction to regulate land ownership and utilization. The Australian Constitution does not make any specific reference to "environment." Nonetheless, this has not prevented either the Commonwealth or the states from enacting legislation within the fields of environmental policy and natural resources management. In general, resource exploitation, land-use planning and nature conservation programs are the prerogative of the states, with the federal role normally limited to suasion for common standards, research assistance and the provision of funds for some resource conservation activities.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the Commonwealth jurisdiction includes federal sites and buildings within states and all federal territories, including some offshore islands and Antarctica.<sup>15</sup> However, during the 1970s, widespread public concern about the environment, new and emergent resource development needs, and various international obligations forced the Commonwealth to take a more direct role; many decisions concerning development projects, export licensing and nature

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14. Crommelin, *Federal-Provincial Cooperation on Natural Resources: A Comparative Discussion of Problems and Solutions*, in *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN VICTORIA PROGRAMME* (1985) (Papers on Federalism, Law School, Univ. of Melbourne).

15. F. TRIGGS, *INTERNATIONAL LAW AND SOVEREIGNTY IN ANTARCTICA* (1986).

conservation activities now impinge upon state jurisdictions in a variety of ways.

The cornerstones of national environmental policy are four statutes enacted between 1974 and 1976, during the Whitlam Labor regime:

- (a) *The Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*,<sup>16</sup> which ensures that matters affecting the environment to a significant degree are taken into account in all plans and actions of federal agencies;
- (b) *The Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*,<sup>17</sup> which provides for identification, registration and protection at a federal level, of sites and structures constituting important elements of the built, cultural and natural environment, which have enduring national significance. The list of such places is designated as the Register of the National Estate;
- (c) *The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*,<sup>18</sup> which provides for the establishment and management of parks and reserves in federal territories, as well as the protection of some other nature conservation sites and meeting various obligations under international treaties and conventions;
- (d) *The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*,<sup>19</sup> which provides for the establishment and management of a major marine national park encompassing the 2,000 kilometer long Great Barrier Reef and adjacent waters.

In addition to the above, other legislation deals with safeguards in uranium mining and exports, grants to the states for nature conservation purposes and, more recently, a World Heritage Properties Conservation Act, aimed at implementation of obligations incurred under international treaties and conventions.<sup>20</sup>

Paralleling these provisions at the Commonwealth level, all states and territories introduced environmental protection legislation in the mid-1970s, enlarged their national park jurisdictions, and attempted to amend land-use management systems, but the overall performance remained variable, with much political expediency evident whenever private corporations sought resource exploitation rights in situations where various provincial governments were actively competing for development.<sup>21</sup> Little attention was paid to wilderness advocates, probably because state gov-

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16. AUST. ACTS P. 164 (1974).

17. AUST. ACTS P. 57 (1975).

18. AUST. ACTS P. 129 (1975).

19. AUST. ACTS P. 85 (1975).

20. Lipman, *Cape Tribulation: The Legal Issues*, 2 ENV'T. & PLAN. L. 206 (1985).

21. Hughes, *Bauxite Mining and Jarrah Forests in Western Australia*, in INTEREST GROUPS AND PUBLIC POLICY (R. Scott ed. 1980); STATE, CAPITAL AND RESOURCES IN THE NORTH AND WEST OF AUSTRALIA (E. Harman & B. Head eds. 1982); Baidya, *Anatomy of the Gordon-Franklin (Tasmania) Dam Controversy*, 23 INT'L J. ENVTL. STUD. 238 (1984) (U.K.).

ernments considered that the expansion of national parks and protected areas had achieved such ends, but many key areas had been omitted from consideration, principally because of the intervention of mining and forestry interests, so environmentalists were not appeased and further conflict appeared inevitable. What governments failed to recognize, was that the conservation lobby had now become a major political force.

### The Australian Environmental Movement

Classification and labeling of interest groups within the community is a somewhat hazardous enterprise, in that the complexity of motivations and values may be masked by dividing individuals and groups into neat organizations.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that when we speak of the "Australian conservation movement," we are dealing with not only numerous subgroups and orientations, but a considerable proportion of the community. Estimates of direct membership range from 120,000 to 300,000 persons—a remarkable figure in a total population of less than 16 million people. These figures, however, can mask multiple membership, count many short-term single-issue participants, and ignore many covert supporters who provide financial support whenever major campaigns arise.<sup>23</sup> In lobbying it is effectiveness, rather than absolute numbers, which ultimately counts.

