Managing the Australian Alps:
a history of cooperative management of
the Australian Alps national parks

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An Essential Preface

Mountains have always held a fascination for me. Though I have rarely gone deliberately seeking them, I have taken every opportunity to visit them. The list includes the Southern Uplands and the Trossachs in Scotland, the Pennines and Lake District in England, the Swiss and Austrian Alps (in winter and in summer), the Rockies and Banff National Park in Canada, Mount McKinley in Alaska, thanks to a good friend, and the Australian Alps. In all of these locations, I have experienced beauty, fascination, wonder, and more.

Against such a background and other research I had already undertaken, I needed little encouragement to document the endeavours to overcome the barriers imposed by jurisdictional boundaries and cooperatively manage the national parks and other protected areas of the Australian Alps. In the course of this study, I have found others with a fascination for mountains and the Australian Alps in particular. For some, it has gone beyond fascination to a real ‘love affair’ with this special part of the Australian landscape. Most of the research was undertaken in 2002, the essential archival work in the first half of the year and most of the interviews in the second half. For various reasons, it was not possible to talk with as many people as I would have liked, but every effort has been made to present as complete and balanced story as possible.

Whilst much of the writing had also been done in the latter part of 2002, the final sections and pulling together the first full draft was completed as fires started to spread across much of the Alps in early to mid-January 2002. When burnt gum leaves started falling on and around my house in Jerrabomberra[1] on January 17 with the closest fires in the ACT’s Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve over 25 kilometres away, I had to take a break. Having met and spoken with many parks staff over the preceding months and knowing that they were fighting fires in the alpine areas of the ACT, NSW and Victoria, in the most difficult and dangerous conditions, and seeing much of what they worked so hard to conserve being burned, made the fire emergency so much more real.

The storm that moved through the full length of the Australian Alps on January 8, 2003, and the many fires it started brought the Alps and the Alps national parks together and reinforced their biogeographical unity, though in a perverse way. They also brought together the staff of the various jurisdictions. In turn, they have highlighted the importance of the essential values of the cooperative management program that this study has highlighted. The value of peer support in adversity and in cooperation in the huge task of restoration and rehabilitation is so evident, as the mammoth cooperative task necessary to fight the fires is followed by the equally mammoth cooperative task of restoring the damage and assisting nature to undertake its own restoration and healing. This cooperation is evident from field staff, rangers and managers through to the heads of agencies and government ministers. To make the story easier to follow, discussion of the fires and some of their consequences is confined to the last chapter.

This is a study about the management of the Australian Alps national parks. It is a study for those who, on a daily basis and frequently beyond what could be termed the normal course of duty, continue to strive for the sustainability of this unique part of Australia’s heritage.

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1. A large and relatively new suburb of Queanbeyan, just across the NSW border with the ACT.
Acknowledgements

This study originated in a conversation with Brett McNamara when I was undertaking the research for an earlier undertaking (Crabb 2003a). Brett encouraged me to undertake the task and to seek support and funding from the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC). His continuing interest and support are greatly appreciated. So too is that of Virginia Logan, Brett’s successor as Australian Alps Program Coordinator, who has no doubt lost count of the number of times I have sought her assistance. A special word of appreciation is due to Paul Stevenson, who has had a number of periods as Secretary to the AALC, in its early days and more recently. The study would not have been possible without the archival material he located (after a long search). Paul was also the source of much other information and many insights that emerged during a number of fascinating debates.

Many people who are or have been involved with the Alps cooperative program gave willingly of their time in answering my questions and discussing aspects of the program. They all made an essential contribution to the study. I am indebted to Gill Anderson, Debbie Argue, Odile Arman, Neville Byrne, Karen Civil, Dave Darlington, Graeme Enders, Murray Evans, Tony Fleming, Neville Gare, Diane Garrood, Roger Good, Ken Green, Greg Hayes, Craig Hore, Steve Horsley, Peter Jacobs, Rosemary James, Sharon Lane, Bruce Leaver, Trish Macdonald, Janet Mackay, Ross McKinney, Cath Renwick, Chris Rose, David Scott, Andy Spate, Penny Spoelder, Mark Stone, Ray Supple, Lee Thomas, Simon Tozer, Ian Weir, Graeme Worboys, and Liz Wren.

A number of people not involved directly with the program have also been of valued assistance, Denise Allardice, Clive Hurlstone, Phil Ingamells, Paul Seager and Ken Stokes. Margaret Bonavita assisted in the location of material in the records of Kosciuszko National Park.

The Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies is a very special place in today’s academic world and the continued support of Professor Bob Wasson and other colleagues is greatly appreciated. A very special word of thanks is due to Steve Dovers, who has contributed in many ways to this study. Thanks are due to Clive Hilliker who drew the maps and to Sharon McInnes for preparing the manuscript for publication.

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For further information about the Australian Alps, see << www.australianalps.ea.gov.au >>
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**Chapter 1. Setting the Scene**

**Introduction**
Located in the south-east of mainland Australia are the highest parts of the Great Dividing Range. Extending over a distance of some 500 km and about 50 km wide, they cover approximately 25,000 km², no more than 0.3 per cent of the country’s total area. Overall, they are known as the High Country or the Australian Alps, including the Brindabellas in the Australian Capital Territory, the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales, and the Victorian Alps in Victoria (Figure 1.1). In one or more ways, most of the names can be misleading. The name ‘Snowy Mountains’ has to be seen in the context of the height of Mt. Kosciuszko, the highest point in Australia, being only 2,228 m, and the nature of the area’s terrain, “a high undulating plateau which reflects the very long geological evolution” (Good 1995). This is a world apart from images that can be and sometimes are conjured up by the term ‘Australian Alps’, a name that seems to have originated with a distant observation by the early explorer Hume in 1834 (Grenier 1992a).

The name and vision have remained; they have been perpetuated, perhaps reflecting the desire for a European vision, evident in many locations in a land that was so different for the European settlers (Heathcote 1994, 253-269). For example, commenting on the view from Mt Bogong, C.J.M. Cole observed:

I stopped and looked in delight at the wonderful panorama which stretched out before me. As far as the horizon there were mountains. All the big peaks were visible … Further away were the Barry Mountains and Mts. Buller and Howitt … To the north-east the most majestic view was seen; the Kosciusko Plateau, heavily laden with snow and the only portion of the panorama bathed in sunlight and looking particularly bright by contrast (The Ski Club of Victoria Year Book, 1933, quoted in Gowland 1992).

**Figure 1.1** The Australian Alps, Their National Parks and Other Protected Areas.

There is little dispute about the fact that parts of the area can be described as ‘alpine’ – the area above a certain altitude that is treeless due to the inability of trees to grow – and ‘sub-alpine’. Nonetheless, and in spite of the relatively low altitude by world standards, the ‘High Country’ might have been a better general name for this unique part of Australia. However, given general usage and for consistency, the all-embracing name, the ‘Australian Alps’, is used in this study.
The Australian Alps

What makes this area unique, certainly for Australia? A full answer would be a long one, and would not be appropriate here. The interested reader can refer to a number of sources (e.g. Costin 1989; Costin et al. 2000; Good 1989 and 1992a; Green 1998; Grenier and Good 1992; NSWNPS 1998; Scougall 1992). A brief account is necessary, however, to provide a setting and context for this study. What defines this area and makes it unique are its biophysical characteristics. Whilst rightly described as “a high undulating plateau”, the result of a long geological history, there is considerable variation in the terrain and, by Australian standards, much of it is rugged. The highest parts of the Snowy Mountains experienced two glacial periods, the second between 15,000 and 35,000 years ago, and some locations retain evidence of continuing but limited periglacial processes (Galloway 1989; Barrows et al. 2000). Parts of the Kosciuszko alpine area are “an outstanding example of glaciation that developed under extremely marginal conditions”, while “The periglacial phenomena are amongst the most striking in Australia and demonstrate the widespread effects of cold climate in the Quaternary and in the recent past”, features of the Alps that are not well known (Galloway 2002). There are karst areas of significant scientific interest and value (Spate 2002). The quality and depth of the soils vary with particular locations; they are highly vulnerable to damage and dependent on the maintenance of a vegetation cover. The deep organic soils predominate, which “has led to the Australian Alps being described as ‘mountains of soil’” (Costin 2002). Whilst summer temperatures can be occasionally high, low temperatures occur year-round, with the mean temperature of the warmest month being about 10ºC. In terms of weather, variability is paramount – a summer’s day can bring all seasons of the year. Precipitation is generally high, up to 2,500 mm and more, though within the mountains there are areas of rain shadow. By Australian standards, the precipitation is also relatively reliable. A winter snow cover is the norm, though the extent and depth vary from year to year. All of the mainland snow country is included, above the average snowline of 1,370 m. The high precipitation (including snowfall), plus such features of the terrain as lakes, bogs, and swamps, contributes to the relatively reliable streamflow in a number of coastal rivers and the Murray and Murrumbidgee systems. The inland flowing streams provide a very high proportion of total streamflow in the Murray-Darling Basin; for example, the Upper Murray catchment accounts for over 17 percent of mean annual runoff from only 1.4 percent of the Basin’s total area. These water resources are of major regional and national significance. However, the climate is changing: through the Twentieth Century, Kirkpatrick (2002) has noted four tendencies – a decrease in winter rainfall and in snow cover, an increase in temperature and in ultra-violet radiation.

The Australian Alps encompass a wide range of ecosystems, from the ‘snow country’ (which covers about 5,200 km² above the snow line) to river valleys extending inland and to the coast as low as 200 m. The variable altitude, terrain, soils, and climate result in a diverse but rich flora (Costin et al. 2000; Costin et al. 2002). There are hundreds of species, some found nowhere else in the world (Green 2002a). The various types of forests – the open wet and dry forests, the mountain ash forests and the sub-alpine woodlands - are dominated by Eucalyptus species, notably the Alpine Ash (E. delegatensis) and Snow Gum (E. pauciflora) (Barker 1989). The scientific significance and appreciation of these environments are frequently obscured by the attention given to the alpine areas, in spite of the area and altitudinal range over which many of them extend (Costin et al. 2002). There are also shrublands, tussock grasslands, bogs and herb fields. “The true alpine zone above the treeline covers only some 370 km² but provides for a very diverse flora of approximately 300 species” (Good 1995). The adaptations of the flora to the environment are particularly evident in the alpine and sub-alpine zones, which, in spite of their harshness, produce a rich profusion of spring and summer flowers. These areas “are like islands; an archipelago where environmental conditions are suitable for a restricted number of plants and animals that can survive the snow and are dependent on it” (Green 1997). In terms of fauna, Kosciuszko National Park alone supports about 300 native terrestrial vertebrates and an unknown number (in the thousands) of invertebrate species (Mansergh et al. 2002; Green and Osborne 1994). Some animals are found only in the Alps, such as the Mountain Pygmy-possum (Burramys parvus) (believed extinct until 1966), the Southern Corroboree Frog (Pseudophryne corroboree), and the Kosciusko Wingless Grasshopper (Kosciuscola tristis), while for other wildlife the Alps are an
essential location for part of their lifecycle, such as the Bogong Moth (*Agrostis infusa*). South of the mainland, alpine and sub-alpine areas are also found in Tasmania (Kirkpatrick 1997). There, the ‘snow country’ extends over some 6,500 km², above about 915 m, accounting for about nine per cent of the island’s area, a very much higher proportion than for the mainland. Of this, some 400 km² can be termed alpine. Tasmania’s ‘snow country’ is generally more rugged and colder than that of the mainland. The largest part of the alpine and sub-alpine country, the Central Plateau, is also the main source of the island’s many rivers (Banks 1972).

For mainland Australia, the hot, dry land, with an average altitude of only some 300 m, the Australian Alps are unique in so many ways, in terms of their terrain, climate and biota, individually and in combination. It is these features that give the Australian Alps their own special appeal and their special human assessments and uses. But it is an environment that is under threat, like so many of Australia’s diverse landscapes. The Alps have a long history of human use and exploitation, especially since the arrival of European settlement. As a consequence, there has been significant environmental and habitat disturbance and degradation. There have been invasions of feral fauna and exotic flora. Global warming is impacting on the biota as well as the snow cover; ozone depletion is resulting in increased UV-B radiation (Green 1997). The impacts of change are severe for many fauna, not least the Corroboree Frog, Baw Baw Frog (*Philoria frosti*), and Alpine Tree-frog (*Litoria verrauxii alpina*) and the Mountain Pygmy possum. The fragile and finite environments of the Australian Alps, in all their manifestations, are being increasingly stressed (Good 1995).

The Australian Alps are defined by their biophysical environments and in particular their native vegetation. The area involved is a very small part of Australia. In this case, however, areal extent is no indicator of significance or importance, whatever parameters are used.

**The problem of boundaries**

Whilst the Australian Alps are regarded as a whole in biophysical and environmental terms, they are divided by the jurisdictional boundaries that have been imposed upon them. Human beings create all kinds of boundaries. Especially within a federal nation such as Australia, there are the boundaries between states and territories. Parts of the Alps are located in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), New South Wales (NSW), and Victoria. Within each jurisdiction, there are the boundaries between different government agencies or areas of administration, whilst in New South Wales and Victoria, there are local governments. None of the human imposed boundaries coincide with the natural boundaries in the Australian Alps, least of all those that demarcate the Alps. So, in terms of their use and management, this is a further source of stress for the Australian Alps, as the boundaries divide what, naturally, is a whole.

If the boundaries have to stay for all their positive benefits, in many instances the attitudes to them have to change. In the words of the Brundtland report, “The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change: the policies and institutions concerned must” (WCED 1987, 9). Inter-jurisdictional resource and environmental management and the institutional arrangements to put it into effect present an increasingly important topic.

There are numerous such inter-jurisdictional arrangements in Australia, as well as overseas (Crabb 1995), yet there is little knowledge or understanding of them in this country and discussion and analysis of such arrangements continue to be very limited. The co-operative management program for the Australian Alps national parks has been praised internationally, yet is little known here (Hamilton et al. 1996). A study of such inter-jurisdictional arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin identified the Memorandum of Understanding for the cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks and the program it put in place as one of the more successful and effective arrangements and one worthy of closer analysis (Crabb 2003a).

**The study in brief**

This study documents the origins and development of the Australian Alps national parks co-operative management program, its structures and its activities. The first chapter has set the biogeographical and jurisdictional scene. The second and third chapters outline the many and often conflicting uses that have been made of the Alps and their environmental consequences. Chapters Four and Five detail the early moves to
overcome the jurisdictional boundaries between the national parks and other protected areas and the evolution of the first cross-border agreement. The first formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks and the subsequent revisions are detailed in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Eight deals with the various measures that have been put in place to give effect to the MOU and Chapter Nine examines the ways in which the work of the cooperative program is undertaken. It is a constantly evolving program and Chapter Ten outlines the ways in which it has been kept under regular review. The achievements of the MOU and cooperative program are considerable and these are discussed and illustrated in Chapter Eleven. Considerable effort has been expended in establishing the international values of the Australian Alps and trying to achieve international recognition of them; these issues are discussed in Chapter Twelve. The program has relevance well beyond the Alps and Chapter Thirteen considers the links it has with other organizations and the transferability of the model to other inter-jurisdictional resource and environmental management situations. Chapter Fourteen provides an analysis and assessment of the successes of the program as well as its weaknesses, based primarily on interviews with a large number of people who are or have been involved with the program. The penultimate chapter considers the means by which the long-held objective of those concerned with and for the Australian Alps can be achieved, namely a truly national park that encompasses the totality of the environment and spans the three jurisdictions. The final chapter looks to the future of the cooperative management program, in the light of the horrendous bushfires of the summer of 2002-03, and beyond them.

Undertaking the research
Two main sources form the basis of this study. The records and minutes of all of the meetings of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC), the Heads of the Agencies involved in the cooperative program and of the Ministers have provided the main story and much of the detail. These were obtained from the current and archival records of Environment Australia, those held by the Program Coordinator, and from Kosciuszko National Park. These have been complemented by other AALC publications, including the annual reports and the periodical Newsletter. Many other published and unpublished documents have been consulted, as is indicated throughout the study and in the bibliography. These various documents would have provided a substantial story, but the one presented here would not have been possible without the cooperation of so many people who are or have been involved in the cooperative program from before its inception. The information and insights they provided were invaluable and essential.

In most instances, the dates of meetings of the Liaison Committee, Heads of Agencies and Ministers are cited in the following way, (26.6.89). Unless stated otherwise, the references are to AALC meetings.
The Australian Alps have a long history of human use and, as a consequence, a rich cultural, social and historical heritage to complement the rich natural heritage (Andrews 1991; Costin et al. 2000, 9-19; Hancock 1972; Lawrence 1994; Lennon 1999). Only the briefest of outlines of this can be provided here, but it is one that is essential to the study. The many human uses can be grouped into three periods, ‘Aboriginal pre-European’, ‘European exploiter’, and ‘European conserver’ (Lennon 1999, 30). Whilst there is a clear sequence in terms of most of the uses, some have occurred in parallel, and many “have taken place over long periods, either on a continuous or intermittent basis” (Lennon 1999, 20).

Aboriginal occupation and use

Aboriginal use and occupation in and around the Australian Alps has a very long history, which takes in the latter part of the second period of glacial conditions in the late Pleistocene (Flood 1980 and 1996; Good 1992a, 133-135; Kaminga 1992). There is evidence of occupation on the fringes of the Alps from 21,000 BP in a rock shelter at Birrigai (near Namadgi National Park in the ACT) and the use of caves in north-east Victoria for over 20,000 years, where stone tools were found dating from the Holocene warm period of 8,500 to 6,500 BP (Flood et al. 1987; Ossa et al. 1995). There is no evidence of permanent residence in the higher areas of the Alps – there were no game or food plants - but Aborigines certainly lived in the lower valleys. For example, about 280 sites have been identified in the Snowy River valley, dating back 10,000 to 15,000 years, with evidence of long continuous occupation (Good 1992a, 130). This extended period suggests that the “Australian Alps may well prove to be of great importance in illustrating Aboriginal adaptation to climate change in the late Pleistocene era” (Lennon 1999, 11).

The higher areas of Kosciuszko and the Bogong High Plains were used in the summer months, possibly from the late Pleistocene, and “through the warmer period of the mid-Holocene until the middle of the nineteenth century. The archaeological record illustrates a more intensive seasonal use of the high country from about 4,500 BP when summer food resources like Bogong moths were available” (Lennon 1999, 6). The various tribes had their own lands at lower altitudes, but at the higher altitudes they shared the lands and used them in summer for intertribal corroborees, settling disputes, marriages and initiation ceremonies. The Bogong Moths, which swarm to the mountains in the summer months, were a major source of food. They also hunted possums for their skins, which were used for clothing (Good 1992a, 135).

Hume and Hovel in 1824 passed nearby what is now Kosciusko National Park and reported in their journals; ‘Whatever place we have been in, whether on top of the highest mountain or in any of the deepest ravines, we always find evident marks that the natives occasionally resort to them, although there does not appear to be any inducement for them to visit these secluded places’ (Good 1992a, 131).

The Aborigines continued their use and occupation of the Alps until the arrival of the early European graziers from the 1820s in NSW and the early 1830s in Victoria. The new arrivals did not recognize or appreciate the Aboriginal occupance and use of the lands. The pastoral occupation of the high country had a disastrous impact on the Aborigines and, together with the guns, alcohol and disease the settlers brought with them, resulted in the decimation of the indigenous populations. “One of the oldest highland cultures of aboriginal people anywhere in the world was lost in thirty years – less than a lifetime” (Slattery 1998, 87). Nonetheless, to this day, strong links to different parts of the area remain for some groups now resident in various locations surrounding the Australian Alps. Much remains to be learned of Aboriginal associations with the Australian Alps.

Exploration

As the above section has implied, the Aborigines were the original explorers. They did much to assist the first Europeans who ventured into what was to become known as the Australian Alps. Among these were the early explorers who helped to make the Alps known to the growing European population. Many of their names are now well known: Hume and Hovell crossed the Tumut River near Talbingo and traveled the western foothills of the Alps in 1824; Strzelecki, who is credited with the first ascent of Kosciuszko in 1840; Lhotsky (Polish-born, like Strzelecki) who climbed Mt William in 1834; Mitchell observed Mt Buffalo in
1836; and McMillan’s journeys from Gippsland in 1839-41 (for stories of other explorations, see Hueneke 1988; Lennon 1992). However, far more numerous were the settlers seeking and establishing grazing areas (Slattery 1998, 88-91). In fact, in many areas they preceded the explorers and undertook much of the early exploration of the Australian Alps. Along with the Aborigines, they often acted as guides for explorers. Many of the pathways – for explorers and graziers – were based on prehistoric routes used by Aborigines in the seasonal use of the alpine areas (NSWNPS 1991a, 23).

Pastoralism

Squatter pastoralists were well established in the Monaro and Kosciuszko areas of NSW by the 1830s, from where some moved south in the mid 1830s to the Kiewa and Lake Omeo areas in Victoria, as well as into the broad valleys in the south of what is now the ACT. In the 1850s, people and livestock moved into the Alps for summer grazing from inland NSW and Victoria. Especially in the alpine and sub-alpine areas, the grazing of sheep and cattle was based on the burning of the native vegetation to promote new growth or ‘green pick’. Large numbers of livestock were grazed, even larger ones in periods of drought, such as 1890-1901. The higher areas were beyond the permanently settled areas at lower altitudes surrounding the Alps.

For many years, transhumant summer grazing in the Australian Alps was an essentially uncontrolled activity. The first attempt to formalize the grazing was made in NSW in 1889 with the Department of Lands introducing snow leases. These and subsequent measures were met with on-going antagonism and defiance. They were of no effect until the seven-year lease became the standard arrangement in the 1920s, though even then there were no real controls until the 1940s. In the 1940s-1950s, there were as many as 200,000 sheep and 17,000 cattle during the summer in the NSW areas (Clark 1992; Good 1992a, 142-148; Hancock 1972; King 1959; Merritt 2003; NSWNPS 1991b; Stricker 1988; for the Tasmanian story, see Scott 1955).

For reasons that are discussed in Chapter 3, further controls were gradually placed on the summer grazing activities. In 1943, NSW snow leases restricted stock numbers, the length of the grazing season and burning, and the following year, some 4,000 ha in the Kosciuszko summit area were withdrawn from grazing. In the Kosciusko State Park (see Chapter 3) in 1958, the State Government agreed to terminate snow leases above 1370m when they expired (burning off had been prohibited a few years earlier). Similar action was taken for the rest of the Park in 1969 and all leases were terminated by 1972. Opposition to the closures was strong and remained so for some years, especially in times of drought. However, apart from allowing about 10,000 cattle from adjoining shires to use the park for a short time during the 1973 drought, there has been no more grazing in Kosciuszko National Park (NSWNPS 1991b, 12).

In Victoria, sheep were banned from the high country in the early 1940s and from 1945, the first controls were placed on cattle grazing (Bunbury 1992, 17). Later, grazing was removed from some areas, Mt Bogong in 1955 and Mts Loch, Hotham and Feathertop in 1958, with further withdrawals in the 1980s. However, whilst grazing has been completely eliminated from the alpine areas in NSW and the ACT, it continues in Victoria, though in significantly smaller numbers. In 1992, 80 per cent of the Victorian Alpine National Park was still available for grazing on seven-year licences (with strict controls). Altogether, less than 100 graziers had some 14,000 cattle in the Victorian Alps, with 8,500 in the Alpine National Park. However, even with the smaller numbers, the renewal of existing licences in 1998 for a further seven years was highly controversial. Since then, numbers have been further reduced.