The Australian conservation movement had its baptism of fire in the period 1967–1976, in attempts to save the Lake Pedder National Park in South West Tasmania from being inundated by a hydroelectric project. The world's first environmental political party, the United Tasmania Group, was formed in 1972 and although it narrowly failed to achieve electoral success, it acted as a catalyst for broadscale recruitment to the conservation cause.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, the federal government intervened to conduct an official public inquiry in 1973–74, offering the State of Tasmania financial compensation *not* to flood the lake. This proposal was rejected by an intransigent State Premier and the wilderness was destroyed.<sup>25</sup>

From this bitter lesson, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) emerged as the principal national environmental organization, buttressed by an array of several hundred local and regional environmental groups, including the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, led by a charismatic individual, Dr. Bob Brown. By the early 1980s these voluntary organizations

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22. W. ROSENBAUM, *THE POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN* (1977).

23. B. Davis, *Characteristics and Influences of the Australian Conservation Movement: An Examination of Selected Conservation Controversies* (1981) (Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Tasmania).

24. P. Walker, *The UTG: An Analysis of the World's First Green Party* (May 1987) (paper presented at Ecopolitics II Conference, Univ. of Tasmania).

25. P. THOMPSON, *POWER IN TASMANIA* (1981) (Austl. Conservation Foundation, Melbourne).

constituted a loose coalition with considerable political clout, expertise on technical issues, and competence. Moreover, they were unorthodox in media usage and brilliant in depicting wilderness through photojournalism. Despite massive advertising campaigns, considerable character assassination and some political leverage, development interests were experiencing more and more difficulty in persuading the public of the merits of their proposals. Considerable elements of the Australian population were becoming conscious of the need for wilderness conservation and some areas became identified as national symbols that ought to be preserved.<sup>26</sup>

By the 1983 federal election (and subsequently reinforced in the 1984 and 1987 elections) the voluntary conservation movement was able to secure promises from the Australian Labor Party to save wilderness, solely on the basis of some capacity to lobby effectively in key marginal seats. This does not mean that all Australian politicians have been converted to the conservation cause, but rather that wilderness values will have to be taken into account. It is a sad reflection on many of the professions involved in land-use decisionmaking, that they have proven extremely slow to recognize past errors and put their own houses in order in wilderness conservation. We can best illustrate this difficulty by briefly citing three case instances.

## **Wilderness Conflict: Three Cases**

### **South West Tasmania**

Following their defeat in the Lake Pedder campaign in the early 1970s, the environmentalists achieved a wilderness victory at Fraser Island in the late 1970s. Due almost to the single-handed lobbying of John Sinclair and FIDO (the Fraser Island Defenders' Organization), the Commonwealth government refused an export license for mineral sands, thus saving a substantial tract of brilliantly colored sandmass, rainforest and perched lakes from destruction. The real test for the revamped Australian conservation movement, however, came in the period 1979–1984, when the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania (HEC) attempted to repeat its Lake Pedder victory by proposing to flood Tasmania's premier wilderness rivers system, the Lower Gordon and Franklin River gorges. By now the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, a respected and technically expert organization, and the more radical Wilderness Society led by Dr. Bob

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26. G. EASTHOPE & G. HOLLOWAY, *THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUCCESSFUL CONSERVATION MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE TASMANIA WILDERNESS SOCIETY* (1986) (Dep't of Sociology, Univ. of Tasmania).



Brown, were well prepared, with massive backup from an alliance of other environmental groups.

When the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania tabled its comprehensive report and recommendations in the Tasmanian Parliament in October 1979, it soon became evident that although the organization possessed considerable engineering capacity, its environmental impact statement was grossly deficient, taking little account of wilderness values.<sup>27</sup> The conservation movement was able to effectively criticize many aspects of the HEC report, identify some seemingly viable options, clearly indicate the potential wilderness loss and provide a "Greenprint" for conservation of remaining wilderness tracts.<sup>28</sup> The resulting debate split the Tasmanian community, led to some backdoor lobbying and unseemly actions in the State Parliament, resulted in replacement of the Premier by a pro-dams advocate, and involved an attempt to conduct a biased public referendum which was only nullified by the environmentalists securing a massive "No Dams" write-in.<sup>29</sup> When it became clear that no alternative means existed to prevent construction from proceeding, the Wilderness Society organized a series of street marches in all the major cities and then blockaded river and land routes to the damsite.<sup>30</sup>

The resultant hubbub meant that the major political parties could no longer ignore the issue, which was now being strongly debated at national levels. The Australian Labor Party promised that if it came to power, the wilderness would be preserved. The region was of outstanding quality and had already been nominated for the World Heritage List, a status achieved in December 1982. Following the Hawke Labor government's electoral victory in March 1983 and with the aid of the Australian Democrats, a World Heritage Properties Conservation Act was passed by the federal Parliament, and the Commonwealth ordered Tasmania to cease work on the Gordon-below-Franklin Power Scheme, offering a compensation package in return. Tasmania took the case to the High Court of Australia, but lost judgment there on July 1, 1983.<sup>31</sup> The Western Wilderness World Heritage National Parks are now operative with management planning being conducted on a joint Commonwealth-State basis.

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27. Davis, *Wilderness at Risk*, 9 UNESCO REV., 17 (Mar. 1984) (Austl. National Commission for UNESCO).

28. R. GREEN, *BATTLE FOR THE FRANKLIN* (1981) (Austl. Conservation Foundation, Melbourne).

29. P. THOMPSON, *BOB BROWN OF THE FRANKLIN RIVER* (1984).

30. Steffan, *Furor Over the Franklin*, SIERRA CLUB BULL., Sept.-Oct. 1984, at 43; G. HOLLOWAY, *THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY: THE TRANSFORMATION OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT* (Occasional Paper No. 4, 1986) (Dep't of Sociology, Univ. of Tasmania).

31. *Commonwealth of Australia v. Tasmania* 46 ALR 625 (C6, 1983).

## Forestry Issues

Australia is one of the least forested continents relative to area and by the mid-1970s a number of commentators were drawing attention to rates of attrition and threats to wilderness values.<sup>32</sup> The orientation of most state forestry agencies was not favorable, however, arising from beliefs about sustainable yield, presumptions that mature-age forests should be replaced by production acreage, and general sympathy with their principal clients—the sawlog and pulpwood industries. The environmentalists were seemingly preoccupied with other issues. Their efforts were scattered and lacked a persuasive data base.<sup>33</sup> However, this situation was gradually to change as the conservationists became better organized and more accurately identified areas of key wilderness value.

The long battle for Terania Creek in northern New South Wales (1975–1981) finally convinced the State Premier (Mr. Neville Wran) that amended forestry management was desirable, and that a number of new national parks and forest parks should be established from 1982 onwards. This program culminated in the state requesting the Commonwealth to nominate its principal rainforest reserves for inclusion on the World Heritage List, a status achieved in December 1986.

In other parts of Australia the situation remains serious. If current rates of clearfell for woodchip exports are maintained, Australia's mature-age forests will disappear in less than twenty years. The struggle to conserve identified wilderness areas in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia is not simple, given the mass advertising campaigns by the forestry industry to defend its cause, reluctance by governments to intervene because of assumed regional employment effects, and the difficulty for environmentalists to mount a sustained case in a number of states and on diverse grounds at any one time. Identification of key wilderness areas by the Australian Heritage Commission in their Register of the National Estate has now given more focus to the debate. Once more the Commonwealth has intervened in Tasmania, ordering a one-year moratorium on logging in key areas so that a Committee of Inquiry can be conducted. The other states are monitoring this operation with some interest, as the Commonwealth *does* control woodchip export licenses, but no hasty decisions are likely because of the major social and economic implications.

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32. R. ROUTLEY & V., ROUTLEY, *THE FIGHT FOR THE FORESTS* (1974) (Research School of Social Sciences, Aust. National Univ.); *THE VANISHING FORESTS: WOODCHIP PRODUCTION AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN TASMANIA* (R. Jones ed. 1975) (Environmental Law Reform Group, Univ. of Tasmania).