Summer grazing has long been a contentious and often bitter issue. It has involved much emotive language. For example, in February 1986, the ACF Newsletter stated: “In Victoria, the ‘mountain cattlemen’ are fighting and often winning a propaganda war by playing on rural nostalgia and false claims that grazing does not damage the Alps”. As is discussed below, livestock grazing has been subject to sustained opposition on environmental and other grounds. It has also had strong support, as it still has in some quarters. Especially in Victoria, the ‘Mountain Cattlemen’ have long been a powerful force (Jameson 1987; MCAV 1992). They are seen as a significant part of the history of the Australian Alps and of its on-going culture. They are among the reasons that grazing continues in some parts of the Victorian Alps. That they are reasons for not terminating grazing is another matter.
Mining
Many of the early mineral discoveries were made by the pastoralists. The most important mineral, gold, was discovered at Kiandra in the late 1850s and within six months, over 15,000 prospectors and miners were on the Kiandra Plain. By 1861, most had gone, making it “one of the most hectic and short-lived gold rushes in the history of Australia” (Good 1992a, 148; NSWNPWS 1998, 24-27). There were also other gold, copper and tin mines within what is now Kosciuszko National Park, such as Lobbs Hole, Grey Mare and Blue Creek. Some mining continued for a few years, but it had all ended by 1906, though there were some revivals at different locations through to as late as the 1950s (NSWPWS 1991a, 29-36). There were numerous gold mining sites in the Victorian Alps from the 1850s on, peaking in the period 1902-1912 (Johnson 1974, 43-51; Nankin 1983, 59-61). Some places have survived, such as Walhalla, Glen Wills, Harrietville, Omeo and Swifts Creek, but Sunnyside and Grant are now ghost towns. The small Red Robin mine near Mt Hotham (Bunbury 1992, 14) has continued to operate.

Much evidence of the former mining activities remains, as they made major impacts on the environment and landscape. The remnants remain part of the Alps cultural heritage.

Forestry
Initially, timber cutting was to supply the mining industry, for its shafts and railways, uses that consumed significant quantities of timber. With the decline of mining went the decline of logging, apart from meeting local needs. However, larger scale operations developed from the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the Alpine Ash forests in Victoria, with significant expansion from the 1960s (Nankin 1983, 61-65; McKimm and Drohan 1992). Much of the activity was and is in areas regenerated from those devastated by the 1939 fires, which also contributed to the establishment of Pinus radiata plantations from the 1960s (Johnson 1974, 64-79). In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of arboreta were planted in the Brindabellas (Fraser and McJannett 1994) and the Jouama Pine Plantation was established in what is now part of Kosciuszko National Park, including many species trials: the plantation is now being removed. The Boboyan Pine Plantation, established in 1966 in what is now the Namadgi National Park, has been removed. Logging in the Kiandra-Adaminaby area was an important source of timber for use in the construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.

Logging has resulted in the creation of thousands of kilometres of roads, increased traffic, the spread of weeds, and the destruction of much old growth and re-growth forests, with significant environmental implications. At the same time, it opened up areas for recreation.

Water storage and hydro-electricity generation
There is little doubt that water is the most valuable commodity produced in the Australian Alps. In the form of snow, it is the basis of the winter tourism and recreation industry. In its liquid state, it supports hydro-electric power (hep) generation, down-stream irrigation, recreation activities, and many rural and urban communities (Good 1992a, 154). As water catchments, the Australian Alps are of critical national importance.

Water storage schemes have been constructed for two main purposes, irrigation and hep generation. Construction of the first Hume Dam, on the Murray up-stream from Albury, was started in 1919 and completed in 1936. Its purpose was to provide water for irrigation along the river. With its construction came the start of concern over catchment management, as is outlined in Chapter 3. The Hume Dam and reservoir were enlarged in 1961. Dartmouth Dam, on the Mitta Mitta River, was built 1978-1981 to provide water for irrigation and to ensure supplies to South Australia under the terms of River Murray Waters Agreement.

The first hep plant in Victoria was built at the Cassilis mine in 1908, though it was only briefly successful and the mine closed in 1916 (Bunbury 1992, 14). In 1911, the Victorian Hydro-Electric Company was formed to exploit the Kiewa River. Nothing came of the plan, but a 289 MW scheme was eventually started in the late 1930s, though it was only partially completed in 1961, scaled down to 184 MW due to a lack of funding (Johnson 1974, 80-82; Bunbury 1992, 15). In NSW, there had been many proposals over more than 60 years to develop water for irrigation and hep using the Snowy and other rivers (Good 1992a, 151-155). The Snowy Mountains Scheme was constructed over the period 1949 to 1974, to provide electricity and water for irrigation (Gare 1992). The
Scheme’s facilities extend over an area of 7,000 km², much of it within Kosciuszko National Park. It involves 16 major dams and numerous smaller diversion structures, some 150 km of tunnels, 80 km of aqueducts, a major pumping station, and seven hep stations with a total installed capacity of 3,756 MW. In many ways, the Scheme occupies a very special place in the history of Australia, as well as that of the Alps (Wigmore 1968; Raymond 1999).

The Cotter catchment in the ACT, located largely within the Namadgi National Park, has been a protected catchment since 1914. There had been grazing leases in parts of the catchment from the 1830s, but the Cotter River Ordinance 1914-1959 imposed a ‘restricted use’ policy on the catchment for the maintenance of water quality (NCDC 1995). It is the main source of water for Canberra, with three reservoirs, two of them within the Park, Corin and Bendora.

Recreation and tourism

There is no need to stress the attractiveness of the Australian Alps as a recreation area, especially given their nature when compared with much of the rest of the country. They have a long history as a recreation destination (Good 1992a, 159-163). The Aboriginal tribes were the first visitors. The pastoralists and explorers expressed their appreciation for the landscape, whilst the first skiing in Australia was undertaken by gold miners at Kiandra in the 1850s. The facilities created by other uses opened up the Alps for recreation, the walking tracks dating from the gold rushes, the huts built by the stockmen and others, and the roads built by the loggers and hep schemes.

The New South Wales and Victorian governments established accommodation and other facilities in the early years of the twentieth century. The first Kosciusko Hotel at Diggers Creek was built in 1908 and the road from Jindabyne to the summit completed. A chalet was built at Charlotte Pass in 1930. The Yarrangobilly Caves House was established in 1901 and the Creel at Waste Point in 1908. Numerous ski huts and lodges were established (Hueneke 1982). In Victoria, government hospices were built in the 1880s and a chalet was built at Mt Buffalo in 1910, with a road to the top of the plateau. For their time, the hotel and chalets were described as ‘opulent’ facilities. The Bright Alpine Club was formed in the 1887 to develop tourist facilities and, a few years later, published the first Alps tourist guidebook (Johnson 1974, 93-125). From the early years of the twentieth century, a number of walking and skiing clubs were set up. In 1938, the Mt Franklin Chalet was built in what is now Namadgi National Park, the first club-built ski lodge in the Australian Alps (McLeod 2003). The first facility built specifically for winter accommodation in the Kosciuszko area was Albina Hut in 1951, later removed following the creation of Kosciuszko National Park.

The construction of the Snowy Mountains Scheme opened up the Kosciuszko area for recreation, especially for skiing, as did the Kiewa Scheme in Victoria (Grenier 1992b). In a similar way and especially in Victoria, forestry operations opened up much of the Alps for recreation, especially with the availability of four-wheel drive vehicles. In the late 1950s-1960s, facilities were built by ski clubs, many in European alpine style, at such places as Thredbo, Perisher, Charlotte Pass and Guthega in NSW and Falls Creek and Mt Hotham in Victoria. A decade later, the commercial development of skiing facilities started and with it the massive expansion of the skiing industry. There are now major resorts at such places as Thredbo and Perisher Valley in NSW and Mt Buller (initially developed by the Forestry Commission), Falls Creek (initially developed by the State Electricity Commission) and Mt Hotham in Victoria. In NSW, the resorts are part of Kosciuszko National Park. In Victoria, the six major alpine resorts are not part of the national parks and are managed by the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, with an Alpine Resort Management Board for each resort (DNRE 2002).

At the resorts and apart from them, there are major facilities for winter sports, including downhill and cross-country skiing and snowboarding, including Blue Cow and the innovative SkiTube underground rack-railway in Kosciuszko National Park. More recently, the summer tourist industry has expanded significantly, catering for walking, horse riding, mountain bike riding, fishing, kayaking, and car-based tourism. Some of the activities require highly developed facilities. Whilst there are no comprehensive data, all the indications are that visitor numbers have increased significantly over

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3 These are Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Stirling, Mt Buller, Lake Mountain, and Mt Baw Baw. They are excluded from their surrounding national parks. The smaller resorts at Mt St. Gwinear, Mt Buffalo and Mt Donna Buang are managed as part of the parks.
recent years. Winter visitor numbers vary with the snowfalls (Table 2.1). For long, they have predominated, but there is now significant growth in the numbers of summer visitors. In Victoria, winter visitation has changed little over the past twenty years, in spite of significant investment, while summer visitors have increased significantly (Bowe 2002) (Table 2.2). Data for NSW resorts are even more limited (Table 2.3).

Table 2.1 Winter Visitor Numbers at Selected Victorian Resorts (‘000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mt Buller</th>
<th>Falls Creek</th>
<th>Mt Hotham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.2 Visitors to Victorian Alpine Resorts, 1991 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>763,000</td>
<td>827,752</td>
<td>105,100</td>
<td>453,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor days</td>
<td>1,207,000</td>
<td>1,486,659</td>
<td>209,580</td>
<td>722,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total spending, $ million</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-added spending, $ million</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>2,332</td>
<td>2,219</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3 Visitors to Thredbo, 1990-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>411,475</td>
<td>268,280</td>
<td>579,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>522,810</td>
<td>274,760</td>
<td>797,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>463,830</td>
<td>269,680</td>
<td>733,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>499,110</td>
<td>294,240</td>
<td>793,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>296,800</td>
<td>258,920</td>
<td>555,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>458,635</td>
<td>285,600</td>
<td>744,235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tourist accommodation and services is the major growth industry in the Australian Alps and of major importance to the regional economies. By way of illustration, the Snowy River Shire in NSW has an estimated three million visitors a year. In the Snowy Mountains region, tourism provides some 5,000 jobs and is worth over $600 million a year (Roberts 2003). Victoria’s Alpine resorts provide over 3,700 jobs and contribute $129 million a year to the state’s economy (Bowe 2002). Managing the growing impacts of tourism and recreation is the major challenge for environmental managers in the Alps.

Changing Uses, Changing Visions
As the above outline demonstrates, the Australian Alps have been subject to many uses and assessments over their period of human occupation. The changing uses have been accompanied by changing visions, both real and not so real (Heathcote 1994, 253-269). The French geographer, Philippe Grenier (1992a) observed that “The story of the Australian Alps could be considered to be the story of a misapprehension”. This was certainly true of the early years of European settlement, beginning with the misapprehension in the naming of these modest uplands as ‘Alps’. Grenier went on to observe that “Perhaps, however, the first settlers – coming from the same race as those who invented high mountaineering – needed these ‘Alps’ on a continent which from the outset was perceived as a region of endless monotony”. As a brochure (undated) produced by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee observes:

While some of the activities changed the Alps, the huts, mining relics and trails which remain are an important part of the Alp’s heritage.

The Alps have also been the source of a culture seen as uniquely Australian. They were the inspiration for Eugen von Guerard’s paintings showing the magnificence and harshness of the alpine landscape. They are the theme of much wilderness photography, and of course the basis for Banjo Paterson’s ‘Man from Snowy River’, one of our most enduring sources of Australian identity.

Over recent years, a vision of largely European origin has gradually changed. On the other hand, perhaps it would be more correct to say that other visions and uses have been added. With these added visions, especially that of a fragile environment in need of protection, much of the misapprehension has disappeared. But vestiges and consequences of the misapprehension remain and these are, in part, among the sources of conflict that have developed and which still occur over the use and management of the Australian Alps.

The biggest change has been the appreciation of the unique natural environments of the Australian Alps. As the next chapter details, whilst it had a long gestation, this change is relatively recent.
3. The Australian Alps: a unique environment to protect

The major part of the previous chapter is a brief account of what can be regarded as essentially the exploitive uses of the Australian Alps, the second of the three periods indicated at the beginning of that chapter. Some of them certainly required a concern for aspects of the natural environment, but by no means were all of them – in part or in whole – in harmony with the environment. Further, many of the uses were (and some still are) in conflict with each other as well as with the natural environment. Damage to the environment very quickly followed European settlement. For example, Strzelecki wrote about the damage caused by grazing and settlers to the vegetation and soils in the 1830s (quoted in Hancock 1972, 57-58). For the third group of uses that were identified, the European conserver, the focus is the gradual realisation that many of them were incompatible with the natural environment and its values and the best use or uses of the Australian Alps. This is the concern of this chapter.

Emerging concerns: the work of early scientists and conservationists

Among the early explorers of the Australian Alps was the botanist, Ferdinand Mueller, who became the Government Botanist in Melbourne in 1852. Over the following eight years (1853-61), he made five expeditions to the Main Range in Victoria and NSW, covering virtually all of the alpine areas north to the Kosciuszko summit (Costin et al. 2000, 11-17; Gillbank 1992). Similar work was undertaken in NSW by James Maiden, the NSW Government Botanist (Maiden 1894, 1898 and 1899) and Richard Helms, an employee of the NSW Department of Agriculture (Helms 1897). With them began the long history of scientific interest in and concern for the well-being of the natural environments of the Australian Alps (Good 1992a, 135-141; Gillbank 1998).

By the 1890s, there was growing concern over the impacts of burning and grazing on the native vegetation and the consequent soil erosion, as well as the overall impacts on the landscape and scenery. In 1893, Helms documented the impacts in the NSW portion of the Alps (Helms 1983), as did Maiden in 1898. Both were concerned with the immediate and long-term effects, for the natural environments themselves and in terms of catchment management. Some of Helms’ later words are of particular interest:

Not satisfied with what nature yields, the herdsmen in order to improve the growth of feed and make it sweeter, as they say, yearly burn large tracts of the grass and scrub. This procedure gives the otherwise fresh and cheerful-looking country here and there a desert-like appearance which is perhaps the least evil done. The greater evil is undoubtedly that it interferes with the regular absorption, retention and distribution of moisture. … That ignorance and may be greed should be allowed to interfere so drastically in the economy of nature, is pernicious and should not be tolerated. Even from an aesthetic point of view it ought not to be allowed, for what right has one section of the community to rob the other of the full enjoyment of an unsullied alpine landscape, and to replace a fresh and fragrant growth by dead and half-burned sticks, making a desert of what was once a garden? The husbandman on the farm by the river, the artist and tourist who seek the picturesque, the botanist and zoologist who come in pursuit of plants and animals, are all interfered with. And why? Because some inconsiderate people are allowed to do as they please (Helms 1896).

Conditions in the Victorian Alps were little different, where the Anemone Buttercup (Ranunculus anemoneus) and Mountain Celery (Aciphylla glacialis) had gone due to livestock grazing by the 1890s. Much damage was recorded, especially in the Bogong and Hotham alpine areas. “But these warnings were lost in the clamour for high-country grazing areas during the disastrous drought period of 1890-1901” (Costin et al. 2000, 17).

In spite of such work, little was done to change the situation until the 1930s, when the level of concern over the impacts of the by then traditional summer grazing began to increase significantly. A major factor was an additional focus, the need to protect the Upper Murray catchment of the Hume Reservoir that was under construction. The severe degradation due to grazing and burning in the NSW portion of the catchment was documented in a report by Baldor Byles (1932). Among other things, he stated that “Although the area of total destruction was not as yet very great, the destructive processes could be observed almost everywhere”. As Mackay and Worboys (1995)
observed, “his conservation recommendations were not based on purely utilitarian values. Byles had also deeply appreciated the intrinsic values of the NSW section of the Alps and was to become one of its staunchest conservation advocates. Byles called for the rehabilitation of the eroding areas and for rangers to control the grazing”. His report, the first of a number, was an important factor in the creation in 1938 of the NSW Soil Conservation Service to provide for the conservation and protection of catchments in the High Country and other areas of NSW. In the early 1940s, William McKell (Premier of NSW and later Sir William McKell) and Sam Clayton (the first Commissioner of Soil Conservation) were also concerned over the potential use of the High Country catchments for hydro-electric development and proposals for the conservation of parts of the NSW section of the Alps. An eight-day horseback inspection of the Snowy highlands by McKell, Clayton and J.M. Tully (Minister for Lands) in January 1942 (undertaken at the persuasion of Clayton) was clearly of critical significance.

In Victoria, concern about the problems created by grazing on the Bogong High Plains was expressed by the Forests Commission as early as 1922 (Johnson 1974, 86). They were compounded by the 1939 wildfires which extended beyond the forests to parts of the alpine areas. The prolific regeneration of shrubs and grasses attracted more cattle which added further to the post-fire soil erosion problems. Subsequently, in 1940, the Soil Conservation Board was set up to tackle Victoria’s soil erosion problems. As part of its work, the Board turned to Dr John Turner, Professor of Botany at the University of Melbourne, who arranged for Maisie Fawcett to undertake an extensive ecological survey of the Victorian part of the Hume catchment (Gillbank 1992). She also turned her attention to the Bogong High Plains and instigated long-term exclusion plots and survey work. Working with the cattlemen, Fawcett clearly identified the soil erosion problems and adverse effects of burning and grazing on the high mountain catchments of Victoria (Johnson 1974, 85-87). Her work “established new principles and techniques of ecological investigation in Australia. In the mid-1940s, she assisted Judge L.B. Stretton, who as Royal Commissioner was conducting an inquiry into the condition of the catchments. His eloquent report [Stretton 1946] alerted the Victorian public to the need for immediate strong action in their defence” (Hancock 1972, 166). It was some years before she published her work, under her married name S.G.M. Carr (Carr and Turner 1959). In many ways, Fawcett’s work marked the beginning of scientists playing a major part in the future land use and management of the Australian Alps (Mackay and Worboys 1995). The continuation of her work led to the exclusion of grazing from certain areas and significant reductions in stocking rates where it continued. Two related matters are of particular interest. Firstly, in the late 1940s, her work had a significant influence on the then young Alec Costin, whose “work with the Soil Conservation Authority of Victoria was to play an important role in introducing soil conservation principles throughout Victoria, and in particular the Victorian Alps” (Mackay and Worboys 1995). Secondly, some of the plots she established in the 1940s in Pretty Valley and Rocky Valley on the Bogong High Plains, and now known as ‘Maisie’s Plots’, are still being studied (Anon. 2001).

The impacts of grazing were compounded by the selective feeding of the livestock, as they concentrated on the relatively palatable species and avoided the less palatable ones. “It means that the animals will go for the wildflowers. … It also means that, in extreme cases, the spaces between the snow grass tussocks become completely bare” (Lee 1979; also Anon 1973). Thus allowing cattle to graze during droughts, as occurred in Kosciuszko National Park in 1972 and 1976, had much greater impacts than overall stocking rates might have suggested. In 1991, in evidence to a Victorian government inquiry, Williams concluded:

5 Much other early scientific work was undertaken in the Australian Alps, in the areas of geology and geomorphology (Edgeworth David), soils, anthropology (Alfred Howitt), and climate and meteorology. James Stirling started meteorological observations at Omeo in 1879, contributing to the longest comprehensive record in the Alps (Gillbank 1998). Clement Wragge’s Observatory operated continuously on the summit of Mt Kosciuszko for five years from 1897, taking a range of weather observations at half-hour and four-hour intervals (Higgins 1987).

6 Pioneering work on vegetation analysis was undertaken in the alpine areas by Fawcett in Victoria and Costin in NSW.

7 So far, pressures to open KNP for grazing during the current drought (2002-03) have been rejected by the NSW NPWS for very sound ecological reasons.
A substantial body of high-quality scientific evidence accumulated over this period [well over 50 years] has shown unequivocally that grazing by domestic livestock has had detrimental effects on the soils and vegetation of the Australian alpine environment (quoted in ‘Seasonal grazing in the Australian Alps’, Gowland 1992).

More recently, a study relating to Kosciuszko National Park stated:

The combination of burning and stock grazing that took place over most of the area occupied by dry and sub-alpine eucalypt forest and woodland for more than one hundred years has dramatically changed vegetation structure over much of the present park (Kirkpatrick 2002).

Grazing was not the only source of problems for the scientists and conservationists. Even though the Kosciusko State Park had been established in 1944, this did not prevent proposals for skiing facilities in the high alpine summit area of Mt Kosciuszo. Also, as part of the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the Spencer’s Creek Dam was proposed for part of the area. As well as creating tension between the Park and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority (SMA), the proposal aroused considerable opposition from conservationists and scientists, including Costin and Byles, regarding “the efficacy and merit of damming a stream at such an elevation and in an area of high scientific merit” (Good 1992a, 154). There was strong lobbying from the Australian Academy of Science, which extended its concerns to future tourism (AAS 1957; Hancock 1972, 176-177). As a result of the strong opposition and by making use of powers under the Kosciusko State Park Act, the Park declared the Kosciusko Primitive Area in 1963 to protect the high alpine areas and their unique biota from any major disturbances, thus preventing the construction of the dam. This only added to tensions between the Park and the SMA. “This was a significant point in our history and a turning point in nature conservation endeavours in this country” (Good 1992a, 154).

But it was not all conflict. The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority Act of 1949 included a requirement in Schedule 1 (Part IV) of the Act for the ‘Protection of Catchment Areas’. The Authority was concerned to protect the catchments in the NSW High Country in the interest of water harvesting and, as a consequence, wanted an end to livestock grazing and the associated burning of vegetation, particularly because of their potential contribution to reservoir sedimentation. It was thus not surprising that William Hudson (Commissioner of the SMA and later Sir William Hudson) and Sam Clayton worked together to eliminate grazing, initially in the alpine areas, and, from the late 1950s, that the NSW Soil Conservation Service collaborated with the SMA in catchment protection and the rehabilitation and revegetation of degraded areas (Hancock 1972, 169-171; Irwin & Rogers 1986). Through its work on catchment protection, the SMA played a major role, to use the words of Klaus Hueneke, in ‘the greening of the High Country’. In a similar way, the Victorian State Electricity Commission played a role in removing grazing from parts of the Kiewa catchment (Slattery 1998, 138). Whilst much remains to be done, the rehabilitation work has continued, by all of the agencies involved. The spectacular recovery of the alpine flora has been one notable consequence.

The scientific work has continued, in all kinds of ways, and has continued to demonstrate the impacts of humans and other agents on the natural environments (Anon. 1973; Lee 1979; Wimbush and Costin 1979; Good 1992b; Gillbank 1992; Wahren et al. 1994; Costin et al. 2000; Scherrer and Pickering 2001; Green 2002a). Among other things, scientists have returned to Fawcett’s plots on the Bogong High Plains (McDougall 1989) and studied the very long-lasting impacts of burning by graziers on the Snow Gum open woodlands (Barker 1989). CSIRO, state agencies and university scientists have been major contributors. The International Year of Mountains conference, ‘Celebrating Mountains’, held at Jindabyne in late 2002, provided further evidence of on-going research, as have the annual meetings of the Australian Institute of Alpine Studies (see Chapter 13) and the report of the Independent Scientific Committee for the review of the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park (NSWNPWS 2002a).

The growing ascendancy of the environmental values and the creation of parks and other protected areas

The most comprehensive account of the establishment of protected areas in the Australian Alps is to be found in Mosley 1999.
forms of protected areas was recognition of the unique environments by all jurisdictions.