33. French, *Australian Forestry Policy: A Critical Review*, CURRENT AFFAIRS BULL., Oct. 1980, at 4, (Sidney).

Another wilderness issue which has taken some years to resolve, is the future of the internationally significant wet tropical rainforests of Northern Queensland. Given the rate of attrition of rainforests around the world, the varied moist tropical forests of Queensland constitute an invaluable scientific reference point, as well as an area of great interest to tourists. Attempts to persuade the Queensland government to safeguard the area have met with fierce resistance in the past. The Commonwealth was reluctant to become involved, much to the dismay of environmentalists. Once again a report by the Australian Heritage Commission proved catalytic, with the federal government offering a \$22.5 million rainforest conservation program to several states, including Queensland. Tiring of unsuccessful negotiation and stung by the rhetoric of the Queensland Premier (Mr. Jo Bjelke-Peterson), the Prime Minister announced in June 1987 that the Australian Government would nominate substantial tracts of wet tropical rainforest for inclusion on the World Heritage List. The implications of this action are not yet clear, but once again it would appear that the failure of a state government to recognize wilderness values forced the Commonwealth to intervene. Yet at a federal level, CONCOM,<sup>34</sup> the intergovernmental ministerial council, has produced nothing more than a weak general statement about wilderness and no Commonwealth agency has yet produced a systematic evaluation of Australia's wilderness resources, although the Australian Heritage Commission is now part way along this road.

### The Great Barrier Reef

Despite intermittent fulminations between the Commonwealth and Queensland governments, some cooperation has occurred, the outstanding example being joint management of the Great Barrier Reef, one of the scenic wonders of the world, encompassing a zone of 330,000 square kilometers and stretching 2,000 kilometers along the Queensland coast. Central policymaking and research is conducted by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)—a federal statutory authority, while day-to-day management is largely delegated to the Queensland National Parks Service and other state agencies.<sup>35</sup> Although a multiple-use zoning plan is in operation, substantial areas have been set aside for marine research and marine wilderness. The very large scale of the region renders

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34. CONCOM (the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers—federal and state) issued a brief discussion paper in February 1985 about the need for wilderness conservation, but left it to the States to take individual action. The paper barely warrants citation, but rather reflects the failure of the States to take decisive action.

35. G. Kelleher & R. Kenchinton, *Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park: Making Development Compatible with Conservation* (Oct. 1982) (paper presented at Third World National Parks Congress, Bali, Indonesia).

this feasible, but it is systematic evaluation which has been a hallmark of the operation. The entire concept has overwhelming acceptance within the Australian community.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In a recent paper concerning wilderness conservation in British Columbia, Australia, and New Zealand, Sewell and Dumbrell<sup>36</sup> concluded that without appropriate wilderness legislation, clear and consistent wilderness policies are unlikely, resulting in constant bickering about jurisdiction, values, decision process and equity. Certainly the experience in Australia to date appears to bear out these contentions. Lacking clear recognition of wilderness values, devoid of appropriate wilderness statutes and guidelines, all the Australian States and Territories, as well as the Commonwealth, have engaged in ad-hoc decisionmaking and belated response to the push and pull of events whenever wilderness controversies have arisen. In a feeble kind of way they have assumed that competent professionals will somehow take wilderness into account in project proposals, or alternatively, enlarged national park areas will somehow cope with the problem. No systematic evaluation of needs, opportunities or prospective sites has taken place and no unambiguous incorporation into decision processes has occurred within the government. Of all the Australian States, only New South Wales seems hesitantly to be heading towards wilderness legislation.

To some extent the Australian conservation movement, a loose amalgam of community groups, has been the conscience and salvation. Sometimes strident and idiosyncratic, the environmentalists have raised public awareness and lobbied hard for particular areas. In these efforts they have been complemented by competent national parks officers and the Australian Heritage Commission, working within the bureaucracy in difficult circumstances. The time is now long overdue for a more systematic and focused campaign to identify and conserve Australia's remaining wilderness resources.

### ADDENDUM

Since preparing this paper, several events have occurred:

- (a) A Wilderness Act has been enacted in New South Wales, but it remains to be seen whether the recently elected Greiner conservative government will implement it.

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36. W. SEWELL & J. DUMBRELL, WILDERNESS DECISION-MAKING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXPERIENCES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (Cornett Occasional Papers No. 5, 1987) (Dep't of Geography, Univ. of Victoria, British Columbia, Can.).