In NSW, cave reserves were established in the Yarrangobilly area between 1872 and 1890 for ‘Public Recreation and the Protection of Caves’. In 1906, the State Government established the ‘Snowy Mountains National Chase’, covering an area of about 260 km² around the high peaks for ‘public recreation and the preservation of game’. However, “The Chase made no difference at all to pastoral and other land-use practices” (Stricker 1988). There were extensions in 1921 and again in 1925, when the preservation of flora was added to its purpose. In Victoria, the Mt Buffalo reserve was established in 1898.

In 1931, Myles Dunphy, a dedicated bushwalker and conservationist, put forward a proposal for the creation of a Snowy-Indi Primitive Area, covering some 4,000 km² in NSW and Victoria. It included the headwaters of the Snowy River and of the River Murray (known as the Indi) and the Cobberas mountains, but deliberately excluded the main grazing leases and commercially valuable forests (Figure 3.1). Two years later, Dunphy formed the Blue Mountains National Park Committee which became the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, with membership drawn largely from bushwalking clubs. In 1935, the Council endorsed and exhibited Dunphy’s proposal for the Snowy-Indi Primitive Area. In spite of accommodating conflicting interests in terms of the use of the High Country, Dunphy’s concept of a trans-border park made no progress; the idea was well ahead of its time. He revised his proposal in 1943, clearly expecting the NSW and Victorian parts to be administered separately (Mosley 1992a). However, the negative response of the Victorian Lands Department spoke of the “danger…of prohibiting occupation”.9 But the idea of a cross-border park did not die. In the late 1960s, the Australian Conservation Foundation published a number of “statements on conservation problems of current public concern”. The first to focus on a regional topic was The High Country (ACF 1969). Much of the document reflected the views of the time, but with a clear emphasis on conservation and land use planning, and proposing that, following the example of Kosciusko State Park in NSW, parks should also be established in the High Country of Victoria and the ACT. Further,

The State Governments of Victoria and New South Wales could also consider with the Commonwealth the desirability of creating a national park in the fullest sense of the word incorporating areas in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria. This would have the advantage of providing a uniform management policy, and control, and a joint program for matters that affect areas in both States such as the creation of a long distance walking trail, proposed years ago (ACF 1969, 10).

Also of interest was the statement by Mosley (1989) that “In 1963 when serious consideration was being given to the construction of the dam on the Upper Murray (or Indi), the Commonwealth Government examined the possibility of extending the Kosciusko National Park into Victoria but again nothing was to come of this second proposal for the bi-State park”.

Whilst Dunphy and the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council made no progress for a trans-border park or any park in Victoria, the proposal aroused the interest of NSW Premier W.J. McKell. In 1943, at the request of the NSW Lands Department, Dunphy submitted a revised proposal to a committee looking at recreation in the High Country. In April 1944, largely as a result of McKell’s actions, the Kosciusko State Park Act established the 528,646 ha Kosciusko State Park, to be run by the Kosciusko State Park Trust, Australia’s first very large protected area.10

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9 Dunphy submitted an article on his proposal to the Sydney Morning Herald, but it was rejected for publication as being “controversial” (Mosley 1992a).

10 According to Gare (1988), “McKell’s vision was a major factor leading to an erosion study of eastern catchments in NSW in 1942; the establishment of Kosciusko State Park in 1946; and the start of the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme in 1949”. The key role played by McKell is also made clear by Hancock (1972, 166-168), who had access to McKell’s private papers during his research. Also important was the Soil Conservation Act 1938, in terms of the establishment of the Park and its subsequent protection and rehabilitation (Costin 2002)
Figure 3.1  Dunphy’s Proposal for a Snowy-Indi Primitive Area.

Figure 3.2  The Evolution of Parks in the NSW and the ACT portions of the Australian Alps
The Act contained provisions for catchment management, recreation and controlled grazing. The truly paradoxical element in the creation of the State Park was its funding. The Act declared that the Trust should administer its own income, such income to come chiefly from rents and fees—i.e., from snow leases. For years the Trust was dependent on mountain grazing for the money to protect mountain catchments. But this it could not do unless grazing ceased or was greatly curtailed (Stricker 1988).

As has been indicated, the story of the gradual removal of grazing from the Park was a long and often contentious one (Stricker 1988; NSWPWS 1991b). Perhaps of most importance in the Park’s Act was Section 5(iii): “The Trust may retain as a primitive area such part of Kosciusko State Park (not exceeding one-tenth of the area of that Park) as it may think fit”. The presence of this Section for a ‘strict natural area’ owed much to the Royal Zoological Society of NSW and the Linnean Society and it was this that enabled the construction of hydro-electric facilities to be prevented in 1963. But Dunphy, the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, the Mountain Trails Club, and the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs had clearly played an important role in establishing Kosciusko State Park (Byles and Dunphy 1966).

Also important for Kosciusko State Park and for subsequent developments was the completion of the Park’s first master plan in 1966 and the basic conservation principles it contained. It set new standards for protected area management. This owed much to the resource management committee of the Park Trust under the Chairmanship of Max Day and membership that included Alec Costin, Alan Strom, Baldur Byles, Geoff Mosley and Dane Wimbush, many of whom had undertaken important research in the Alps (see also Gare 2001a).

The progress of Kosciusko State Park, including its Master Plan, lobbying by the National Parks Association of NSW (formed in 1957), and the contributions of the then NSW Minister for Lands, Tom Lewis, were major factors in the establishment of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in 1968. As a result, Kosciusko State Park became Kosciusko National Park (KNP) (Gare 2001a; Hancock 1972, 177-179) (Figure 3.2). Then and subsequently, Kosciuszko has made a major contribution to protected area management in NSW and beyond (Worboys et al. 1993). Since 1968, there have been major additions to KNP, including the Byado lands in 1974 and 25,000 ha in 2001 as a result of the Regional Forest Agreement for southern NSW. In 1997, a ‘z’ was added to the spelling to more accurately reflect the Polish origin of the name, Kosciuszko.

There are a number of other protected areas in the NSW portion of the Australian Alps. Adjoining the northern boundaries of KNP are the Scabby Range Nature Reserve (established in 1982) and the Bimberi Nature Reserve (established 1985) (Dovey 1993) (Table 3.1 and Figure 1.1). These reserves also border the ACT and the Namadgi National Park. Given their locations, their management involves very close liaison between the NSW and ACT parks agencies. Brindabella National Park was established in 1996. There had been proposals for such a park for many years, both from NSW and from within the ACT, especially from the National Parks Association. In the minutes of the AALC meeting of 17.12.92, it is recorded that an ACT committee had noted “that the area would be a logical extension of the Australian Alps national parks which would cover an obvious gap along the boundary [of the ACT]”. Brindabella National Park has an area of 18,472 ha (increased from 12,609 ha when gazetted) and covers the most northerly of the alpine areas.

The first proposal for a national park in the ACT was made in the 1950s and the National Parks Association (ACT) was formed in 1960 to further the proposal, based on the work of Nancy Burbidge. The Canberra Bushwalking Club, formed in 1961, wanted a much larger park. Before anything was established, the NSW Minister for Lands, Tom Lewis, offered to take over responsibility for parks and wildlife in the

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11 Mosley (1999, 161) has noted that the vision for Kosciusko State Park “coincided with the development-oriented vision of society and its need for protection of alpine catchments for water production”.

12 The amended spelling is used throughout this document except when quoting from pre-1997 publications.
Table 3.1 National Parks in the Australian Alps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year Established</th>
<th>Area, in hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Namadgi National Park</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>105,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>5,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Kosciuszko National Park</td>
<td>1944 - 1967</td>
<td>690,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brindabella National Park</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>18,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scabby Range Nature Reserve</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bimberi Nature Reserve</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Alpine National Park</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>647,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snowy River National Park</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>98,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avon Wilderness Park</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>39,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mount Buffalo National Park</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baw Baw National Park</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>13,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACT, while in 1972, the new Whitlam Government proposed that a federal national parks agency would administer ACT parks. Eventually, the Gudgenby Nature Reserve was created in 1979, covering an area of 51,000 ha. In 1984, it was extended by including the Cotter catchment, with a total area of 94,000 ha and named Namadgi National Park (NNP).13 Namadgi is the Aboriginal name from the Brindabellas. It was later extended to 105,900 ha, some 46 per cent of the area of the ACT. It covers much of the northern end of the alpine areas, where many plant and animal communities are at the limit of their distribution, and includes the Ramsar-listed Ginini Flats wetland (Environment ACT 2001). A small public reserve was established in the Tidbinbilla area in 1936. In 1962, a park and fauna reserve was established and later extended as the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (Environment ACT 1999).

Victoria’s second national park was established at Mt Buffalo in 1898 with an area of 1,152 ha. The Bright Alpine Club played an important role in the establishment of the Park. Extensions have been made to the park at different times and it now covers 31,000 ha (Ingamells 2001).

Although Victoria had failed to respond to Dunphy’s 1938 proposals for a major national park, some years later in 1949, the Victorian Town and Country Planning Association proposed the creation of a national parks authority and a number of parks in Victoria, including Baw Baw and a Victorian Alpine National Park of over 500,000 ha (Figure 3.3). In its 1951-52 Report, the Parliamentary State Development Committee endorsed the proposal for an Alpine National Park and suggested extending it to the NSW border (Johnson 1974, 130-132). Another important event in 1952 was the formation of the Victorian National Parks Association. Its major goal was the establishment of a Victorian Alpine National Park and over the subsequent years, it made many proposals for such a park, including a 1975 one that was contiguous with Kosciuszko National Park in NSW (Figure 3.4) (Johnson 1974, 135-137).

The continuing controversy over proposals for alpine parks and the associated political pressures from parks’ supporters and opponents, especially the cattlemen and forestry interests, led to the examination of the alpine areas by the Land Conservation Council (LCC), which had been set up in 1971 as a mechanism for evaluating land use on public lands in Victoria. The Council’s initial recommendations on the state’s alpine areas were clearly controversial, resulting in over 14,000 submissions. As Johnston (1988) discussed, they presented major political problems for the Government and the responsible Minister.

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13 In the early 1990s, there appears to have been an offer from the ACT for NSW to manage Namadgi. Someone in the Commonwealth heard about it and said the Commonwealth might be interested; it would have fitted in with the Commonwealth parks estate.
Figure 3.3  Town and Country Planning Association Proposal 1949.

Figure 3.4  Concept of a Trans-Border Alpine National Park Proposed in 1975.
However, whilst there was no support for one large Victorian Alps park, the final report (LCC 1979) recommended the creation of a number of smaller protected areas: Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park (1982) (104,000 ha); Bogong National Park (1981) (79,000 ha); Cobberas-Tingaringy National Park (1986) (94,700 ha); an extension to the Snowy River National Park, which had been established in 1979 (taking the area to 40,700 ha); an extension to the Wabonga Plateau State Park (taking the area to 21,700 ha); and the Avon Wilderness Park (29,500 ha) (Figure 3.5). In 1983, the LCC released its final recommendations on a Special Investigation of the Alpine Area, which included a significant expansion of the protected areas and “the establishment of a large alpine national park that will encompass most of Victoria’s alpine and sub-alpine environments” (LCC 1983, 9). Whilst most of the recommended individual parks had been established by the mid-1980s, the Alpine National Park was not proclaimed until December 2, 1989. As Johnston (1989) observed: “In conservation, one would have to go a long way to find an issue as persuasive, as hard fought and as long lived as that of Victoria’s Alpine National Park”.

**Figure 3.5  National Parks in the Victorian Alps Prior to the Establishment of the Alpine National Park**

The allowance of livestock grazing in the LCC’s recommendations and in parts of the Alpine National Park was a reflection of the political realities of the Park’s creation and a source of continuing controversy. On the one hand, the Government noted that the area has a rich cultural heritage and that “Europeans have made use of the Alps for nearly 150 years. Stockmen in search of pastures founded a tradition of high country summer grazing which has been sustained to this day” (VDCFL 1988). On the other, and demonstrating continued concern for the natural values of the High Country, in a letter to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, the Australian Academy of Science reaffirmed “the scientific evidence that commercial grazing, forestry and mining are
incompatible with preservation of nature conservation values and, in places, with catchment values. Such activities should be terminated or gradually phased out in a national park”.\(^{14}\)

**Conclusion**

Even though much of the Australian Alps now has protected area status of one form or another, the tensions and conflicts that have waxed and waned for some one hundred years continue (Mercer 1992). This is not the place to discuss such issues further, but equally they could not be ignored. In conclusion, one quote must suffice, taken from a small publication issued in 1980 at the start of a review of the Plan of Management for the Kosciusko National Park. The publication was entitled *The Pressure is on Kosciusko National Park*:

> In its [then] 36 years of existence, Kosciusko National Park has been subjected to a number of pressures which have endangered its national and international status as a conservation area. It inherited considerable problems, established as it was after a long history of other forms of land use.
> As we enter the 80s, the major concern is the sheer pressure of numbers of people wanting to use the area. The carrying capacity of existing facilities, such as roads and resort accommodation, is one consideration. So is the carrying capacity of the less resilient natural features of the high mountains (NSWNPWS 1980a).

The comments are still valid (see Costin et al. 2002). With tourists the latest ‘livestock to graze the Alps’, managing people continues to be the real challenge.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) Letter written by Professor B.W. Holloway on behalf of the Academy, dated 20.9.85.

\(^{15}\) As Worboys and Pickering (2002) have observed, “There are no excuses for visitor use impacts that detract from the natural attributes of Kosciuszko National Park. Natural attributes are the most important attribute underpinning the tourism and recreation values of the park”. The observation also applies to the other parks.
Chapter 4. Overcoming the Boundaries

The unique alpine and sub-alpine environments of the Australian Alps have long been recognised, but the unity of these environments has been fragmented by human-imposed boundaries, especially those of the states and territory and their agencies. In turn, the jurisdictional boundaries have fractured and prevented the holistic management of the Australian Alps.

But just as Myles Dunphy saw beyond the boundaries in his proposal for a trans-border park, so did others. In different ways, they gave early acknowledgement to the problems created by the boundaries and recognition to the need to overcome them. The story involves many interconnected strands, some in sequence and others in parallel, involving the different roles of bureaucrats, politicians, and others.

On-the ground: dealing with the daily issues

For those involved in parks and other protected areas on a day-to-day basis, overcoming the problem of boundaries involved what have been termed classic park management issues, such as fire protection, vermin control, rubbish removal, track maintenance, etc. The co-operative measures that developed were generally small-scale, ‘on-the-ground’ in every respect, and essentially informal, between staff of the New South Wales and Victorian parks agencies, and even before there were parks on the Victorian side of the border. There were inter-agency contacts by on-the-ground staff, both within and between states, but also between people in more senior positions, such as Neville Gare, the first Superintendent of Kosciuszko State Park, and Don Saunders of the Victorian National Parks Service (formerly the National Parks Authority).

With the proposal for Victoria’s first park on the NSW border in the alpine area in 1979, discussions followed between NSW and Victoria regarding the ability of staff to cross borders between Kosciuszko and Cobberas-Tingaringy National Parks to undertake on-ground works and patrols in the adjoining national park in the other state. In identifying potential areas for cooperation, Ian Smith, the District Superintendent for Victoria’s East Gippsland, concentrated on classical park management issues when he stated “joint works/patrols would involve rubbish removal, track maintenance, fire control, cattle control and possibly wild dog control”. He also indicated that there “are side benefits to the rangers involved in working with another service” and suggested the stocking of park brochures from parks on either side of the border (Byrne 1998).

The agencies

Fire management and control along the NSW-Victoria border area has long been a concern, predating the creation of the national parks. Within NSW, the Hume-Snowy Bush Fire Prevention Scheme was established in 1951, in part at least as a response to the 1939 wildfires and the Byles report. It was run by the Hume-Snowy Bushfire Council (Hancock 1972, 170). The Scheme operated to support the catchment protection provisions of the NSW Soil Conservation Act 1938 and to co-ordinate the legal fire prevention responsibilities of authorities within the Hume-Snowy Bush Fire District, and involved the NPWS, SCS, Forestry Commission and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, which was a major participant (Leaver 2002). It covered Kosciuszko National Park (except the Byado area, which was added to the Park in 1974) and areas of agricultural and forested land on the margins of the Park (especially to the north-west), with some areas covered extending into Victoria (NSWNPS 1980b; Good & Bowden 1996). The Scheme and Council ceased to exist in 1986 when fire management was transferred to Kosciuszko National Park. “The co-operative basis for fire management across the State border is determined by the Border Fire Liaison Committee” (NSWNPS 1981, 93). This operated the Border Fire Agreement, which covered an area 15km wide on each side of the border.

The 1966 Kosciuszko State Park Plan and the first 1974 Kosciuszko National Park Plan were, for their time, significant documents, but they said little about cross-border issues. A similar observation can be made of Victoria’s Land Conservation Council documents. The first contacts on cross-border issues of a more formal nature between the parks agencies in NSW and Victoria appear to have taken place in connection with the preparation of the second Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park.

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16 Much of Chapters 4 and 5 and the first part of Chapter 6 is based on, and builds on, the unpublished papers by Byrne (1998) and McNamara (2000).
Cross-border negotiations on issues relating to the 1982 plan of management for Kosciusko National Park revolved around common issues including recreation and fire management, and resulted in an identified need for ongoing consultation and cooperative management. Fires sweeping across southern Kosciusko required a combined suppression approach with the Victorian authorities. The management of the Pilot Wilderness of Kosciusko National Park was absolutely dependent on the access policies to Cowombat Flat determined by the Victorians. The basis of a cooperative approach to management was sown (Mackay and Worboys 1995).

However, the actual 1982 Plan of Management made only relatively brief reference to cross-border issues in a short section concerned with ‘Liaison with National Parks Service, Victoria’:

The aims of liaison will be to co-ordinate: planning and management programmes, information services, basic national park management functions such as monitoring of visitor use patterns, control of introduced weeds and animals and of illegal grazing; and protection of the catchment area of the Upper Murray (NSWPWS 1981, 93).

‘The Kosciusko Group’

A number of people played critical roles in terms of cross-border issues, beyond what may have been required of them by their employing agencies. In the late 1970s, membership of the informal ‘Kosciusko Group’, which included Bruce Leaver, Roger Good, Neville Gare and Alec Costin, crossed agency boundaries – the NSW NPWS, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the recently established Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS). As for the Group’s purpose, the members were “trying to do things better”. Initially, their concerns were within NSW, with a focus on Kosciuszko National Park, but the members were united in their concern for the Australian Alps as a whole, which required them to look across the borders. In recognition of this and developments in Victoria, the Group extended its interests south of the border, to which Ian Weir (Victorian Parks Service) was receptive, and also to the Australian Conservation Foundation. In turn, the ACT was brought in to the discussions with Andy Turner. The small group of alpine ecologists and managers were aware of the fact that many management issues could “only be effectively addressed by close co-operation between managers of the individual Alps parks, and at the policy level of each State management agency” (Good 1992c).

There was no real opposition to the Group and its activities; they were told they could go ahead if they wanted to, but they were unlikely to achieve anything (R. Good, pers. com.). But they were doing critical work in the parks, individually and collectively (for example, they were involved in what was perhaps the first conference on conservation of the Alps [Turner 1980]), and they persisted with their concern for the Australian Alps as a whole. Having established the basis of an important collegiality in the Alps community, the Group began establishing links with politicians, taking the opportunity provided by some fortuitous timing, the presence of Labor Governments in all of the jurisdictions, and a few supportive politicians, and members of the conservation movement.

The politicians

The earliest involvement of politicians in cross-border parks seems to have been with Gough Whitlam in his 1972 Australian Labor Party policy speech. He stated that “We [a future Labor Australian government] would .. work in co-operation with the New South Wales and Victorian Governments for a National Park in the Australian Alps, and with the New South Wales and South Australian Governments to develop a Central Australian wilderness area” (Whitlam 1972). In the subsequent Queen’s Speech of February 28, 1974, it was stated that the Government will prepare legislation for a National Parks and Wildlife Commission to assist in the establishment of a system of national parks, including such areas as the Great Barrier Reef, the Central Australia wilderness and the Australian Alps. It is intended that Aborigines be among those trained to care for the parks (House of Representatives Hansard, Volume H of R 88, page 4).

However, nothing appears to have come of this intention in terms of an Australian Alps National Park.

Returning to the situation on the NSW-Victoria border, the views and activities of a number of politicians were critically important, and not just in terms of issues within their own jurisdictions. In 1979, following the Land Conservation Council’s recommendation for Victoria’s
Cobberas-Tingaringy National Park, the NSW Minister responsible for national parks, Paul Landa, wrote to his ministerial colleagues in Victoria, Bill Borthwick and Vasey Houghton, expressing his concern that cattle grazing was to continue within the Park under the Land Conservation Council’s recommendations (Byrne 1998). Landa’s views on national parks were clearly set out in his statement announcing the review of the Kosciusko National Park Plan of Management in January 1979:

The Park possesses a wealth of environments of great significance to nature conservation in this State. These environmental resources, their protection and management, are the basis for the involvement of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in this area. We should not lose sight of this primary objective of protecting and managing the great diversity of environments in the Park. But the conservation of the plant and animal communities of the Park is not merely the constraint within which development must proceed. It is the goal of the Service’s management of the Park and it is my firm commitment (quoted by Leaver in Turner 1980, 2; see also Leaver 2001).

In May 1982, Eric Bedford, NSW Minister for Planning and Environment, wrote to his new Victorian counterpart, Evan Walker (Minister for Conservation and Planning) supporting the Victorian Government’s policy for the completion of “a single contiguous Alpine National Park – adjoining Kosciusko National Park – to form a major National asset”. Bedford sought to explore the “possibility of establishing a system to co-operatively manage alpine national parks”, foreseeing benefits “in developing systems for complementary management”. The areas of fire protection, visitor management and control of grazing animals and pest species were suggested as being of mutual interest. The Minister also “anticipated that co-operative management could better utilise the resources devoted to park management in the border area, so contributing to nature conservation values”. In a far-sighted statement that recognized the proposal as a first of its kind in Australia, Bedford foresaw a co-operative management system that might “provide a model for similar nature conservation initiatives in other areas” (quoted in Byrne 1998).

Officers of each agency were nominated to draft a framework for co-operative management and the two relevant conservation Ministers, Eric Bedford (NSW Planning and Environment) and Evan Walker (Victoria Conservation and Planning) subsequently met on February 18, 1983, to further discuss the proposal. In June 1983, the Assistant Directors of the two national park agencies (Ross May, Victorian National Parks Service, and Geoff Armstrong, NSW NPWS) initiated the first high level agency discussions concerning co-operation between the States. In subsequent discussions between agencies senior staff, annual meetings between rangers from the different parks were proposed, based on successful cross-border meetings already held between staff in Victoria and South Australia. Bruce Leaver (Regional Director, South Eastern NSW) and Ian Smith (Victoria) were given approval to initiate an inaugural meeting to discuss co-operative management arrangements.

During a three-day inspection of Kosciuszko National Park in April/May 1984 for fourteen MPs from Victoria, organized by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and hosted by Terry Sheahan (NSW Minister for Planning and Environment), he and Rod Mackenzie (Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) gave further consideration to cross-border measures and agreed “to establish an intergovernmental working group to develop co-operative arrangements for managing adjoining parklands in the mountainous region of south-eastern Australia”. The Ministers also discussed the inclusion of the ACT in the co-operative arrangements. Subsequently, Bob Carr (the new NSW Minister for Planning and Environment) pursued the issues and by mid-January 1985, Gordon Scholes (Minister for Territories in the Federal Government) had agreed that there would be advantages in expanding the agreement to include participation by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Scholes cited the significance of the recently established Namadgi National Park in the broader regional context as a key reason for inclusion.

**Things coming together**

Following the meeting between Sheahan and Mackenzie, the ACF Director, Geoff Mosley, wrote to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS), Professor J.D. Ovington, indicating that the ministers had “decided to set up a working group to co-ordinate their respective alpine park matters”. He also stated that “there is a need to co-ordinate the planning and management of the alpine parks in both the States and Territories” and suggested “the
Commonwealth call a meeting of the three Ministers to discuss this matter” (letter dated 26.6.84). Neville Gare, the Deputy Director, replied stating that the “ANPWS will be pleased to assist in developing the concept of a continuous alpine national park if the opportunity presents itself” (letter dated 20.7.84).

Critical to any Commonwealth involvement was the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. Under Section 17(3) of the Act, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife had the power to perform any of his functions in cooperation with a State, authority of the Commonwealth or State, or a local governing body, and the ANPWS was established by the Act for the purpose of assisting the Director in the performance of his functions. Among other things, the ANPWS was an agency empowered to cooperate with State authorities and other Commonwealth authorities in the management of national parks and similar reserves (Gare 2001b).

The following year, on July 4, 1985, Joan Kirner, Victoria’s Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, formally announced the presentation of legislation for an Alpine National Park. The announcement was made at Bennison Lookout, north of Licola, in the Victorian Alps. Among those present were senior representatives from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments and their parks agencies, including Bruce Leaver and Neville Gare. Among other things, Joan Kirner stated that “we should not consider this Park as Victoria’s alone”. Being contiguous with Kosciuszko National Park and Namadgi National Park, “together they form a major national asset” and it was “important that this system of parks is seen as a single natural unit and not as three discrete areas”. On the same day, the Commonwealth Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Environment, Barry Cohen, announced that the preparation of a Management Plan for the Park would be assisted by a grant of $75,000 plus technical expertise from the ANPWS under its States Co-operative Assistance Program. Further, he “considered it essential that management of Australia’s scarce Alpine resources be integrated to take into account factors operating across state borders”. To this end, $5,000 of the grant was for workshops and meetings related to interstate co-operative aspects of the project.

Mr Cohen emphasized the national significance of the Alpine National Park, which, together with the adjoining Kosciusko National Park in NSW and Namadgi National Park in the ACT, will provide protection for Australia’s mainland alpine regions. He considered it essential that management of Australia’s scarce alpine resources … be integrated to take into account factors operating across State borders, such as fire, access and snowfield usage (News Release, July 4, 1985).

The Commonwealth funding was clearly important in the planning of the Alpine National Park, but it was also important in helping to establish links with the Commonwealth. There is no doubt that Kirner had vision and an interest in conservation. However, politically, the establishment of the Park was very important to the Victorian Government in terms of the conservation vote, as the Victorian National Parks Association was very influential. Cross-border co-operation was one more plank in assisting establishment of the Park, as well as providing another means of access to people north of the state border. The Commonwealth assistance helped to break down the barriers that existed between the States and the Commonwealth, in general and with the ANPWS in particular. At the same time, Neville Gare, as Deputy Director of ANPWS, continued to champion the Alps, and so provided a way by which the ANPWS was accepted by the states.

Clearly stimulated by Kirner’s speech, the related gathering and the Commonwealth grant, an informal meeting was held on July 15, 1985, of senior parks agencies’ officers: Neville Gare, Brian Martin and Gwen Shaughnessy from ANPWS; Andy Turner and Frank Gnauck from ACT Parks and Conservation; Bruce Leaver from NSW NPWS; and Ian Weir from Victoria’s National Parks Service. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss items of common interest in alpine park planning and management, and to

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17 The States Cooperative Assistance Program (SCAP) was initiated in 1983-84. It enabled the ANPWS to develop with the States and Territories nature conservation projects of national or international significance related to wildlife and to national parks and reserves. Operation of the Program ended in the 1995-96 financial year.

18 For a time in the 1970s, agencies in at least one state had orders to have no contact with Commonwealth agencies, while the Director of the ANPWS seems to have been a hindrance to collaboration.
identify topics for a possible workshop or workshops to be convened by ANPWS. The meeting focused on methods of co-operation and matters of mutual interest regarding the Australian Alps parks. It was agreed to hold a workshop, which should recognize the values of alpine areas, identify common management issues and develop a framework for co-operation and co-ordination. A Steering Group was formed, comprising Martin, Turner, Leaver and Arnis Heislers (representing Weir), and met on August 22, 1985, to organise the workshop, with Martin given the task of developing an umbrella statement of broad principles.

Conclusion
This chapter has highlighted the importance of things coming together at the right time: the presence and clear roles of key people; that among other things, they had been talking about park planning and management; particular developments (especially the formation of ANPWS); the availability of Commonwealth money (the States Co-operative Assistance Program); and the activities of conservationists (the ACF) and scientists (through the Australian Academy of Science and in CSIRO). But it should be remembered that all – agencies, groups and individuals – had their own agendas. For example,

During the debate [over the 1982 Kosciusko National Park Plan] one strategy was to identify Kosciusko as an asset of national significance to put development pressure in context. … Like the NSW resort issue, it was considered [in Victoria] that debate about Victoria’s parochial problems [especially cattle grazing] could be put on a more balanced footing by elevating the conservation values of the Victorian Alps to a national level (Leaver 2001).

However, agendas aside, there was a common concern for the well-being of the nationally important Australian Alps.
Chapter 5. Howmans Gap and the Evolution of the First Formal Cooperative Management Agreement

The workshop recommended and organized by the Steering Group gained the full support of the Victorian Minister, Joan Kirner. As set out in letters she sent to other ministers, dated September 17, 1985, it was to be “a working meeting of departmental representatives, to foster a co-operative approach and in particular to assist the planning and management of the three abutting National Parks in the alpine area. … The meeting would focus on broad aspects of the planning and management of the Alpine areas in Victoria, in relation to other Alpine National Parks. The meeting would also consider the nature and attendance at subsequent meetings if it is considered that these would be worthwhile”.

The Workshop, hosted by Victoria, was held on October 28-31, 1985, at the Howmans Gap Alpine Camp, near Falls Creek, in the Victorian Alps. Prior to the meeting, it was endorsed by Barry Cohen, Federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, who promised the involvement by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service with representation by Neville Gare (Deputy Director), Brian Martin (Project Officer for Co-operative Management) and Theo Hooy (Planning Officer). Minister Bob Carr (NSW) confirmed the attendance at the meeting of Bruce Leaver (Regional Director), Joss Davies (Regional Planning Co-ordinator) and Roger Good (Protection Systems Officer). Minister Bob Carr (NSW) confirmed the attendance at the meeting of Bruce Leaver (Regional Director), Joss Davies (Regional Planning Co-ordinator) and Roger Good (Protection Systems Officer). The Minister proposed “a joint Ministerial statement” on co-operative management of the adjoining national parks should be issued following the meeting. With the workshop being held in the Victorian Alps and under the patronage of Joan Kirner, it is perhaps not surprising that the Victorian attendance was larger than that from other jurisdictions; it included Ian Weir, Arnis Heislers and Ian Smith. The States Co-operative Assistance Program enabled ANPWS to play a co-ordinating role.

The Howmans Gap meeting was a critical event in many ways. It was the first occasion on which a number of staff from the relevant agencies had come together to discuss common issues and co-operative management of the Australian Alps national parks. It was critical in terms of the particular people who were present, not least those who had been working towards such a gathering for a number of years. The meeting had ministerial blessing. It was termed “a working meeting” and, judged by the outcomes, it was (for a full report of the meeting, see Davies 1986). Major parts of the workshop were the exchange of information and the discussion of common problems.

The meeting brought together policy-makers, planners and managers from the four parks services “to discuss strategies and priorities for co-operative planning and management for national parks and other protected areas in the Australian Alps” (Davies 1986, 1). Large numbers of issues were identified “in which participating agencies can co-operate in the management of the Alps” (Davies 1986, 4-5). Five working groups, covering natural resources, cultural resources, recreation, regional planning, and public awareness, “were asked to develop approaches to those issues that were seen to be important and of mutual concern where co-operative mechanisms are feasible” (Davies 1986, 6-15). Given that the workshop was funded as part of the ANPWS assistance with planning for Victoria’s proposed Alpine National Park (VDCFL 1987), there was much discussion of planning and plan implementation for the new park, with input from all of those present. For the wider scene, Participants agreed to seek the approval of their respective Ministers to a program for future action on co-operative management. A Framework of Co-operation was drafted at the working meeting and subsequently approved in principle by the responsible Ministers (Davies 1986, 19).

The Framework (see Appendix 1) set out the basis for the national significance of the Australian Alps, a national commitment to their management and conservation for all Australians, an agreement to develop a formal ‘Australian Alps National Parks Agreement’, and the initial actions that would be undertaken to implement the Framework. The ‘Initial Action’ agreed on was: the continuation of the Liaison Committee formed prior to the workshop (to be responsible for the various activities agreed to in the Framework), a public awareness program, a resources program
(development of a data base for natural resource management; a workshop on catchment management issues), a cultural resources program, a recreation management program (initially a workshop), and regional planning (Davies 1986, 19-20).

Following on from the general management workshop held at Howmans Gap, two more specific issue-oriented workshops were held. The first was hosted by NSW at Charlotte Pass in April-May 1986 and was concerned with catchment management, “based on the general theme of resource management and recreation demands within the alpine catchments” (Good 1987, 1). Issues of common interest, that were catchment and non-catchment based, were defined and considered under the headings of vegetation management (fire, grazing and logging), weed and feral animal management, bulk water management, recreation (camping and passive recreation), education, and horse riding access, brumby running, and walking trails. The third meeting, hosted by the ACT, was held in Canberra in October, 1986, and was concerned with recreation planning and management (Garvan 1987). 19

Given that the ANPWS was funding the planning of Victoria’s Alpine National Park and there was considerable activity in establishing formal contacts and the ‘Framework of Cooperation’, there seems to have been only limited impact on the 1988 Kosciusko National Park Plan of Management. Section 8.4, ‘Interaction with other organisations’ contained very little on links with Victoria’s National Parks Service and no mention of the cooperative program that was being established (NSWNPWS 1988, 105-112).

The ‘Framework’ seems to have quickly become an Australian Alps National Parks Agreement. Following the Howmans Gap workshop, Victoria took a co-ordinating role, with Joan Kirner playing the role of ‘champion’ or ‘patron’. In late November 1985, she again wrote to her ministerial colleagues sending them a copy of ‘A Framework for Cooperation’ and seeking their support for a formal agreement for inter-governmental cooperation based on the ‘Framework’. She stated: “I believe that the value of such an agreement would be to provide a clear focus on the importance of the national parks in the Australian Alps and to highlight our commitment to the protection and management of these areas”. In responding, the Ministers expressed support and their own sentiments:

This is an important initiative in conservation of this nationally significant area. The framework ... appears to ... provide a sound basis for co-operation between State, Territory and Commonwealth nature conservation agencies and I am agreeable, in principle, ... that it be developed into a formal Agreement. Barry Cohen, Commonwealth Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, in a letter to Joan Kirner, 28.11.85.

I consider the forms of co-operation and actions outlined to be of benefit to the Australian Capital Territory. I am, therefore, pleased to give my in-principle support to such an Agreement and ... to continue negotiations on the details. Gordon Scholes, Commonwealth Minister for Territories, in a letter to Joan Kirner, c. 22.11.85.

I am happy with the framework and I agree in principle to the development of the Agreement as outlined. I believe the co-operation which is developing is most encouraging as the adoption of a broader view in the management of these important national parks can only be in the public interest. Bob Carr, NSW Minister for Planning and Environment, in a letter to Joan Kirner, 3.12.85.

In a Minute to the Commonwealth Minister, dated about 20.11.85, the Director of ANPWS, Professor J.D. Ovington, stated:

This is a unique opportunity for the Commonwealth and State Governments to join in the development of an Agreement for the conservation of the Australian Alps. A formal Agreement would enable the Commonwealth to have a direct role in the conservation of this nationally significant area.

Following the Howmans Gap meeting, a news release outlined Ministerial support for and the preparation of an Australian Alps National Parks Agreement (see Appendix 2). The statement was
issued on the eve of the Silver Jubilee Conference of the National Parks Association of the ACT, held in Canberra on November 30 - December 1, 1985, with the theme ‘Australian Alpine Areas – Management for Conservation’ (Frawley 1986). The conference included contributions from those who had drafted the agreement, Roger Good, Bruce Leaver, Andy Turner, and Ian Weir. At the close of the Conference, Neville Gare, Deputy Director of the ANPWS, delivered a paper entitled ‘The future for alpine conservation, the benefits of co-operation’, in which he outlined some of the potential benefits of the co-operative management of the Australian Alps.

In the 1940s good fortune brought together Federal and State leaders at both political and agency level with common aims and enthusiasm. The result was the Kosciusko National Park and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Forty years on we have a similar case of the right people in the right place at the right time. Ministers in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney have indicated a mutual recognition of the national significance of this only-too-rare piece of alpine country which lies south of us here today. Their officers have already met several times, and those meetings have reflected the enthusiasm of the Ministers (Gare 1986).

In a subsequent Media Statement released on December 6, 1985, headed ‘Everyone’s a winner in new park management effort’, Dr Andy Turner, Director of Policy and Projects in the ACT Parks and Conservation Service in the Department of Territories, observed that “Namadgi National Park will be not just a park for the people of Canberra but an important gateway to and from the entire Australian Alps”. He foreshadowed some of the areas of potential co-operation that would result from the Agreement: “Visitors … will be able to use a system of walking tracks which will start in Namadgi and provide a link through Kosciusko to the Victorian Alps. Control of access and use will be compatible through our parks. The agreement will assist in the detailing of the history of the area, such as the route the Kiandra gold diggers took through what is now Namadgi National Park in the 1860s”.
Chapter 6. The First Memorandum of Understanding, 1986

The Howmans Gap ‘working meeting’ was clearly just a start. Activities were in the hands of a small group of people, sometimes called a liaison committee, that met on a number of occasions before and after the Howmans Gap gathering. At a meeting on January 30, 1986, attended by Neville Gare and Brian Martin (ANPWS), Ian Weir (National Parks Service of Victoria’s Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands), Bruce Leaver, Roger Good and Joss Davies (NSW NPWS), and Andy Turner (ACT Parks and Conservation Service), it was agreed that:

- the ‘Framework’ be recast as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the governments involved;
- long-term, there should be mirror legislation to formalise the Agreement;
- administrative arrangements should include a Ministerial Council, Standing Committee, and advice from the community through existing Advisory/Consultative Committees; and
- there should be a single Australian Alps National Park, with divisions in each jurisdiction.

Joss Davies, the Regional Planning Co-ordinator for the NSW NPWS, was given the task of recasting the ‘Framework’ as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a document that would commit the Ministers and their respective departments or agencies to the agreement in principle that had already been made with the ‘Framework’ and confirmed in the press release following the Howmans Gap meeting. The development of the MOU was premised on the following assumptions, as set out in the Framework:

- agreement should not alter existing management responsibilities;
- agreement should not introduce any extra funding mechanisms; and
- agreement should primarily be a mechanism for the agencies to continue doing what they are already doing in a coordinated manner.

The preparation of the MOU was assisted by the Senior Legal Officer in the NSW NPWS. There was also input from the Commonwealth’s Australian Government Solicitor and comments from Brian Martin, Neville Gare, Andy Turner, and Ian Weir. Draft versions were much longer than the final document and there was a Schedule 2, a ‘Cooperative Work Plan for the period to June 1987’ (Schedule 1 listed the protected areas covered by the MOU). There was also discussion regarding the MOU referring to a single Australian Alps National Park, with Kosciusko National Park and others named as ‘Kosciusko Division’ and so on, but with no change to existing administrative responsibilities.

The MOU was finalised by mid-1986 (Appendix 3) and subsequently signed by the relevant Ministers, Bob Carr (NSW, Planning and Environment), Gordon Scholes (Commonwealth, Territories), Joan Kirner (Victoria, Conservation, Forests and Lands), and Barry Cohen (Commonwealth, Arts Heritage and Environment). The document implies that all Ministers signed it on July 4, 1986. However, although this is regarded as the ‘official’ date when some of the Ministers appear to have signed (some possibly did so as early as the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers [CONCOM] meeting in Adelaide on June 26), the official announcement was delayed until Barry Cohen returned from overseas and signed the MOU on July 16. Media reports, including a photo showing Joan Kirner and Barry Cohen signing the MOU in Adelaide, appeared the following day. In a subsequent news release from Barry Cohen, dated 16.7.86,

The Ministers said the concept of the agreement was unique in Australian land management. It would have tremendous benefits for the large number of Canadians interested in the protection and use of this priceless natural asset. The Ministers said the region’s rich natural and cultural resources required the best ideas, information and expertise for its careful management. This form of co-operative management would ensure that would happen.

As has been indicated, the whole process of establishing the first MOU was given considerable encouragement by Joan Kirner, who may well be described as a champion of the cooperative program. However, it is not so clear that she was the first person to propose the concept of a formal Commonwealth / State Agreement regarding cooperation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks, as stated by Brian Martin in a

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20 According to a paper by Roger Good dated February 20, 1986.
Minute dated 5.3.86. The MOU and the proposed Agreement gained wide support, such as from the various National Parks Associations and the Australian Academy of Science. An earlier letter from the President of the Academy, dated December 19, 1985, stated: “The Academy views the agreement as an important step in the conservation of the scientific resources of the Australian Alps”.

The MOU set out the details of the parties to the agreement, acknowledgement of the national significance of the Australian Alps, agreement to co-operate in the management of the national parks and other reserves in the Australian Alps, the agreement’s working arrangements including the establishment of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee and provision for an annual co-operative works program, and a schedule listing the parks and other reserves covered by the agreement. An important point was that, unlike other agreements, the MOU did not change any of the agencies’ existing management responsibilities. It is not clear how the ‘boundaries’ for the MOU were set, as there were no specified criteria by which parks and other reserves should be included. There appears to have been early agreement on the ‘core’ areas, but considerable discussion about others. As far as can be gathered, it was decided to include these ‘core’ areas and leave the others for later consideration and possible inclusion. It was realised that the alternative was a protracted discussion at the time and the possible delay – and even failure – of the whole process. Prevailing political considerations could not be ignored.

Some observations in one of the very few accounts of the program, published in 1992, made by one of those involved in the establishment of the MOU, are of interest.

With the signing of the agreement by the four relevant Ministers, arguably the most significant co-operative nature conservation program of recent decades in Australia had been initiated. In spite of this important initiative, many obstacles have had to be overcome to reach the operational status the Alps Liaison Committee now enjoys. These obstacles were mainly institutional as the individual Government agencies held very different objectives and priorities for land management and conservation. These had in most cases been in place for several decades and the agencies were reluctant to change either the objectives or the priority for management programs (Good 1992c).

A more formal agreement
It is clear from the records of the January 1986 meeting that the MOU was regarded as an interim measure. In Clause 3 of the ‘Framework’ and Clause 2.1 of the MOU, the parties had agreed “To pursue the development of a formal intergovernmental agreement to protect the nationally important values of the region”. The MOU was to operate during the estimated two years or so that it would take to develop some form of more formal and binding legislative Agreement between the governments, possibly similar to that dealing with co-operation in the Murray-Darling Basin.

For a number of years, through to the early 1990s, the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) (see Chapter 8) devoted much time and energy to the development of a formal inter-governmental agreement, as required by the MOU. These discussions seemed to go in different directions at different times. There was particular concern over the legal nature of the MOU, the Crown Solicitor indicating (in a letter dated 24.3.86) that it involved no contractual arrangements, it was an unenforceable arrangement with no obligation really being entered into by the parties, and that its success was thus dependent on political goodwill. He also raised questions regarding the overall ‘upgrading’ of the MOU, the need for a formal agreement, the establishment of a Ministerial Council (given the national significance of the Australian Alps), and the development of a single management plan. Legal advice was sought from other sources. The Legal Service Section of the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment stated, in September 1986, that the MOU should be strengthened and made more formal, that “the appropriate course is to work towards strengthening and expanding the MOU into a legally binding agreement that produces complementary legislation”. Later, in a letter dated 25.11.86, the Director of the Service stated: “Because of the national significance of the Alpine Park, it should be an item for consideration by a Ministerial Council with a Standing Committee to make recommendations to Ministers on management issues”. He also stated that it was desirable to have ‘single’ plan of management.

At its meeting in September, 1986, the AALC considered possible mechanisms to achieve a formal intergovernmental agreement on co-operative management of the Alps. The
Committee recognized that further information was needed on the relative advantages of various mechanisms, such as letters of agreement, complementary legislation, and mirror legislation, but that the River Murray Waters Agreement should be considered as a possible model. The Committee also indicated the need to know the most expeditious way of implementing Section 2.1 of the MOU and what the respective agencies needed to do to have a formal agreement in place by January 1988 (i.e. before the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations). There clearly appeared to be some pressure for a formal agreement. However, as a result of initial investigations, it was proposed to defer, at least for the time being, seeking to bring in new legislation or amending existing legislation; to upgrade the MOU through an exchange of letters between the State Premiers and the Prime Minister; and to arrange for the preparation of a single joint management plan for all of the national parks covered by the MOU.

A year later, in November 1987, the Committee agreed “it was important to use the existence of the MOU to the greatest advantage”. Nonetheless, a formal agreement was still on the agenda in the following year. According to the minutes of the AALC meeting on 10.6.88, “a response from the Victorian Government Solicitor .. said that the agreement could be either a binding enforceable contract or an arrangement without legal obligation, and that a decision had to be made on which was the more appropriate. … the NSW response was similar, suggesting that a decision on the type and coverage of agreement was required”. The discussion of the different structures raised a number of points, including the fact that the enforcement aspects raised difficulties (such as the type of penalties for non-compliance); the public perception of the Agreement was important (it should not just be a bureaucratic exercise); and that an Alps Commission, or joint State Management Authority may be formed, its power arising from the legislation. The AALC meeting on 1.12.88 considered various models as the basis for the formal agreement for the Australian Alps National Parks, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the Western Tasmania Wilderness National Parks World Heritage Area, the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, and the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. The meeting agreed that administrative arrangements were preferred to legislation and that legislation could follow at a later stage. Also, an agreement should provide for Alps-wide management, joint planning and administration (through one administration organization), and a joint funding commitment. The NSW and Victorian representatives also saw World Heritage nomination as a goal, with much discussion on the extent to which the agreement should cover this issue (see Chapter 12 for the discussion of World Heritage issues).

At its 5.4.89 meeting, the AALC believed that the formation of a Ministerial Council was the best option in upgrading the MOU.21 To achieve this, it was considered that, to begin with, a background paper on the need for the MOU upgrading was required, to in effect convince the Ministers that a Ministerial Council was the way to proceed. The paper would cover previous legal advice, the need for more formal funding arrangements, and the non-enforceable aspect of the proposed upgrading. It was recognized that the concept of a Ministerial Council would need to be supported and pushed by each agency, and the usefulness of a Ministerial Council in assessing the reports on international significance of the Alps could also be noted (but to also emphasise that this was not a critical reason for the formation of the Council). The paper was to be prepared as a matter of urgency. Two months later, at its June 1989 meeting, following discussions with ANPWS legal advisers, the AALC agreed that legislation remained a long-term goal and that each agency would work towards this end through the Committee; and that an exchange of letters between the State Premiers and the Prime Minister, to upgrade the present Agreement, should be sought.

However, on May 5, 1989, a meeting was held at Kosciuszko National Park between Tim Moore (NSW Minister for Environment), Tom Roper (Victorian Minister for Planning and Environment) and Kay Setches (Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands). They concluded that, for the immediate future, the existing arrangements should remain and that the MOU should be pushed to its fullest potential. It was agreed that the MOU should be redrafted, with the proclamation of the Victorian Alpine National Park providing an ideal opportunity to boost cross-border initiatives with the gathering of Ministers for a re-signing. In spite of the position

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21 The ANPWS suggested that a Ministerial Council would signal an upgrade in commitment to the Program and would formulate a requirement for the Ministers to meet regularly.
taken by the Ministers, the AALC (28.6.89) agreed that it should still keep before it the development of legislative arrangements to ‘firm-up’ the MOU. In this regard, the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement should be looked at closely as a potential model. Different options continued to be considered. The May 1990 AALC meeting agreed that, rather than upgrading the MOU, the formation of a Ministerial Council was the preferred way to go “at this time”. At a meeting of ministers on 26.4.91, a proposal to strengthen the arrangements through the establishment of a formal Alps Commission (which seems to have came from the Alpine Parks Advisory Committees) was rejected, the Ministers sticking with the MOU.

Gradually, the position taken by the ministers gained precedence over other views. On December 17, 1992, the Heads of Agencies discussed possible negotiations towards more formal arrangements for the Australian Alps national parks beyond the MOU. They agreed, however, that the MOU was beginning to work well and that, in the light of the then uncertain political future and possible ministerial changes, it was important to work on further strengthening the MOU arrangements rather than pursuing a legislative approach. Finally, on the position of alternatives to the MOU, at a ministerial meeting on 3.11.94, “All Ministers agreed that the MOU is operating well and that a formal inter-government cooperative management agreement is not required at present”. This position has not changed.
Chapter 7. Changing the Memorandum of Understanding

Since the signing of the original MOU in 1986, it has been revised on four occasions. This chapter outlines the evolution of the MOU through the changes that have been made and the reasons for the changes.

The 1989 Revision
The first revision was undertaken in 1989, the result of a number of recent and imminent developments (see Appendix 4). Primary amongst these were the establishment of the Victorian Alpine National Park and the gaining of self-government for the ACT in 1989. Apart from accommodating these changes, the MOU was essentially unchanged. It should be noted that the 1989 MOU terminated the original one, essentially because of the entry of the ACT following self-government; subsequent MOUs were amended and upgraded.

The revised MOU was carried by a small group of people on the Great Alpine Trek, which covered some 700 km from Parliament House in Canberra to Snowy Plains in Gippsland, and signed along the way.22 The Trek was launched in the front of Parliament House by Clyde Holding (Minister for the Arts, Tourism and Territories) on November 2, 1989. The signatories to the revised MOU were Graham Richardson (Commonwealth, Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism and Territories), who signed the document in Canberra before going overseas; Ellnor Grassby (ACT, Housing and Urban Services), who signed in the Orroral Valley, Namadgi National Park, on November 3; Tim Moore (NSW, Planning and Environment), who signed at Charlotte Pass in Kosciusko National Park on November 9; and Kay Setches (Victoria, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands), who signed at the completion of the Trek on December 2, 1989, at the proclamation of the new Alpine National Park, at Snowy Plains, north of Licola.

Through the early to mid-1990s, there were various discussions – within and outside the AALC - about further changes to the MOU. Among the reasons were suggestions and support for additional Victorian protected areas to be included in the MOU. This in turn led to discussion of the need for an accepted definition of ‘national park’ in the context of the MOU, though nothing emerged. At their July 25, 1990, meeting, the Heads of Agencies agreed that a basis should be parks with common boundaries; “a basis for real national parks would be abutting parks on state borders”. In the absence of any clear statements, perhaps the reasons for this concern with common boundaries or contiguous parks was the wish not to dilute the national park concept with areas of perceived lesser conservation value (Neville Byrne, pers. com.) and perhaps the desire for one park. In terms of proceeding further, it was noted that whilst it was likely that the Minister and ANPWS would support a ‘national park’ approach, the Commonwealth would provide support rather than direct intervention by such means as a proclamation under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The 1996 Revision
At its May 1996 meeting, the AALC discussed a further revision of the MOU. Among the issues discussed was a proposal for NSW to prepare a submission for the new Brindabella National Park to be added to the Schedule of areas covered by the MOU, the area covered by the Park being the major northwesterly extension of the Australian Alps. The following month, the meeting of Ministers (21.6.96) agreed that Brindabella National Park should be included and that provision should be made to include other contiguous and compatible conservation reserves as they were gazetted. They also noted that as the MOU co-operative program was now managed under a three-year strategic plan (see Chapter 8), the MOU should be upgraded to reflect this approach, as well as incorporating approved new administrative arrangements.

The revised MOU (Appendix 5) was signed on November 29, 1996, by Robert Hill (Commonwealth Minister for the Environment), Marie Tehan (Victorian Minister for Conservation and Land Management), Pam Allen (NSW Minister for the Environment), and Garry

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22 The Trek was undertaken on foot, bicycle, ski, raft, horse, and 4WD. The core group was Sally Ferry (Leader), Harry Hill, Carrie Steffan, David Jones, Bob Wood, David Campbell, Sue Feore, and Deirdre Slattery, with others participating along the route. The Trek took a month to complete.
Humphries (ACT Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning). The major changes were as follows:

- the MOU reflected the new Commonwealth administrative arrangements;
- Clause 3.1 was re-written, with the requirement for a formal inter-government agreement being dropped;
- “tourism” was added to Clause 3.2(c), reflecting the Ministers’ concerns regarding the tourism industry (noted at the Heads of Agencies meeting on 6.11.96);
- Clause 4.1: for the protected areas, “appropriate” policies and management practices became “complementary” ones;
- Clause 4.2 dealing with consultation and cooperation was revised, and staff training was added;
- Clause 4.4 dealing with public participation was revised;
- a separate Clause 5 was introduced dealing with the Liaison Committee;
- a new Clause 6 was added dealing with Strategic Plans and Work Plans; and
- Clause 9 made provision for the inclusion of new contiguous and compatible conservation reserves in the MOU when they were gazetted.

Among other issues discussed were suggestions to broaden the membership of the AALC in order to have regular input from other stakeholders, such as tourism agencies, conservation organizations, adjacent land managers, national cultural agencies, and the scientific community.

The 1998 Revision
Over a period of some time, the AALC had discussed the inclusion in the program of alpine, sub-alpine and mountain reserves not adjoining existing Australian Alps protected areas. Examples included Mt Buffalo and Baw Baw National Parks in Victoria. Such a view was not universally accepted. At their meeting on 3.11.96, the “Ministers considered the proposal that Mount Buffalo and Baw Baw National Parks come under the ambit of the MOU. The proposal was rejected on the grounds that the MOU was clearly meant to apply to contiguous reserves in the Australian Alps and, as such, Buffalo and Baw Baw, which do not adjoin any of the reserves currently covered by the MOU, do not qualify for inclusion”. There was no use of the term ‘contiguous’ in the original ‘Framework’, the Victorian parks that pre-dated and were incorporated into the Alpine National Park were not contiguous and yet were covered by the original MOU. The use of the word and the concept in earlier years was far from clear.

However, the discussions continued, such as at the 13.11.97 meeting of the AALC regarding the inclusion of Mt Buffalo National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, ACT, in the MOU. In keeping with international best practice, the Committee agreed with the concept of managing and viewing the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program on a biogeographical and regional level, rather than a series of discrete parks and reserves which are simply contiguous with one another. This view was fully endorsed by the Ministers. It was a change that represented “a significant development in terms of viewing and managing the Australian Alps national parks on a regional basis” (AALC 1999, 26).

The revised MOU (Appendix 6) was signed on November 6, 1998, at the Mt Buffalo National Park Centenary Celebrations by Robert Hill (Commonwealth Minister for the Environment), Pam Allen (NSW Minister for the Environment), Brendan Smyth (ACT Minister for Urban Services), and Marie Tehan (Victorian Minister for Conservation and Land Management). Among the changes to the MOU were the following:

- Part 5 of the preliminary statements included the biogeographical unit concept as the basis for the inclusion of protected areas under the MOU;
- Clause 1 stated that all matters being conducted under earlier versions of the MOU would continue (recognition of the evolving nature of the program under a succession of amended memoranda);
- Clause 2.5 set out a new ‘Vision’ for the Australian Alps co-operative program;
- Clause 3.2 stated an expectation that management of the Australian Alps should be best-practice; the concept of ‘alpine’ was extended to alpine and sub-alpine environments;
- Clause 6.1 set out the requirement for a three-year Strategic Plan and clarified the roles of the Heads of Agencies and Ministers;
- Clause 6.2 determined that annual work programs be developed;
- Clauses 6.3 and 6.4 defined a review process and preparation of an annual report;
- Clause 9 made provision for the inclusion in Schedule 1 of any national park, nature
reserve, wilderness area or other conservation reserve containing alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems or communities. The amendment removed the restrictive word ‘contiguous’ of previous MOUs; and
- Schedule 1: the addition of Victoria’s Mt Buffalo National Park.

The 2003 Revision

Discussions continued at meetings of the AALC and the Heads of Agencies regarding many aspects of the MOU and the activities of the Cooperative Management Program. There was the key question of which parks, other reserves and even areas currently outside protected areas should be included. For example, at the Heads of Agencies meeting on 29.4.02, it was agreed that the ACT should prepare a nomination for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve to be included in the Agreement and that the case for the inclusion of Victoria’s Baw Baw National Park should be assessed, including investigation of support from the local community. A further point was that there has never been any criteria by which to determine which areas are covered by the program, except for the early “contiguous” requirement, which ignored other alpine and sub-alpine reserves. The focus on parks and other protected areas has also left out proclaimed historic areas, such as Mt Wills, Grant, Mt Murphy, and Howqua Hills, all of which are contiguous with the Alpine National Park, as well as other areas of public land that could be included. In response to these issues, the Heads of Agencies, at the 29.4.02 meeting, agreed to “determine criteria for protected areas to qualify as part of the MOU and for those criteria to be suggested as an amendment to the MOU”. In the absence of such criteria, there have never been any clear reasons why some areas are included and others not included in the program.

Another important issue raised by both the Heads of Agencies and the AALC was that of greater recognition of Aboriginal heritage values and of Aboriginal involvement in the program. At their April 2002 meeting, the Heads of Agencies considered raising the profile of the AALC with indigenous groups by seeking direction from them for the Alps Program, while the AALC (22.7.02) acknowledged the lack of mention of Aboriginal issues in the MOU and noted that the program’s Cultural Heritage Working Group (see Chapter 11) had prepared a clause for inclusion in the MOU relating to Aboriginal issues. At its 22.7.02 meeting, the AALC appointed a Task Force to prepare a draft revision of the MOU.

The revised MOU was signed in Melbourne on May 23, 2003, by Dr David Kemp, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Commonwealth of Australia, Bob Debus, Minister for the Environment, New South Wales, Jon Stanhope, Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, ACT, and John Thwaites, Minister for the Environment, Victoria (Appendix 7). In the words of the NSW Minister for Environment, Bob Debus, “the re-signing was about refinement and further cooperation”. There is a clearer focus on a whole of landscape approach to the management of the Australian Alps. The new document contains a clearer statement of the program’s working arrangements and a much greater emphasis on cooperative and coordinated management. Clause 4.6 states “the agencies will co-operate to establish and implement processes for consultation with Aboriginal communities and foster their participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks”. Whilst specific reference to the “national” significance and values of the Alps has been dropped, Clause 4.11 states “the agencies will collectively strive to identify opportunities for the recognition of regional, national and international significance values of the Australian Alps national parks”. Baw Baw National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve have been added to the protected areas covered by the MOU.
Chapter 8. Putting the MOU into Operation

By signing the MOU, the Ministers committed themselves and their agencies to a number of objectives and a set of ‘working arrangements’, in effect, a cooperative management program for the Australian Alps national parks. The achievement of the objectives and the realisation of the working arrangements involve all levels of agency staff, from those on the ground through the heads of the government agencies to the responsible Ministers, usually those concerned with the environment portfolios. However, even though successive revisions of the MOU have set out the working arrangements in more detail, the structure as set out in the AALC’s annual reports is not so evident in the MOU (Figure 8.1). This observation relates particularly to the place of the Ministers and the Heads of Agencies.

The Australian Alps Liaison Committee

Of critical importance is the one forum prescribed in the MOU, the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC). “The function of this committee is to facilitate development, co-ordination, and implementation of co-operative management programs, including but not limited to the annual co-operative works program and other arrangements under [the] Memorandum of Understanding” (Clause 5), in essence the cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks. Each agency is represented on the Committee by “a senior officer”. The Committee has overall responsibility for the efficient and effective operation of the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program. The AALC regularly monitors progress with projects conducted under the program, approves the range of projects in the annual works program, and directs the work of the Program Coordinator and Working Groups within the overall context of the Alps program [see below]. .... The AALC members are senior managers with direct responsibility for implementing the projects and outcomes of the cooperative management program within the Australian Alps national parks. These senior officers are able to approve the involvement of field staff in the various programs, training and projects that make up the Australian Alps cooperative program” (News from the Alps 20, 1999, 1).

“The success of the committee is dependent on the capacity of members to make decisions on behalf of their agency. Without this level of representation the committee would have difficulty operating” (Mackay and Worboys 1995). Whereas the earlier MOUs set out the formation of the AALC, the 2003 revision states that the parties to the agreement will “maintain” the Committee.

As indicated previously, various committees were formed before the Howmans Gap working meeting and the report of that meeting stated that a liaison committee “will continue to meet” (Davies 1986, 19). The ‘Framework for Cooperation’ made provision for such a committee and a number of meetings were held in early to mid-1986, when such matters as the MOU, a cooperative work program, and an Alpine Parks Newsletter were discussed. The first formal meeting of the AALC set up by the MOU was held at the Wodonga offices of the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands on September 11, 1986.\(^{23}\) The members were as follows:
- Neville Gare, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (Convenor);
- Roger Good, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- Andy Turner, ACT Parks and Conservation Service; and
- Ian Weir, Victoria Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

At this first meeting they agreed to meet twice a year (March and September), but as the complexity of the co-operative program grew, this increased to four times a year in 1991.

Early on, it became the practice for two officers from each agency to attend meetings and in late 1991 (15.11.91), it was agreed that, as a general rule, there would be one member and one observer from each agency. The following year (11.9.92), this was changed to one member and one alternate member. From the Committee’s inception, the Commonwealth agency member was the Convenor and the agency has also provided the Secretary. In 1994 (25.2.94), there was discussion about rotating the positions of Convenor and Secretary, but no change was made. As part of other changes (see Chapter 10), the Commonwealth member ceased to be the permanent convenor in 2000 and the position now rotates between members, though the provision of secretariat support has remained with

\(^{23}\) Informal Liaison Committee meetings had been held on 30.1.86 and 2.5.86.
Figure 8.1  Australian Alps Cooperative Management Structure

Conservation Ministers
Commonwealth  ACT  NSW  Victoria

Heads of Park Management Agencies
Commonwealth  ACT  NSW  Victoria

Australian Alps Liaison Committee
One representative from each Agency

Program Coordinator
Seconded from participating land management agency

Community Relations Working Group
Natural Heritage Working Group
Recreation and Tourism Working Group
Cultural Heritage Working Group

Community Projects Officer
Australian Alps Walking Track Committee

Source: AALC 2001, 8.
the Commonwealth agency (Clause 9 in the MOU).

The membership of the AALC has changed frequently over the years, though a number of long-standing members have provided continuity (for a detailed list of AALC members, see Appendix 8). In spite of the changes and the “often different perspectives on park management priorities, there is a strong degree of agreement and consistency in the decision-making of the AALC” (Byrne 1998).

Heads of Agencies and Ministers
There are no provisions in the MOU for meetings of the relevant government Ministers. Whilst the Ministers are kept informed of the work of the Alps program, through progress updates and the annual reports, meetings to specifically discuss matters relating to the Australian Alps have been very infrequent, usually only in relation to the revision of the MOU and/or a major event in the Alps. At the Ministers meeting on 3.11.94, it was acknowledged that they should meet “more frequently” and it was suggested and agreed that meetings should coincide with every second Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) meeting. However, this has not eventuated and there has been little if any change. Whether or not the relevant Ministers should meet more frequently, on a regular basis, or simply when required, is open to debate. The most recent meeting on 23.5.03 was termed the Australian Alps Ministerial Council.

An external review of the AALC and cooperative management program undertaken in 1997 suggested specific roles for the Ministers and Heads of Agencies in the program, as well as for the AALC (AACM 1997, 46). These are discussed in Chapter 10.

Program Coordinator
The early 1990s saw a number of important developments for the operation of the cooperative management program. Of critical importance was the appointment of a Program Coordinator, the program’s only full-time position. It was discussed and agreed to by the AALC at its 23.3.91 meeting, with agreement at the Ministers meeting on 26.4.91. Initially, the position was named ‘Project Officer’, but by the next AALC meeting (23.3.91), the name was ‘Program Officer’ and shortly after that, ‘Program Coordinator’. The first detailed discussion of the Program Coordinator’s position by the AALC appears to have been at the 22.5.91 meeting, covering such matters as the duty statement, payment, on-costs, etc., and agreement that the position be rotated around the agencies involved every one to two years, a term later extended to three years. Rotating the position has contributed much to raising awareness of the program and to improving communication between the agencies. The tradition of rotating the position continued until 2001, when the second person in a row from ACT Parks and Conservation was appointed, though Virginia Logan does work from the NSW NPWS offices of Kosciuszko National Park in Jindabyne (for names of Coordinators, see Appendix 9).

The position is central to the program and critical to the implementation of the MOU. At their meeting in late 1993 (30.11.93), the Heads of Agencies agreed that the fact that the MOU was working so well, was “due in great part to the existence of the Program Coordinator and, particularly, a Coordinator drawn from the field”. One of the people interviewed termed the Program Coordinator ‘the lynchpin of the program’, stating that each Coordinator had brought different skills to the position. The Coordinator was the reason for much of the program’s achievements. It is hardly surprising that it has been observed “the coordinator needs good networks through the agencies, a sound understanding of the Australian Alps context, and an intimate knowledge of agency structures and procedures” (AACM 1997, 14). The main tasks of the position have been identified as follows (Mackay and Worboys 1995; see also AACM 1997, 14-17):
management of the program and budget;
- assisting and cajoling working groups with their projects, including a proportion of project management;
- advising the AALC and agency staff where necessary on the program;
- drafting policies and procedures;
- liaising with staff in agencies on the program and identifying priority areas to ensure the success of the program;
- maximizing communication about the program;
- preparing the newsletter and annual report; and
- specific project management.

An independent review of the cooperative management for the Australian Alps concluded that "the Program Coordinator is an appropriate and cost-effective mechanism for facilitating cooperation and coordination. As the nature of parks management evolves in Australia, and the nature of AALC investment matures, there will be an increasing need for the Program Coordinator in the AALC structure" (AACM 1997, 16). However, this has not removed concerns by both the AALC (16.8.00) and the Heads of Agencies (23.11.00) about the costs of the position (salary, on-costs and expenses), which are a major component of the program’s total budget (see Chapter 9). There is also concern about the fact that the higher salary scales in NSW compared with the other agencies means that it is extremely difficult to attract people from NSW to take the position at its present level of remuneration.

Not surprisingly, as the overall program has developed, the role of the Program Coordinator has changed over time.

From initial promotion of the AALC concept and development of practical responses to the original MOU, the role has become one of managing the investment cycle, steering regional field staff towards development and implementation of AALC activities which meet the interests of the AALC generally, and administering the operation of AALC investments” (AACM 1997, 16).

At the AALC meeting on 15.2.2000, it was suggested that the position become a ‘Development Officer’, perhaps at a higher level, but no change has eventuated.

Community Projects Officer
The AALC also employs a part-time Community Projects Officer (which has been variously named a Media Officer and Community Education Officer) (Appendix 10). The person “is responsible for: the coordination of launches to promote Alps products and activities; media releases; managing the Australian Alps worldwide web page; responding to emails and, in collaboration with the working groups [see below], developing extension material and managing projects that are at the community interface with the program” (AALC 2001, 12). Supporting the work of the Community Relations and Recreation and Tourism Working Groups is particularly important. The position is also important in terms of maintaining the profile of the program in the wider community.

Working Groups
The brief of the MOU and AALC is a large one; no one group of people could satisfactorily cover all that it involves. Hence a number of working groups bring together people with specialist expertise to cover the broadly-defined major areas of activity as well as specific ones. For reasons that will become evident, the organisation, membership and general nature of the working groups have been the subject of much discussion, particularly within the AALC and the groups themselves, as well as beyond them.

In conjunction with the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, the working groups play a major role in the implementation of the Alps cooperative management program. Their responsibilities include “developing new projects in the key result areas as outlined in the strategic plan, recommending priority projects for AALC funding, and managing projects through outsourcing or in-house means” (AALC 2001, 11). They also provide advice to the AALC and agencies on their areas of responsibility. As is discussed later in this Chapter, the number of working groups and their areas of concern have changed over the years.

Membership of the working groups is based on a number of unwritten criteria. There is generally an equitable spread of persons from the agencies involved in the program. They are selected on the basis of the technical skills and expertise they can contribute to the group, with a balance of practical experience and specialist knowledge. Thus from
within each agency, there is generally a mix of field-based and ‘office’ staff (from head office and regional offices), but with a focus on experienced ‘field-based’ staff (though clearly this does not apply to the Commonwealth agency members). 25 One member of each group serves as the convenor, having responsibility for the work and organization of the group. “Membership of the working groups also encourages professional development and fosters a holistic approach to viewing and managing the Australian Alps national parks” (AALC 2001, 11). The number of members in each group has varied over the years. Early on, the AALC “agreed that, as a general principle, membership of working groups should comprise one representative from each agency” (11.9.92), though it had earlier been noted that “Given the broad scope anticipated in the terms of reference of the Natural Resources Working Group and the range of issues from science to management, [there] should be one or two representatives from each agency” (23.6.92). There are now normally two members from each agency in each group.

Despite their contributions, the working groups are by no means free of problems. These were made clear in an independent review of the program (see Chapter 10). For example:

Working Groups are comprised of self-selected, and hence motivated, parks staff, who perform their roles in a semi-volunteer manner, often in addition to their normal parks workload. They meet occasionally in person, and mostly electronically. Hence the working groups produce outputs with relatively low inputs – thus by this criteria they are efficient.

The weakness of this arrangement is that the conduct of working group business does suffer when there are direct conflicts with day-to-day work demands, resulting in haphazard performance (AACM 1997, 26).

Central to the problem is the varying degree to which ‘Alps work’ is regarded as a part of an individual officer’s duties. Some years ago, it was observed that “the Alps program can add a significant amount of work for some people and it is paramount that the cooperative program is endorsed and recognized in the regional strategies of individual agencies, and the work programs of staff” (Mackay and Worboys 1995). However, the recognition clearly varies, both between and within agencies. There is stated support at the Ministerial and Heads of Agencies levels. For example, the record of the 28.10.97 Heads of Agencies meeting stated:

the working group process was working well with field staff involvement. Agencies were asked to support working group meetings and allow their staff to attend meetings.

The following questions were confirmed: agencies should provide travel budgets for members to attend working group meetings, unless exceptional circumstances arose, and participation in a working group should be recognized as an integral part of the member’s work plan.

At the following Heads of Agencies meeting (6.11.98), the Liaison Committee members “reported that the Alps responsibilities have been incorporated into corporate business plans and personal performance plans”. However, for a host of reasons, the reality of the situation can be and often is quite different. Not only are there too few staff, the very nature of the work of field-based staff can make it very difficult for them to do all that it is needed (see Chapter 14 for further discussion).

There are also problems of communications, in a number of directions. At times, these have existed between the AALC and the working groups, a matter identified by the independent review (AACM 1997, 20) and one discussed by the Liaison Committee on a number of occasions. There is also a need for better communication between the various working groups. Further, there needs to be better communication between working group members and their agency colleagues.

Over the years, various options have been suggested to alleviate some of the problems associated with the working groups. Whilst they have been an integral part of the Alps program since its inception, as early as 10.6.88, the AALC discussed whether or not certain working groups should be retained and whether or not other mechanisms to deal with issues should be examined. At the 27.3.92 AALC meeting, it was “suggested that the current system of working groups and their restricted terms of reference is not necessarily conducive to coverage of the wide range of issues considered under the MOU”. An alternative could be “a series of task forces appointed to progress specific projects or

25 The mix of staff provides for important links into the head offices of agencies and into such organizations as the heritage and parks sections of Environment Australia.
programs and annual review of those groups to assess the continued requirement for them”. Members of the working groups could be lead persons from each agency backed by an internal network of qualified people (24.3.93). Also discussed has been the need for a set period of time for membership of working groups, with an annual review of membership by the AALC. Whilst the latter now appears to be being undertaken, no action has been taken on regular changes in the actual membership.

Following the independent review and discussions by the AALC, a paper prepared for the Heads of Agencies meeting on 6.11.98 brought together many of the key issues relating the working groups.

One of the weaknesses in the operation of the MOU was support by agency executives without recognition of the time and effort needed to implement working group activities. A suggested contributing factor was the weak integration of AALC and agency work plans (AACM 1997, 6). The issue needs to be addressed and there are several identifiable options, the first being:

- Support by agency executives (including line managers) with recognition of the time and effort needed to implement working group activities. This may involve formal consolidation of Alps workload into core responsibilities for the branch, section and individual officers. Associated corollaries are: the realistic appointment of working group members who can contribute the time; and integration of AALC and agency work plans.

In the absence of this recognition and commitment to the Alps program by agency line managers, it may be necessary to consider:

- Secondment of agency staff to part or full time Alps work. This may justify streamlining working groups to a quorum of one member per agency. This option may consume more agency resources but will conserve Alps funds;
- Employment of casual and contract personnel for specific functions, e.g. project supervision. This option will conserve agency funds at the expense of Alps funding; or
- A combination of the above under specific circumstances, to best progress the objectives of the MOU within the funding and time constraints.

[Emphasis in original.]

In spite of the many discussions, no significant changes have been made to the working group structure. There is no doubt that they work well and that they are one of the keys to the success of the cooperative management program; the IUCN has identified them as one of the strengths of the MOU (Hamilton et al. 1996). If any changes are made, the involvement of field staff must be ensured, as the groups are one of the strengths of the MOU and the program (3.3.97). However, as was observed at a Heads of Agencies meeting (4.2.2000), their success is largely due to “the high level of enthusiasm and dedication of field staff, mostly out of work hours”.

The working groups and their issues

As indicated earlier (Chapter 5), the Howmans Gap meeting identified a program for future action on cooperative management in the Australian Alps, the five parts of the program being written into the ‘Framework for Cooperation’. Following this meeting and the one at Charlotte Pass (Good 1987), five working groups were established and subsequently formalized by the AALC:

- Public awareness and codes of ethics;
- Horse riding and trails;
- Cultural resources;
- Fire management; and
- Feral animals and pest plants.

They were set up to deal with issues initially identified as critical to the co-operative management of the Australian Alps. As the needs of the program developed and priorities changed, so have the number and focus of the working groups (for details of the working groups since the inception of the program, see Appendix 11). Not all of the changes and the reasons for them appear to have been documented.

In early 1989 (5.4.89), the Public Awareness and Codes of Ethics Working Group was wound up and replaced by one concerned with Community Awareness; the Fire Management Working Group was wound up and changed to one dealing with Data Bases. By the early 1991 AALC meeting (7.2.91), there were Community Awareness, Recreational Trails, Pest Species, Water Quality, and Cultural Resources working groups. At the next AALC meeting (22.5.91), the terms of reference for the Recreational Trails Working Groups were considered too narrow and “the scope of the Group’s work [was] widened to include recreation generally”. Further, it was decided that the Community Awareness Working Group “should concentrate on education, interpretation and publicity while the Recreation Trails Working Group would expand its role to consider
appropriate tourism-related projects”. By early 1992 (27.3.92), there were Community Awareness, Water Quality Studies, Law Enforcement, Cultural Resources, Recreation and Tourism, and Pest Species working groups. At the AALC meeting on 24.3.93, it was reported that the Water Quality Working Group had been disbanded in October 1992 due to a lack of interest, too many issues to cover, and a low priority with the agencies. It was believed that it was better to have a professional network to deal with specific problems. The decision and reasons were – and remain – surprising.

In 1993 (24.3.93), a new four working groups structure was determined. A new Natural Resources Working Group was formed, incorporating the work of the former Pest Species Working Group (which was disbanded). The Cultural Heritage and Community Relations working groups remained. The Recreation and Tourism Working Groups was renamed Facilities and Services. The Law Enforcement Working Group was disbanded after having completed its work. By 1997, an independent review of the program concluded that “The working groups are a sensible reflection of the objectives of the MOU and the practical needs in managing the Australian Alps national parks” (AACM 1997, 18). These four working groups have remained and continue in operation, though with revised names: Natural Heritage, Cultural Heritage, Community Relations, and Recreation and Tourism.

Other activities
A number of other activities that can be regarded as contributing to the operations of the co-operative management program for the Australian Alps merit mention. There have been a small number of exchanges of park rangers and other staff between agencies arranged through the program. These have clearly been of great benefit to those who have participated as well as to their agencies. Whilst the number of people who will be able to participate is small, it is something that should be facilitated and encouraged. The twice-yearly newsletter, News from the Alps, is an important means of keeping people informed about the program, both within and beyond the agencies.

26 Up to and including Issue no. 17, 1998, it was known as the Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter.

There were community-based advisory committees for at least three of the Australian Alps national parks, Namadgi, Kosciuszko and Victoria’s Alpine, and there were occasional meetings of the chairpersons of the committees with the AALC. The first such meeting was held at Khancoban in March 1987, in conjunction with an AALC meeting. Records of meetings contain comments on the desirability of regular meetings between the AALC and the advisory committees (or at least with their chairpersons), even with the Ministers. At its meeting on 2.4.96, the AALC determined that such meetings should take place at least once a year, but there are no records of any subsequent meetings. That this important means of community communication and consultation has not continued is surprising, especially given statements in the MOU and statements from Ministers (e.g. 5.6.89 and Clause 4.8 in the 2003 MOU). Whilst there is now a Snowy Mountains Region Advisory Committee, it is not clear if committees exist for other parks or regions.

**Guiding the work of the MOU**
As has been indicated, a number of other developments took place concurrent with and following the first revision of the MOU in 1989. The early 1990s was a key time in the history of the program. The employment of the Program Coordinator and further development of the working groups have already been discussed. The Liaison Committee agreed on a logo for the program (16.8.91). Two other measures were also of critical importance, the development of a three-year cooperative management plan and the establishment of a central fund with financial contributions from each of the agencies.

**Cooperative Management Program, 1990-1993**
From the records of the meetings, it would appear that the idea of a three-year co-operative management program originated at a meeting of NSW and Victorian ministers and senior parks agencies staff held on May 5, 1989, at Waste Point.
in Kosciuszko National Park. The idea was discussed by the AALC at its meetings over the second half of 1989. At the 28.6.89 meeting, key elements of the Plan were identified, including:

- Objectives: to foster protection, enjoyment and better understanding, and increase expertise in management; and
- Key Themes/Strategies: community awareness; visitor services and facilities; reserve conservation; management expertise; and international/national significance.

Discussions at the 11.10.89, 4.12.89 and early 1990 meetings led to agreement on four main strategies to achieve the objectives of the MOU through a Co-operative Management Program (see Appendix 12):

1. Development of increased community awareness through such measures as an Alps video, codes of behaviour brochures, schools information kit, and preparation of an education program;
2. Provision of visitor facilities and services, such as an Australian Alps recreational trail, water quality studies (to protect water quality and user health), and visitor use profiles;
3. Conservation of natural and cultural resources, including a symposium on cultural heritage conservation and interpretation and the working group on weeds and feral animals; and
4. Enhancement of management expertise, through training programs for interpretation of Alpine values and environments and cross-border law enforcement interstate ranger exchange.

Developed in consultation with each of the management agencies, the three-year Program came into effect on July 1, 1990. It prescribed co-operative management directions and programs for the Australian Alps national parks and reserves. The Program detailed a number of particular projects which would probably have been more appropriately dealt with in the annual works programs.

**Strategic Plans for the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps**

In 1993, the Program became the Strategic Plan. Since then, the AALC has adopted a strategic planning approach to the consideration of annual projects under the MOU.

The strategic plan identifies the main areas for work under the MOU including key result areas, outcomes, strategic actions and performance measures for each key result area. The strategic plan is the primary guide for consideration of project proposals by the AALC and Working Groups (News from the Alps, 20, 1999, 2).

Thus the purpose of the first and subsequent Strategic Plans was and is to guide the work of the program and address the major issues in co-operative management of the Australian Alps national parks. Thus

The AALC is keen to ensure that the updating of the strategic plan should be considered every three years to ensure that there is the opportunity for new foci and emphases in cross-border management, while maintaining continuity of primary directions and programs. Heads of Agencies, Working Group members, field staff and Alps stakeholders will be involved in the development of the new strategic plan (News from the Alps, 20, 1999, 2).

The first Plan covered the period 1993-96. Two subsequent three-year plans have been undertaken (1996-1999 and 2000-2003), and a further one is in the early stages of preparation. The plans have demonstrated the gradual evolution of strategic planning by the AALC.

The four strategies identified in the Program became ‘key result areas’ in 1992-93 and for the period 1993-96. There were subsequent changes in some of these, at least in name. In 1992, ‘Resource Conservation’ became ‘Conservation of Natural and Cultural Resources’, becoming ‘Resource and Cultural Heritage’ in 1994-95. The following year it was separated into ‘Resource Conservation’ and ‘Natural and Cultural Heritage’, and in 1997, the names were changed to ‘Natural Heritage Conservation’ and Cultural Heritage Conservation’.

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28 The meeting was convened to discuss cooperative arrangements across the border between Kosciuszko National Park and the Victorian national parks, though the discussions went further. Among those present were Tim Moore (NSW, Planning and Environment), Tom Roper (Victoria, Planning and Environment), and Kay Setches (Victoria, Conservation, Forests and Lands). Agency officers included Don Saunders (Victoria) and Graeme Worboys and Ross McKinney (NSW).
The 1993-96 Strategic Plan was set out in the AALC’s Annual Report for 1993-94 (see Appendix 13) (AALC 1994, 6-8). The Plan was developed during late 1992 and the first half of 1993, but from the records of its meetings, seems to have been the subject of very little discussion by the AALC. A draft Plan was placed in the Newsletter, but a request for comment brought no response. By the AALC meeting on 23.6.93, it was obviously finalised, as it was agreed to publish a brochure detailing the Plan.

The main parts of the Plan were set out in terms of four Key Results Areas (KRAs), much the same as the strategies of the previous Co-operative Management Program, namely Community Awareness, Resource Conservation, Visitor Facilities and Services, and Management Expertise. The statements were shorter and more precise than the previous document, and expressed in general terms. The Plan acknowledged that if the Vision and Mission statements of the MOU and the Plan were to be achieved, a number of principles had to be adopted and a number of things had to be in place by 1996.

Strategic Plan for 1996-1999
As part of the development of the 1996-99 Strategic Plan, an audit of the 1993-96 Plan indicated that while most targets had been achieved, there were some strategies which needed continued effort to
- improve and increase community awareness of the importance of the Australian Alps and the productive outcomes of the co-operative management program;
- understand the cultural heritage values of Australian Alps against international criteria;
- document and set-out priorities for the treatment of key threatening processes; and
- expand education programs to further reduce visitor impacts.

These areas were incorporated into the 1996-99 strategic plan. There was wide consultation in the preparation of plan, especially with working groups and field staff, in recognition of the fact that the co-operative program would be far less effective without their support.

At their annual meeting (6.11.96), the Heads of Agencies gave detailed consideration to the Plan, which was endorsed in principle on the understanding that it will be reviewed in the coming year with greater emphasis on outcomes, links with agency budget requirements and dealings with Aboriginal communities. Subject to an operational review, amendments may be made to the Strategic Plan.

A number of particular points are of interest in the context of the particular plan itself and of future issues:
- The need to develop a more strategic approach to Aboriginal involvement in Alps cooperative management.
- Greater emphasis should be given to ensuring inputs generate the kinds of outcomes sought from the cooperative nature of the arrangements.
- It was also suggested that in the future that the AALC may adopt an even more strategic approach so that they may seek to fund pre-determined priorities rather than simply respond to project nominations as is the current framework. It may also be necessary to be more proactive in seeking additional financial support. It may mean that worthwhile projects may require multi-year financial commitments and for the committee to identify clear priorities, so that if budgets decrease available funds are committed to supporting priority agency projects. Heads of Agencies will have a clear role in approving budgets and will be looking for clearly defined management outcomes.

In the view of the Ministers, key points in the 1996-99 Plan were “improving visitor facilities and services in the national parks, increasing community awareness, participation and enjoyment, bolstering natural and cultural heritage conservation, and improving the level of management expertise” (Ministers’ Media Release 28.11.96).

Strategic Plan for 2000-2003
In an early Heads of Agencies discussion on the Strategic Plan for 2000-2003 (6.11.98), the executive officers were asked where they wanted the Alps to be in five years time. They were also told that working group members need to have a sense of ownership of the goals and performance indicators for the program. Among the responses to the question, it was noted that the Ministers were keen to see outcomes “on the ground”, while

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29 Unless there were AALC or other meetings for which no records have been seen. This is certainly true with respect to the AALC meeting on 1.12.93. No minutes for this meeting were located or for any other meeting that may have been held in the second half of 1993.
the vision should widen from agencies to the broader community. It was also suggested that the AALC should be promoting international awareness of the program’s achievements and strive to keep the MOU and program at the cutting edge. Other issues raised were establishing a monitoring program and establishing partnerships with tertiary institutions. Through to the first half of 2000, considerable effort was devoted to the new Strategic Plan, much more so than with previous plans, with two workshops, an AALC Task Force, and an extended discussion at the 22.4.99 AALC meeting. The preparation benefited from the independent review (AACM 1997). By early 2000, the plan was endorsed by the Heads of Agencies (2.4.00) The 2000-2003 Strategic Plan was a much longer and more sophisticated document than previous ones, demonstrating the progress that had been made in strategic planning by the AALC and the cooperative program (Appendix 14). It outlined the background to the plan and the achievements to date, the vision and mission statements, a situational analysis (detailing the current opportunities and threats), the structures to implement the Plan, and details of the six Key Results Areas through which the objectives of the Plan would be achieved. In brief, these are as follows:

1. **Natural Heritage Conservation**
   Outcome: An improved understanding and enhanced management of the natural ecosystems of the Australian Alps national parks.
   Responsibility: Natural Heritage Working Group.

2. **Recreation and Tourism Management**
   Outcome: Implementation of contemporary approaches to visitor and tourism management, through supporting best-practice, sustainable use and minimal impact philosophy and principles.

3. **Community Awareness**
   Outcome: Key audiences are aware of the unique natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks as a single biogeographical entity, the management actions that are necessary to protect these intrinsic values, and the cross-border management program and its achievements.
   Responsibility: Community Relations Working Group.

4. **Cultural Heritage Conservation**
   Outcome: An improved understanding of the unique Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps national parks which is incorporated into effective protection and management programs.
   Responsibility: Cultural heritage Working Group.

5. **Australian Alps Development Program**
   Outcome: To ensure that the Australian Alps national park program is well managed, maintains its effectiveness and operates within the relevant policy context of each participating agency.
   Responsibility: Australian Alps Liaison Committee.

6. **Management Expertise**
   Outcome: Staff, volunteers and other park-based workers are knowledgeable about the values of the Australian Alps, and are skilled in the best-practice techniques for managing the natural environment, cultural resources, visitors and threats to the Australian Alps national parks.
   Responsibility: Program Coordinator.

**The Next Strategic Plan**
Initial work has commenced on the next Plan. Among other things, the AALC will “try to enhance the strengths of the program as well as ensuring its effective delivery and incorporation into the on-ground management of the agencies” (News from the Alps, 28, 2002, 6). The Plan will have to give emphasis to what is needed by the parks and other protected areas, at the same time as providing scope for the incorporation of worthwhile projects put forward by parks staff.

**A longer-term viewpoint?**
In the context of discussions of the 1996-1999 Strategic Plan (1.4.96), the AALC gave consideration to a long-term strategic plan covering a period of 25 years (see Appendix 15). It was pointed out that in developing the MOU, the idea of an Alps-wide management plan (to cover all Australian Alps national parks) was proposed but ultimately rejected. However, a more realistic option would be to have a long-term Alps-wide Strategy against which individual park management plans could be reviewed and updated. Such a long-term approach could be backed up with 3-5 year works plans to address issues in the strategy.

The proposal was welcomed by the chairpersons of the Advisory Committees in a joint meeting with the AALC (2.4.96). Although it was stated that there was to be a report on the proposal, it was not mentioned again in minutes of the AALC. Some further explanation is certainly merited.
Chapter 9. Doing the Work

Thus far, consideration has been given to the administrative arrangements for undertaking the cooperative management program. This chapter is concerned with the way the work of the program is undertaken. There are three parts to it: the annual work programs; the funding of the programs; and Commonwealth involvement.

The annual work programs
As has been indicated, the MOU and the Strategic Plans make provision for an annual work program (or for one covering some other agreed period). In the original MOU, Clause 3.7 stated, among other things, “A co-operative work plan for each year or other agreed period will be submitted to the Ministers by the Committee for approval prior to implementation”. The same or similar statements have been contained in subsequent revisions of the Memorandum, though there is no longer a requirement for Ministerial approval. However, the 2003 revision contained much clearer direction regarding the works program, stating in Clauses 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 that the AALC “will ensure”

- that an Australian Alps national parks co-operative works program is developed consistent with the Strategic Plan for each financial year;
- that the primary focus of the annual co-operative works program is to foster innovation and best practice in the areas of policy and management planning, education, training, research and performance measurement;
- that the annual cooperative works program is consistent with and incorporated into the management programs undertaken by the Agencies.

The first co-operative work program for the year 1986-87 covered a variety of activities, grouped into six areas: Information and Education (e.g. an education and information poster highlighting the Australian Alps parks and their values; a visitor code of behaviour for minimal impact use of the parks), Recreation (e.g. a workshop to determine appropriate facilities and services; the investigation of cross-border recreation access routes), Public Participation (e.g. agency exhibition of plans of management), Cultural Resources (e.g. examination of existing agency policies for cultural resource management), Natural Resources (e.g. computer mapping and modeling; fire management), and Management Plans (proposals for the Victorian Alpine Area).

There has been a gradual evolution in the nature of the work programs, particularly in terms of the kinds of projects that are undertaken and the ways in which they are selected. There is an annual call for projects, with all agency staff and others invited to submit proposals. The proposals are then grouped and considered by the relevant working groups, with each group ranking proposals covered by its area of work and making recommendations for funding to the AALC. Funds are then allocated by the AALC and approved by the Heads of Agencies. Through the 1990s, projects were selected on the basis of criteria related to their adherence to the strategic plan and objectives of the MOU; their relevance to the Alps as a whole; the finite, succinct nature of projects; their accordance with individual agency priorities; and their efficiency and cost effective nature. Once a proposal had been approved and received funding, “Project management [became] the responsibility of members of working groups or individuals within agencies or the Program Coordinator. Project officers with specific skills [were] employed on particular projects, generally under the supervision of the coordinator. Many projects [were] undertaken by consultants.” (Mackay and Worboys 1995).

There has been growing concern about the nature of the projects undertaken under the annual work programs. For example, at the AALC 7.4.97 meeting, there was “discussion on the relevance of projects to the Alps co-operative management agreement. The Liaison Committee considered it was important to focus on strategic projects that have relevant outcomes for managers”. However, the independent review of the AALC and its activities really focused attention on a number of problems in relation to the work programs (AACM 1997). It was noted that “the AALC has evolved to become an investor in projects” and that whilst “The strategic planning approach to project identification is effective. … there are a number of emerging trends which threaten the project identification and preparation processes” (AACM 1997, 18). Among the threats identified were the following:

- a trend towards investment in local rather than general issues: “because of declining resources available to rangers for on-ground works there is increasing demand for the use of AALC investments to fund local on-
ground works rather than strategic activities with application across the whole of the Australian Alps;  
- a trend towards preparation of projects without implementation commitment; and  
- poor linkages with the strategic plans (AACM 1997, 18-19).

The threats were not difficult to overcome, by  
- modifying the call for projects (emphasizing the need for links to Strategic Plan);  
- increasing the size of projects (many are very small); and  
- strengthening project monitoring and evaluation (AACM 1997, 19).

The AALC has given considerable attention to these matters. The annual ‘Call for Projects’ document has been significantly strengthened with clear attention given to the selection criteria, especially in terms of accordance with the Strategic Plan (Appendix 16). The second issue is more difficult. The recommendation for fewer and larger projects was supported by the Heads of Agencies at their meeting on 29.10.97, and the average size of projects is increasing. However, the fact cannot be ignored that small grants from the program are often the only funds available for many very worthwhile projects (a point taken up again later). The review had more to say on the third matter:  
The AALC currently has very limited project monitoring and evaluation capabilities. There is little proactive and systematic monitoring of project performance or evaluation of project outputs and outcomes.  
This is the most significant weakness in the AALC systems (AACM 1997, 24).

This is in spite of specific recognition being given in the MOU (clauses 6.1 and 6.5 in the 2003 revision) to review the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the co-operative work program. Progress has been made on this, but it remains a problem. At the 23.8.99 AALC meeting, it was again suggested that the standard of projects needed to be improved and that Committee members should become more closely involved with the working groups and individual projects.

By way of illustration of the kinds of activities undertaken, the 1999-2000 Work Program is set out in Appendix 17.

Funding the work programs and other activities
Although the first MOU contained agreement on “the development and implementation of co-operative work programs” (Clause 3.7) as well as other activities, it said nothing about how they were to be funded. The same was true for the 1989 revision. This deficiency in terms of financial powers was noted in legal advice given in relation to the first MOU.

For the first two years, whilst there was agreement on programs, there was no clear and sure agreement on funding them: “the agencies involved managed their respective park budgets to conduct projects and programs that would have value to other parks in the MOU” (McNamara 2000). Each agency covered the costs of carrying out an agreed project in its area of responsibility. In the absence of clear agreement on funding the program, the early financial arrangements were somewhat ad hoc and insecure, and were subject to the changing priorities of individual agencies, with no guarantee that funds would be spent on agreed programs. Not surprisingly, this soon created problems. For example, the record of the AALC meeting on 5.4.89 reported on the “Problem of lack of agency financial commitment to activities identified in the works program. This was highlighted by the funding impasse reached on publication of the two ’codes of ethics’ brochures”. It was an issue that had wider implications.

Although State contributions were far from clear, major contributions were made by ANPWS, particularly through the States Co-operative Assistance Program (SCAP). In 1986-87, ANPWS provided some $126,000 for work on the Plan of Management for the Victorian Alpine National Park, a study of the Mountain Pygmy Possum and its protection from skiing developments, preparation of a computerized data base for management of the Alpine areas, and a bibliography on conservation and management of Alpine ecosystems (Kestel Research 1988). For the next few years, ANPWS documents indicated funding support for Alps activities in the order of $80,000 to $100,000 per annum.

Through 1989 and 1990, there were discussions regarding the establishment of a central fund and obtaining ‘new monies’ for the Alps, especially in the context of the 1990-93 Cooperative Management Program. Agreement clearly did not come easily. For example, an ANPWS Minute
dated 31.8.89 stated: “Both NSW NPWS and the ANPWS have indicated a reluctance to commit themselves to a formal ‘Alps co-operative management’ budget”. However, initially, it was proposed that the Cooperative Management Program be funded to the level of $500,000 per annum, with annual contributions of $250,000 from the Commonwealth, plus $110,000 each from NSW and Victoria, and $30,000 from the ACT. The proposal was discussed by the AALC and within the ANPWS and was made formally by Kay Setches, Victoria’s Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, to Senator Graham Richardson, Commonwealth Minister for Arts, Sport, Environment, and Territories, in a letter dated December 8, 1989. With strong support from ANPWS, Senator Richardson approved the proposal (in a letter dated 17.1.90), and as part of the 1990-91 Budget proposal, ANPWS submitted a New Policy Proposal for $250,000 per annum to match, dollar for dollar, State and Territory resources for the three-year program. Among other statements in various documents, the ANPWS observed that “Without the input of funds from the Commonwealth it will not be possible to progress the implementation of the cooperative management program”. However, the proposal was not successful.

As a consequence, the first year’s budget for the cooperative management program was scaled back to $360,000, including $110,000 made available by ANPWS from existing resources. In making the funds available, Peter Bridgewater, then Director of ANPWS, indicated that the funding would “require some contraction of other ANPWS programs”, but that “such a course of action can be justified” (in a letter to Don Saunders, Director of National Parks and Wildlife Division, Department of Conservation and Environment, Victoria, 13.8.90). He also indicated that the Minister would be approached for approval for additional monies in future years. The Commonwealth funds were provided under the States Co-operative Assistance Program through the ANPWS.

In the same year, the Heads of Agencies discussed the establishment of a central fund for the Alps work programs and the need for a standardised approach to funding MOU projects (25.7.90). It was agreed that such a fund would be established, with “an equitable financial contribution” made by each of the agencies: NSW NPWS $110,000, Victorian National Parks Service $110,000, ACT Parks and Conservation Service $30,000, and ANPWS $110,000. This was the first time that a financial commitment had been made by each agency to further the aims of the MOU, another aspect of the significant developments that occurred within the Alps program in the early 1990s. It was a major step forward, as under federalism in Australian, agencies do not readily hand over funds to another jurisdiction!

At their meeting on 26.4.91, the Ministers agreed to increase total funding to $400,000 for the 1991-92 year of the Program, with agency contributions as follows: Victorian National Parks Service $120,000, NSW NPWS $120,000, ACT PCS $40,000, and ANPWS $120,000. The increase was to cover the costs of the appointment of the Program Coordinator, one of the position’s tasks being to manage the joint fund within the accounting systems of the Coordinator’s agency. The increase was also to compensate for the increase in the Consumer Price Index. There have been no subsequent increases, yet from 1992-93 to June 30, 2001, increases in the CPI have reduced the real value of the $400,000 to $322,650.

The annual budget allocations since 1992-93 are set out in Table 9.1. They demonstrate the changes in demands on the program, but also the overwhelming importance of natural heritage issues as well as the size of the ‘fixed costs’.

In the light of more recent developments and the earlier discussion, an extract from the minutes of the AALC meeting on 16.8.91 are of interest:

The meeting spent some time in discussion of the philosophy behind the funding of projects in the Works Program. It was noted that, as recognised at the April Ministers’ meeting, the funds

30 Like the Cooperative Management Program, the funding proposal seems to have originated at the ‘Alps Liaison meeting’ between NSW and Victorian Ministers and senior parks’ staff held at Kosciusko National Park on May 5, 1989.

31 At about the same time, at a Heads of Agencies meeting (25.7.90), Ian Weir (Victoria) is reported as stating the “commitment from the Commonwealth to $110,000 on a dollar for dollar basis would significantly aid Victoria in its quest for monies”.

32 Based on annual CPI data from various issues of Consumer Price Index Australia, Publication 6401.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
available for the MOU are limited and will not be sufficient to run large programs. Because of this, MOU funds should be considered essentially as seed monies although it was agreed that, in some cases, seed monies will be the only monies made available to a project.

The very small budget of the AALC was commented on by the independent review. It was politely considered to be “extremely modest”, certainly when compared with other programs in Australia, and, for example, the annual budget for Kosciuszko National Park of $10.5 million and the turnover of the ski industry in the Park in 1995-96 of $350 million (AACM 1997, 31). The review noted that  

It was not possible to quantify the return on investment by the AALC but our estimates suggest that the economic benefits exceed the costs – in some instances significantly (AACM 1997, 38).

Also on the positive side, the scale of AALC investment enables it to function flexibly and without excessive overheads and administrative costs. This is consistent with the intent of the MOU and any increase in resources for collaborative projects developed or managed by the AALC would be better sourced through cost-sharing and co-financing arrangements with existing or new, project specific, partners rather than trying to increase the AALC’s direct investment resources (AACM 1997, 31).

The review observed that “there is an opportunity for the AALC to improve the effectiveness of its investment by co-financing … projects with interested private sector partners” (AACM 1997, 23). Reference was made to such activities as tour operator training and frontline training, but it was acknowledged that projects for co-funding were not easy to identify.

### Table 9.1 Budget Allocations by Main Expenditure Areas, 1992-93 to 2000-01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Natural Heritage Conservation</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage Conservation</th>
<th>Visitor Facilities and Tourism</th>
<th>Community Awareness</th>
<th>Management Expertise and Program Coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>75,180</td>
<td>86,720</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>140,032</td>
<td>144,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>183,306</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>152,107</td>
<td>50,673</td>
<td>120,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>150,595</td>
<td>68,850</td>
<td>181,318</td>
<td>59,700</td>
<td>113,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96*+</td>
<td>147,755</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>158,339</td>
<td>86,550</td>
<td>127,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>168,564</td>
<td>122,550</td>
<td>160,110</td>
<td>101,000</td>
<td>133,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>234,650</td>
<td>40,725</td>
<td>123,900</td>
<td>93,653</td>
<td>144,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99*</td>
<td>128,416</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>96,700</td>
<td>172,300</td>
<td>118,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00*</td>
<td>234,500</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>71,500</td>
<td>120,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01*</td>
<td>54,800</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>84,500</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>155,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The values are as given in the Annual Reports; the remainder have been grouped by the writer and are open to debate.

+ It was stated that the figures included funds carried forward from previous year.

Source: Annual Reports of the AALC.

Whatever the view on the size of the program’s budget, the agencies’ contributions are by no means limited to the common fund. There can be little doubt that the dollar value of the in-kind contributions – especially staff time, but also such items as materials, use of vehicles, phone calls, etc. – are much larger. This is a commitment that stems from the MOU and, in the words of one interviewee, one that is appreciated. Agreement “to collate and communicate the total investment (staff, accommodation, resources, etc.) by agencies into the Alps program” (Heads of Agencies 29.4.2002) has yet to be completed.

Whilst the first two MOUs contained no mention of financial arrangements, the situation was changed in the 1996 revision, with the inclusion of Clause 6.3:

Within the capacity of individual Agency budgets, Agencies will contribute funds to be managed by the Liaison Committee for the approved works program under the Memorandum of Understanding. The Liaison
Committee may enter into cost-sharing arrangements with one or more State/Territory for projects within the works program.

The decision to terminate the Commonwealth funding appears to have been first advised to the other partners in May 2000. At the 23.11.00 Heads of Agencies meeting, the Environment Australia officer reported that “the last Commonwealth allocation of $120,000 had been made for the year to June 2001, unless there was a change of heart at [the] political level. The Commonwealth will continue with in-kind support and participation and was willing to explore ways of injecting funds in other forms”. The Commonwealth wished the MOU to remain intact and viable. The minutes of the meeting give only some indication of the displeasure and concern of the State and Territory representatives (the ACT was extremely annoyed, Victoria disappointed). Among other things, the following were noted:

- the program was under a fundamental threat and its operational base should not be compromised;
- the apparent Commonwealth view of the Alps partnership should be wider than just a “Parks club” and that “the Alps is too operational”. In effect, the Alps has become a world-wide product, in East Timor, Bhutan, and the Pacific Islands, and has done much for the Australian International Aid profile;
- the issue has been handled in an “offensive manner” with no formal correspondence from the Commonwealth regarding new directions; and
- a funding collapse could see the international best-practice of the Program die before the International Year of Mountains in 2002.

The Heads of Agencies agreed that “active involvement of the Commonwealth was desirable” and that the matter should be handled at the Ministerial level, the next occasion on which the Ministers would be meeting being the ANZECC meeting on December 15, 2000. The matter was raised, including the lack of formal correspondence and the implications of withdrawing close to one-third of total funding. However, there appears to have been no positive outcome. It was close to another three months.

In an effort to identify additional sources of funding for the program, the Heads of Agencies 2000 meeting (23.11.00) considered a number of possibilities in terms of ‘Strategic Partnerships and Alliances for the Australian Alps national parks’. These included engaging more stakeholders based on a financial contribution, such as Victoria’s Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council and the CRC for Sustainable Tourism, and the Alps program becoming more business-like in profiting from activities and products. The meeting noted that partnerships through activities are different to partnerships in the program at a whole-of-management level and agreed to develop them at project level as a first move, both with governments, e.g. Tasmania, and resorts in all parts of the Australian Alps. Thus far, little has come from this and other similar discussions, in spite of the good ideas.

The Commonwealth contribution
Given the overall nature of the MOU and especially the lack of firm commitment in Clause 6.5 in the 1998 version (Clause 7 in the 2003 revision), the funding has never been secure. There has always been the possibility of a threat to the program’s funding, in spite of the fact that it is critical to the integrity of the program. This threat became a reality in 2000 with the withdrawal by the Commonwealth of its financial contribution.

In spite of this stated commitment, there was no reference to involvement in the Alps program in the 2001-02 annual report of the Director of National Parks (EA 2002).
before the withdrawal was formally set out in a letter from Peter Cochrane, the Director of National Parks, dated 8.3.01.

Various reasons have been given for the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding: for example, there is no financial commitment in the MOU (though this is not quite true); money had to be saved in Environment Australia and it was a departmental decision, and not the only such decision; funding could be seen as favouratism in the context of possible National Heritage listing (see Chapter 15); changes in government directions and programs (the government wanted to support its own programs, not those of previous governments); government assistance was now on a more targeted basis (but Alps funding has surely always been targeted); and the views of the Commonwealth Minister and other persons. A Victorian document stated: “The Commonwealth argued that its role in fostering and facilitating cooperation between the state and territory agencies in the establishment phase of the MOU was now complete”. Another view was that the Commonwealth funds should be seen as ‘seed money’ and it has been there for fifteen years. However, given the history of Commonwealth involvement in the Alps program, such views can be questioned. The funding cut was also difficult to reconcile with Clause 2.4 of the 1998 MOU:

There exists Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps national parks and the need for joint commitment by the relevant Governments to conserve these values.

At the time and subsequently, the Environment Australia representatives made much of the availability of other programs to assist with funding the Alps program. It was noted that while there was less certainty, there were still opportunities with a broader approach to partnerships and the Biosphere Reserve concept. However, at the 23.11.00 meeting and subsequently, it was also noted that other options (particular mention being made of the Natural Heritage Trust [NHT]) would be difficult to obtain and, if successful, would almost certainly have conditions attached. Realistically, however, there was virtually no chance of NHT funds being available, as a number of people indicated. Even more recently, at a Heads of Agencies meeting (29.4.02), it was reported that reinstating funding to the Alps Program was not presently on the Federal Government’s agenda, although – once again - funding may be available through the Natural Heritage Trust. The 2003 MOU did contain a commitment that “The Commonwealth Agency will provide secretariat support to the AALC and may also undertake administrative support and program management tasks” (Clause 9). However, whilst the value of Commonwealth in-kind services has to be acknowledged, the earlier funding cut was not simply one of about one-third. Given the fixed costs (such as paying for the Program Coordinator, the Community Projects Officer and operational costs), the reality is that it was a much larger cut to the Program’s disposable income, the money for doing things, the funds for research and on-ground works. The cut has also had an impact on the morale of those involved in the Program, though this has been countered by a determination to persist and succeed with or without some level of Commonwealth involvement. The response of the AALC and program partners is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 10. An Evolving Activity: keeping things under review
The continuing evolution and development of the MOU, the AALC and its activities have been documented in earlier parts of this study. As part of this evolution, the AALC has regularly kept itself and its activities under review and, on occasion, considered their future directions. For example, in 1992, a paper was prepared with the title ‘Toward a Vision for the Australian Alps in 2002’. It was discussed at a number of AALC meetings (15.11.91, 27.3.92 and 16.10.92) and at the Heads of Agencies meeting on 17.12.92. The paper certainly contributed to the preparation of the Strategic Plan, but there was no indication that it went any further. There have been other AALC discussions along similar lines. The 1996 revision of the MOU included a new Clause 6.1, while the 1998 revision placed further review requirements on the AALC (see Appendix 6). In addition, there is an inherent review requirement in Key Result Area 5 ‘Program Development’ of the 2000-2003 Strategic Plan: “To ensure that the Australian Alps national parks program is well managed, maintains its effectiveness and operates within the relevant policy of each participating agency” (Appendix 14). These and other measures are consistent with the original desire of ‘trying to do things better’.

An external evaluation
Whilst most agencies may undertake such review activities, in 1996 the AALC took the unusual step - for a government institution - of engaging external consultants to undertake “an independent evaluation of their strategic plans and operations to assess the effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the purpose of the MOU” (AACM 1997, 1). This step was entirely consistent with Clause 6.1 of the 1996 MOU. The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

- to judge how effectively the strategic plan, the operations of the AALC and its *modus operandi* achieve the purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding;
- to review how the outcomes of the AALC process are incorporated into park management programs; and
- from the outcomes of the evaluation, the AALC will review its forward strategic plan and *modus operandi* accordingly to focus and improve performances.

The evaluation or review was undertaken by management consultants AACM International of Adelaide. The key findings were clearly very positive:

**Overall effectiveness of AALC**
The AALC is highly regarded for having effectively addressed matters of co-ordination across the Australian Alps national parks in a world-class way, and for delivering excellent value for the relatively modest annual investment. Nevertheless, areas for improvement have been identified and options proposed.

**Effectiveness of AALC in achieving the purpose of the MOU**
The AALC is effective in achieving the purpose of the MOU. It effectively addresses all of the MOU objectives and working arrangements with the possible exception of s3.2d [1996 version] which relates to protection of mountain catchments.

Based on consultation with more than 60 stakeholders of the Australian Alps, it is clear that the management of the Australian Alps national parks is better with the AALC than without it (AACM 1997, iv).

The AALC was a catalyst for co-ordinated activities and delivered economies of scale. It had an appropriately low-key and flexible management and its administrative overheads (less than 6 per cent) were well within equivalent national and international benchmarks (AACM 1997, 36). The work of the AALC was highly valued by stakeholders. For parks staff, it provided innovation, facilitation, networking, co-ordination and professional development. Its activities tended to be driven from the “bottom-up” by staff enthusiasm and commitment. At the same time, many

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34 There is a problem with the Review, and one that it is surprising was not corrected at the draft stage, in its use of ‘AALC’. This acronym refers to the Committee, yet it is used frequently in the Review when what is meant is the program as a whole, the Alps agreement, etc., as well as just the AALC.
stakeholders perceived that there was executive support for the AALC activities but not recognition of the time and effort involved.

However, as has been noted previously, there were areas where improvements could and needed to be made. While the AALC was a strategic investor in Alps co-operative program, it needed to further organize its procedures to achieve a more strategic role. The AALC had developed effective processes for the early parts of the investment cycle (the identification, preparation and appraisal of projects), but monitoring and evaluation of them were relatively weak, and implementation activities could be strengthened with better accountability. The consultants recommended that the current level of investment should continue with the Working Groups, Program Co-ordinator and the proposed changes built into existing procedures and structures.35

Among the major recommendations of the review were the following:
- the Ministers adopt a strategic policy role in the program and focus on active participation in the revision of the MOU every 5 to 10 years;
- the Heads of Agencies adopt a strategic management role in the program and focus on active participation in revision of the Strategic Plan every three years, with an annual review of AALC activities; and
- the AALC adopt a strategic planning role and focus on leading development of the Strategic Plan every three years and approving the Annual Work Plan, with annual and mid-year reviews of Working Group activities.

The consultants believed that adopting a comprehensive investment approach to the program would:
- result in larger, more competitive, more effective and better managed projects which linked directly with the Strategic Plan;
- give a tight linkage between AALC planning cycles and work plans, and agency-planning cycles, work plans and management structures;
- increase staff competence in project management; and
- encourage cost sharing with other stakeholders (private and public).

Suggested future actions included determining the economic values of the various activities and enterprises which take place in the Australian Alps region, to better inform decision making processes; and target the Australian Alps national parks News from the Alps for all stakeholders, not just parks staff, and develop a comprehensive distribution list.

The overall assessment of the AALC and its activities were summarized as follows:
- Investment in the AALC by participating agencies acts as a significant catalyst to attract additional investments for research, staff training, production of consistent guidelines for park management and recreational use, and for public education.
- The AALC has achieved economies of scale in developing best practice guidelines, staff training and resource manuals, and community education materials from this investment.
- The administrative overheads of the program are less than 6 percent of the total AALC budget – well within national and international benchmarks for comparable programs.
- Responses from participants and field observation demonstrate that there are strong linkages between AALC and park management teams. This is especially so at regional and district levels within the state and territory agencies.
- Similarly, responses from regional communities including user groups have valued the role of the AALC, while those of city based conservation groups identified the need for greater involvement with program development.
- The role and activities in introducing innovation, providing a forum for staff networking and coordination is highly valued by the staff managing Australian Alps national parks.

35 The above summary is based on an AALC Minute dated 12.8.97 prepared for the Heads of Agencies and the responsible Ministers.
The AALC has provided an opportunity for professional development of staff that is not otherwise available. The response of staff has been to give their time in addition to their normal duties to become involved with implementing programs of the AALC.

The scale of investment in the AALC is modest compared with operating budgets for Australian Alps national parks. However, this enables the AALC to operate in a flexible and efficient manner which relies on the commitment of stakeholders to the Australian Alps rather than bureaucratic processes. The current investment should be maintained along with AALC Working Groups and Program Coordinator structures, so long as project management and evaluation strategies are implemented as an integral part of the project investment cycle used by AALC (AACM 1997, 39-40).

The review’s conclusion was that radical changes were not needed, as the AALC and its activities were essentially achieving the purpose of the MOU. However, it was evident that the Strategic Plan and working arrangements could be improved, particularly in terms of better communication with the Working Groups (especially their greater involvement in developing the annual work programs), park users (including the development of partnerships with operators within the parks), and the wider community.

An internal review

The response of those involved in the Alps program to the funding cut by the Commonwealth in 2000 was, almost without exception, highly critical (certainly from those interviewed). There was recognition of the many things contained in its annual cheque. There was encouragement and ‘glue’, helping to hold things together when other agencies might have pulled out (at least at one point, the Victorian agency experienced severe financial difficulties). The contribution was symbolic as well as of practical importance. Commonwealth involvement is positive, as it looks beyond state and territory borders, seeing the Australian Alps as a whole. A national asset requires a national view. In one person’s view, the financial contribution was not the main thing. But also among the responses to the cut were ‘shock’, ‘disappointment’, ‘Environment Australia gets the kudos without the input’, and a detrimental impact on staff enthusiasm and morale.

Whilst there was the critical response, there was also a determination that the program should continue, that it was worth doing with or without the Commonwealth. So, another review of the program and especially its future was undertaken, a rather different one to previous undertakings. With total funding reduced to $280,000, the two AALC meetings in February 2001 were almost entirely devoted to discussions of how to cope with and adapt to the new situation. The first meeting (15/16.2.01) discussed a range of issues and particularly how to further develop the program to meet the objectives of the MOU, such as the core objectives, the program’s alignment with core objectives of the agencies, threatening processes, and the program’s structure. It was agreed that the AALC convenor’s position would rotate among the agencies. Among other things, it was suggested that there be three working groups based on outcomes rather than functions:

- Strategic Partnerships Agency Coordination Network, covering such things as program development, field workshops, staff development and training, and reconciling policy differences;
- Community Awareness and Marketing; and
- Alps Heritage Programs (natural and cultural).

In addition, special task forces could be formed when required. It was also suggested that the Program Coordinator become a Program Development Office and that the Program be supported by a Secretariat.

The second meeting (22.2.01) continued the discussions, under the heading ‘Developing a More Robust and Adaptable Alps Program’, and also involved members of the four working groups. It looked particularly at what could be done in the future. Whilst it was acknowledged that further assessment would be required, overall, it was agreed, among other things, to:
- recognise and retain the values and opportunities for on-ground liaison;
- consolidate over the next 15 months: where we have been, where are we going;
- continue to provide best practice management;
- maintain the operational base of three to four working groups;
- investigate policies for complementary Alps plans of management;
- maintain the position of the Program Development Officer; and
- rotate the chair of AALC.

Following the meeting, a paper was prepared for a Heads of Agencies meeting planned for 20.3.01. The main points were as follows:

The Commonwealth support for the Alps Program will need to be sought from relevant programs on a project by project basis, focusing on issues of National Environmental Significance. Possible projects could include:

(i) a regional recovery plan for the Alps;
(ii) extension of the Kosciuszko Biosphere Reserve (across borders); and
(iii) a combined listing for the Alps national parks under the new Commonwealth heritage legislation.

The Australian Alps Liaison Committee and members of the Working Groups have prepared a proposal for a revised structure, as follows, for the consideration of member Heads of Agencies:

(i) maintaining the Memorandum of Understanding (without change);
(ii) adaptation of the Strategic Plan 2000-2002;
(iii) maintenance of the Liaison Committee but with the convenorship rotating through all four agencies;
(iv) revised terms of reference for a Program Development Officer;
(v) revision of the Working Group structure to three Working Groups and an appropriate number of Project Task Forces (rather than four Working Groups); and
(vi) streamlining finances to reduce overheads, to focus projects on those with direct outcomes, and those that will attract additional sponsorship from agencies and other partners.

As has been indicated, at different times and in different ways, Commonwealth involvement has been the glue that has held the program together. Whilst its symbolic importance outweighs the number of dollars, efforts have continued to have the Commonwealth funding restored.

Chapter 11. Some Achievements of Cooperative Management in the Australian Alps National Parks
A vast amount has been achieved through the Australian Alps MOU and the cooperative management program. In a study such as this, it is not possible to deal with all of the work undertaken by and for the AALC; more detail can be found in the AALC Annual Reports and the newsletters, News from the Alps. The following account is therefore selective and presented under a number of headings that are, in general, consistent with the Key Result Areas of the Strategic Plan. However, using this grouping is not without its difficulties, as the categories are not mutually exclusive and because of the wide-ranging nature of many of the achievements. Virtually all of them illustrate cross-border cooperation, though some more than others (e.g. law enforcement, fire management, feral animals, tracks, wilderness protection), reflecting the origins and major initial impetus for the MOU.

From its inception, there was acknowledgement of the fact that the work of the MOU had to be firmly founded in the best scientific and other knowledge. There was acknowledgement of the importance of links with the scientific community, including CSIRO, the universities, and the Australian Academy of Science, as through the first Fenner Conference (Good 1989). There was recognition of the continuum of research, knowledge, strategies and action. As a result, the cooperative program has always had a strong research component, in spite of continuing calls (especially from some Ministers) for more ‘on-ground works’ (whatever that may mean). However, there are three aspects of the program’s research work that merit some comment. Firstly, whilst much of it has been and is specific to the Australian Alps, much has far wider application and benefit, in all kinds of ways – scientific research on particular issues, tourism management, development of processes and strategies for protected area management, an ecosystem based approach that transcends boundaries, etc. (Worboys et al. 2001). This fact is very inadequately recognized, not least in terms of the financial and other support given to the program.\textsuperscript{70} Secondly, there is a need to maintain and increase research capabilities (particularly in terms of the numbers and qualifications of scientists working in the Alps – see later in the chapter and Chapter 14) and the need for on-going and independent research, especially of controversial issues (e.g. implications of resort developments and expansion, livestock grazing, feral horses). Thirdly, there is the issue of the nature of much of the research that is and has been undertaken. Given the program’s limited budget, there is a strong view that its research should focus on ‘applied’ rather than ‘pure’ research, that is, research that has a clear application to park management. At the same time, whilst giving a clear applied focus to its own work, the program must continue to encourage and facilitate the pure research work; the outcomes of such work are often surprising.

Two other points can be made. The program’s achievements have to be seen in the context of such matters as changing priorities, greatly increased visitor numbers, and changing use patterns and demands, both between seasons and within each season. Secondly, the park managers are not complete masters of the areas for which they are responsible. Many things are outside their control, being the responsibility of other agencies, and they are always subject to decisions of Government Ministers, which may be for good or ill.

So, what are some of the achievements?

1. **In terms of the Natural Heritage**

As was indicated earlier in this study, the Australian Alps constitute a unique and fragile environment. For the cooperative program’s Key Result Area of Natural Heritage Conservation, the specified required outcome is “An improved understanding and enhanced management of the natural ecosystems of the Australian Alps national parks”. This is fundamental to the program, to the protected areas themselves, and to everything that is undertaken within them. It is thus not surprising that the Natural Heritage area is and has been one of considerable activity and achievement, but where much remains to be done.

\textsuperscript{70} This is a fact that should be publicized beyond as well as within the Alps. The seminars that were held in Jindabyne and Bright in November 2000 to publicise the program’s research, ‘Sharing the Knowledge: research from the Australian Alps’ should be continued and held in other locations that are more readily available to a wider audience (AALC 2000b). The ‘Celebrating Mountains’ conference, part of International Year of Mountains 2002, could have given much more direct acknowledgement to the role of the Alps program (Mackay & Associates 2003).
As was discussed earlier, fundamental to the Natural Heritage is the native vegetation, where continuing work has its basis in some of the early scientific work. The numerous plots, reference areas, transects and monitoring sites are of scientific value, as well as a significant component of the Alps cultural heritage. The AALC (7.4.97) acknowledged the “need for a more comprehensive project to monitor the natural heritage of the Alps, using the current [scientific plots] project as a stepping stone”. Following on from the earlier ‘Science in High Places’ study (Griffiths and Robin 1994), funds were made available for the identification and re-establishment of scientific plots with ongoing monitoring significance (News from the Alps 16, 1997, 2) and the subsequent establishment of the Australian Alps Scientific Sites Database. With 280 sites registered, it contains details of location, researchers, methods used, data recorded, and publications (Clarke et al. 2000). Plots with on-going monitoring significance are being re-established. The plots are the means of documenting environmental change caused by land use practices such as grazing and short and long-term climate change (Costin et al. 2002).

The scientific plots are also a means of documenting the effects of fire and subsequent regeneration. The latter was considered at a fire ecology workshop in 1993-94, whilst a long-term project commenced in 1996 to establish vegetation plots to monitor effects of fire on fire-sensitive vegetation communities (AALC 1996, 8; Papst and Wahren 1999). The Alps Vegetation Fire Response Monitoring System was established in the sub-alpine and montane areas of the three main parks, Alpine, Kosciuszko and Namadgi. Fire also affects fauna, both directly and indirectly through the loss of vegetation (Walter 1997; AALC 1999, 18). As was noted earlier, fire management and protection has long been a concern of the cooperative management program and in the early years, there was a Fire Management Working Group. Working with the Border Fire Coordinating Committee, it drew up a common code of practice for fire management (AALC 12.2.88). A fire management planning workshop was held at Khancoban in 1995.

An indication of the AALC’s concern for on-going research and the dissemination of that research was its support for the preparation and publication of the second edition of Kosciuszko Alpine Flora (Costin et al. 2000). The major work on flowering plants and ferns of the Australian Alps alpine areas, including those in Victoria, it describes over 200 species, 21 of which are endemic.

The Alps are home to a rich fauna, with some of the species found nowhere else. Many are threatened and endangered, and consequently protected, and there is a need for Alps-wide approaches to them. In 1994, a major review of the status of frogs found 27 species in the alpine region, of which nine were of particular concern, especially the Spotted-tree Frog, Baw Baw Frog, and Corroboree Frog (Gillespie et al. 1995; Osborne et al. 2001; Osborne and Hunter 2003). There are two species of Corroboree frogs and both are declining in numbers due to environmental factors, drought, climate change, increased UV-B radiation, and exotic pathogens, though the northern species (*Pseudophyine pengilleyi*) in parts of Namadgi seems to be doing better than the southern species (*Pseudophyine corroboree*), which is facing extinction, with no more than about 500 in 80 sites in Kosciusko National Park (News from the Alps 26, 2001, 15). There has been significant decline of the Alpine Tree Frog, with less than ten local breeding populations in NSW. At higher altitudes, its tadpoles cannot survive the increased levels of UV-B radiation (AALC 1997, 8). Surveys undertaken in 1995 and 1997 indicated only four populations of the brush-tailed rock wallaby left in the Alps, with a total population of about twenty individuals, all located in inaccessible areas in the Snowy River National Park (AALC 1998a, 11). Ten years earlier, there was evidence of their presence in Namadgi and Kosciusko National Parks (AALC 1997, 9). Among other work was a study of the population and habitat of the Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*). An endangered species, there are small populations in Kosciusko and Namadgi National Parks. Recent reviews of the terrestrial and aquatic fauna of Kosciusko National Park have highlighted the endangered status of a number of native species (Mansergh et al. 2002; Marchant 2002).

A particular aspect of caring for the flora and fauna of the Australian Alps is that of tackling the exotic pest species. These have been issues for the cooperative management program since its inception. One of the first working groups was specifically concerned with Pest Species, the work being continued by the NHWG. In 1995 (1.11.95), a draft ‘Australian Alps Weed Management Strategy’ was completed. It
indicated that over 90 introduced plant species have been recorded in the Australian Alps, some of which are aggressive displacers of native species requiring control where possible and, where not, prevention of their further spread. Because of the high costs of control, integrated weed management with minimum levels of disturbance are required. Following this, the Australian Alps Weed Management Manual was prepared in 1996 with identification and control techniques. Among the particular weeds are willows (mapping infestations followed by the development of a management strategy and community awareness program to reduce and prevent further spread [Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter 7, 1994, 4]) and blackberry (workshop, release of rust to control [22.5.91, 27.3.92]). An indication of the increasing nature of the problem is that by 2002, 175 alien plant species had been recorded above 1500 m, most of them in disturbed areas, at roadsides, along walking tracks and around resorts (Hill et al. 2002).

Of particular interest has been the work on the long-standing problem of English (or Scotch) Broom (Cytisus scoparius). It demonstrates the potential of the Alps cooperative program in terms of research on the problem, the investigation of control and eradication measures, the development of a management strategy, and the implementation of the measures. It is also an illustration of work undertaken and financed by the Alps program that has applicability and benefit well beyond the Australian Alps.

Broom has successfully invaded large areas of the Australian Alps national parks since its introduction over 150 years ago. Broom currently occupies some 200,000 hectares of the natural environment in Australia, the majority of this within the Australian Alps (AALC 2000a, 21).

It has significant impacts on the natural values and biodiversity of invaded areas.

Broom also threatens the survival of rare and endangered plant communities, one of which, the extremely rare enigmatic Greenhood Orchid, Pterostylis aenigma, is found only in areas that are presently infested, or are under threat, from this invasive weed (AALC 2000a, 21).

In 1992, a review was undertaken of the effectiveness of Broom control techniques and a strategy developed to control its spread (AALC 16.10.92). Over the following years, a number of workshops on control methods were held, especially for field staff. Work was also supported on a number of biological controls. The twig-mining moth (Leucopetra spartifoliella) and seed-feeding beetle (Brachidius villosus) were released 1998, together with the Broom psyllid (Arytainilla spartiophila). In 1999, a management strategy was released (McArthur 1999 and 2000). Among other things, the Strategy provided an overview of the occurrence and management requirements of English Broom and means to develop control expertise among field staff.

The Broom Management Strategy of the Australian Alps national parks (1999) provides each agency with a regional overview and guiding strategy for the control of this invasive weed species. Parks Victoria, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service allocate significant financial and ‘on-ground’ resources in controlling broom (AALC 2000a, 30).

In 1998, the AALC sponsored Alps Invaders: weeds of the Australian High Country (Sainty et al. 1998), an identification guide to aid public support in the weeds management and eradication campaign. In 1999-2000, parks staff training sessions were held at Howmans Gap and Tumut on the identification of invasive weeds and recognition of common, sleeper and potential weed species, in order to bring about more effective weed management.

Pest species include fauna as well as flora. Feral animals degrade the native flora and create other environmental problems, such as soil erosion and, in many cases, affect native fauna. Three are of particular concern, wild dogs (including foxes), pigs and wild horses or brumbies. Others include wild goats, rabbits and hares, and deer. Wild dogs are a problem for almost all land managers, public and private, not least national parks. Unfortunately, it has become an issue of blaming others – especially national parks - as being responsible, but as recent studies have demonstrated, it cannot be tackled through ‘the blame game’ (Hunt 2003). The major control method is using bait poisoned with ‘1080’. The problem is how to place the bait so that is taken by dogs and foxes, but not by native fauna – in the case of the Alps, the spotted-tailed or eastern tiger quoll (Dasyurus maculates) – which are then killed. The Alps program has funded various projects dealing with the feeding habits and behaviour of wild dogs and quolls, as well as workshops for field staff and adjacent land.
managers (AALC 2.5.96). The usual method of distributing 1080 bait is by aerial drops, but an AALC project indicated that quolls eat aerial baits dropped for wild dogs and are killed, with consequent impacts on the quoll population (News from the Alps, 22, 1999, 9). Other studies have indicated that poisoned baits have to be placed in the ground at a depth of at least 10 cm, so that they can be taken by dogs but are too deep for quolls (AALC 1998a, 11). These are examples of research that makes a direct contribution to park management.

Feral horse or brumby management in the Australian Alps national parks is a complex and emotive issue, spanning a range of natural and cultural heritage values. Some years ago, Kim Robinson, of Victoria’s National Parks Service, was reported as saying there was a need “to turn community attitudes around from the ‘Wild Brumby’ of romantic poetry, to the half starved, environmentally damaging ‘Feral Horse’ of the Australian Alps”. The AALC and individual parks agencies have spent much effort on the control and management of feral horses, and some on their potential eradication, though it is not clear to what extent there has been much integration, if any, of the various activities. Early on, studies of the effects of brumbies on the Alps vegetation were undertaken with ANPWS assistance under the States Co-operative Assistance Program (AALC 23.11.87). A major workshop on feral horses was held in 1992 (Walters and Hallam 1993). Work undertaken more recently has been trying to find the best methods for locating and counting feral horses, estimating population trends and determining their impacts, work that was strongly supported by the Ministers (Ministerial meeting 21.6.96). It was recognized that there was a need for consistent techniques and actions in feral horse monitoring (AALC 26.6.97). A major project nearing completion is the study of ‘Population Ecology of Feral Horses in the Australian Alps’ by Michelle Walter, which estimated a baseline population of about 5,000 wild horses in the Australian Alps in 2001 (Walter 2002). Given the numbers and evidence of the relatively recent recolonisation of the alpine areas in KNP (News from the Alps, 23, 2000, 14), their management needs to be well informed. Work undertaken by the AALC has contributed to management activities in the individual parks. Following much research and community consultation, there was the trial removal of ten horses from KNP in 2001-02. A draft ‘Wild Horse Management Plan for the Alpine Area of Kosciuszko National Park’ was approved in July 2002 (O’Brien and Wren 2002).

The above examples illustrate the importance of scientific research and information as the basis for pest species management. However, such work is also influenced by government legislation. The declaration of what species are declared ‘noxious’ is largely related to agricultural matters and it varies between jurisdictions. Such legislation and related regulations also determine issues relating to matters of biological control and the use of chemicals. For example, in Namadgi National Park, there has been an 80 per cent success rate in the reduction of feral pigs, essentially because of the use of bait containing Warfarin, which is not registered for use in the other jurisdictions; only 1080 can be used in NSW. This is an illustration of the fact that at least some issues are not within the control of the parks but in the hands of other agencies.

One of the criticisms made by the independent review (AACM 1997, 5) was the lack of attention given by the program to issues relating to water management, especially given that they are mentioned in Clauses 2.1 and 3.2 of the 1996 MOU. In the early days of the program, there were a number of discussions relating to water quality, particularly in terms of recreation in the national parks (5.4.89), and concern over giardia (an intestinal parasite) and the need for more research on the organism (28.6.89). A Water Quality Working Group was established but not activated (see Chapter 8). More recently, in conjunction with the CRC for Freshwater Ecology, overall issues of water quality have been considered (Norris 1999) and stream health monitoring has been undertaken using the Australian Rivers Assessment (AUSRIVAS), a model that predicts numbers of macroinvertebrates based on undisturbed sites. The work indicates that stock grazing on the Bogong High Plains and the increasing pressures of alpine tourism are having detrimental impacts on alpine streams.
Concern for the wider issues of catchment management found expression in the Alpine rehabilitation course run at Howmans Gap in 1993 (24.3.93) and the 1997 workshop on disturbed mountain catchments. A working draft of an Alpine Rehabilitation Manual (Parr-Smith and Polley 1998), with a focus on alpine and sub-alpine restoration and rehabilitation, was completed in 1998 and released for use and comment. “The final manual will provide a basis for an accredited training certificate for field staff and contractors operating on rehabilitation projects in Australian Alps national parks” (AALC 2000a, 20).

A number of other issues have been considered by the cooperative management program, such as global warming, ultra-violet radiation and snow cover, though it is a matter of debate as to whether or not they have received the attention they merit (Green 1997) (see Chapter 14). In 1998, a conference on the ‘Global Threats to Snow’ was held at Jindabyne. It resulted in an inventory of present knowledge on snow in the Australian Alps, in particular the impact of global warming on high altitude species (e.g. pygmy possum), future winter snow cover, the potential loss of alpine ecosystems, the impact on skiing, and the increasing dependence of skiing on artificial snow making (Green 1998). More recently, an assessment of the implications of climate change for the Australian Alps has indicated a decline in winter snow cover and reduced opportunities for snow making, while the increased demands for more water for snow making will have implications for the alpine ecosystems (Whetton 2002).

In line with the more strategic approach to its activities, the AALC commissioned a study entitled Protecting the Natural Treasures of the Australian Alps (Coyne 1999). It identified more than 1,300 significant natural features in the Australian Alps and nearly 100 threats to their continued survival. Among other things, the study recommended that greater emphasis be given to managing the Australian Alps national parks as a single ecological entity rather than as discrete functional units and suggested strategies by which this could be achieved (AALC 2001, 19). Following the report, the NHWG organised a workshop to prioritise and rank the identified features to guide the group’s work. The outcome, ‘Strategic Priority Framework for Australian Alps Biodiversity’, is now the basis for assessment of all project proposals submitted to the NHWG for funding support (Carey 2000). Using the information from Coyne’s study, an interactive CD-ROM electronic database has been released.

2. In terms of the Cultural Heritage
For the cooperative program’s Key Result Area (KRA) of Cultural Heritage Conservation, the specified required outcome is “An improved understanding of the unique Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps national parks which is incorporated into effective protection and management programs”. This is a large KRA. Much is known, but much remains to be discovered – or rather re-discovered. Cross-border approaches are particularly relevant and they have resulted in understanding the Alp-wide significance of many historic features such as Aboriginal connections with the Alps, pathways of human movement, and huts.

One of the first activities in the cultural heritage area was the Symposium held in 1991. This brought together much of the existing knowledge on a variety of issues as well as indicating some of the gaps in knowledge (Scougall 1988). A number of projects followed the Symposium. The oral history project, initiated in 1993 (23.6.93), led to the recording of the memories and recollections of many people who lived and worked in the Australian Alps. The completed collection of 465 oral history records tapes was lodged with the National Library of Australia in Canberra (21.2.95). A bibliography of the oral history (Hodges 1996) and a cultural bibliography (Fletcher et al. 1993) were published. A study of how people accessed the Alps in the early days resulted in an atlas of human movement in the Australian Alps. A preliminary report was completed in 1998, but the study was not finalised.

There are many historical sites in the Australian Alps, many of which have not received the attention they merit. In order to raise awareness levels of cultural heritage issues, the AALC has organized a number of staff training activities,
particularly the ‘Trash or Treasure’ workshops held in 1994 and 1997. In 1996, Cultural Landscape Management Guidelines were prepared for identifying, assessing and managing cultural landscapes in the Australian Alps national parks (Lennon and Mathews 1996). Among the examples of historic sites is Willis, on the Barry Way at the boundary of NSW and Victoria and where the Snowy River crosses the state border. It was the site of a customs station and there are remnants of the first survey of state borders, the customs house, and stockyards. The AALC undertook a major interpretation exercise at the site. There are many historic mining sites in the Alps and a ‘Mining Heritage Conservation and Presentation Strategy’ was completed in 2002 (LRGM 2002). The natural heritage importance of the many scientific sites in the Alps has already been mentioned, but they also have cultural value. Griffiths and Robin (1994) identified 48 scientific sites to be of outstanding scientific significance. Building on this work, a later study, called ‘Mountains of Science’, produced a ‘Thematic Interpretation Strategy for Scientific Sites of Cultural Significance in the Australian Alps’ (Haiblen and Macdonald 2000; Macdonald 2003; News from the Alps 26, 2001, 16). The study categorized scientific sites which have been established for environmental research purposes according to a number of themes. It recommended an interpretation strategy to assist park agencies in explaining to the public how these places can be used to understand environmental values which are now protected within the Alps parks.

Of particular interest and significance are the huts that are found throughout the Alps and especially in the alpine and sub-alpine areas (Hueneke 1982). Apart from their heritage and cultural significance, they have continuing importance for back-country winter and summer recreation, especially walking, often as places of refuge. In 1996, an Alpine Huts Heritage Survey was undertaken and the AALC prepared an inventory with each agency managing the cultural heritage values of these sites in line with the survey and the Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance (the Burra Charter) (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 1994). Maintenance of the huts is carried out by parks staff and voluntary organizations, such as the Kosciusko Huts Association, bushwalking and other clubs. A 1999 Heritage Building Training Workshop dealt with key principles, skills and practical techniques in conserving heritage buildings in the Alps national parks (AALC 1999, 19 and 27). People from the different park agencies were able to share their knowledge. It was of particular relevance to the historic huts, for parks staff and the volunteer groups.

In 1999, a major study was completed of the international significance of the cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks (Lennon 1999). It was directed particularly at indicating the national and international cultural significance of the Alps (see Chapter 12), but it also brought together much existing knowledge, as well as indicating some of the gaps in that knowledge:
- there was a paucity of information on integrated Aboriginal use of the Alps;
- 2,200 historic sites and 800 Aboriginal sites were already listed but the list is not comprehensive; and
- there was a need for a major archaeological project to adequately summarise the pre-history of the Alps.

Lennon’s study provided an important stimulus for the CHWG, particularly in terms of Aboriginal issues. A Cultural Heritage Strategic Planning workshop was held in 1999 that had a number of important outcomes (AALC 1999, 20). To improve field-based staff and managers understanding and awareness of issues faced by contemporary Aboriginal people, ‘Communicating Across Cultures’ workshops were held in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. They provided people with valuable skills to assist them in the development of more effective working relationships with Aboriginal people who have an interest in the Alps. A ‘Research Strategy for Cultural Heritage in the Australian Alps’ was prepared, its purposes including the establishment of a data base of cultural heritage sites, the identification of gaps in existing knowledge, and a number of projects for consideration (Argue 2000; AALC 2000a, 22). A major outcome from the study was a focus by the CHWG on Aboriginal heritage values (AALC 25.2.02), initially through the Aboriginal Liaison and Directions Study (Goulding and Buckley 2002). The topics covered include:

73 The work was undertaken whilst the authors were on secondment from Environment ACT.

74 The workshop was held in Canberra, Googong Reservoir Foreshores, and Namadgi and Kosciuszko national parks.
- who are the different Aboriginal groups with ties to the Australian Alps;
- what are the Aboriginal heritage values of the Alps; and
- what are the aspirations of the Aboriginal people for ongoing research into the management of Aboriginal heritage values of the Alps.

With the support of the AALC, cultural heritage issues are being given increased attention in the Alps program (see Table 9.1). This has wide support, though concern has been expressed that there are dangers in pushing for the preservation of all cultural heritage and that this should not be at the expense of the natural heritage values. In particular, it was observed that significant components of the cultural heritage were the brumbies and the mountain cattlemen. In the course of this study, concern was expressed that recognition of cultural heritage should not be allowed to entrench the presence of grazing or brumbies in the Australian Alps, given the overwhelming scientific evidence in support of their removal.

3. **In terms of Recreation and Tourism – meeting the needs of visitors**

This Key Result Area highlights the dual tasks and dilemma of national parks and of the MOU – meeting the needs of and protecting the natural and cultural environments and providing for the needs of visitors. For Recreation and Tourism, the specified required outcome is “Implementation of contemporary approaches to visitor and tourism management, through supporting best-practice, sustainable use and minimal impact philosophy and principles”. The particular concerns here are striving for sustainable tourism and providing visitor facilities and services, though there is sometimes difficulty in differentiating between these issues and those that come under community awareness (see below).

An important activity has been the provision of cross-border, non-commercial tourist and recreational facilities. Particularly important are the various recreational trails, for walking, horse riding, mountain bike riding, and cross-country skiing. The provision of such facilities and the associated route signage (such as ski trail marking) and publication of route maps and guides (e.g. Mountain Biking in Namadgi and Brindabella National Parks, a map indicating 400 km of fire trails available to cyclists) are important for recreation activities. Equally important is the maintenance of the facilities and encouraging the minimal impact of the activities on the routes and wider environments. In 1992, a recreational trails workshop was held which dealt with such issues as construction materials for walking tracks, erosion control and drainage, maintenance, and the need for an Alps-wide trails strategy. In 2001, an ‘Australian Alps Best Practice Field Forum on Mountain Walking Track Management’ was held at Mt Buffalo, attended by about 100 people from Australia and overseas.

The most high profile facility is the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT), an extension of the Victorian Alpine Walking Track, developed in the 1970s (Siseman 2003). Opened in 1995, the AAWT is a 655 km route through the Australian Alps between Walhalla (at the edge of Baw Baw National Park) in Victoria and Tharwa (on the edge of Namadgi National Park) in the ACT (Figure 1.1) (AALC nd). The route is fully signposted, with information displays at each end of track (Walhalla and the Namadgi Visitors Centre) and interpretive signs at strategic locations. The Track was developed and is maintained with significant financial input from the AALC ($45,000 up to 1994 [AALC 18.4.94]). Also, “The involvement of key walking groups including the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs and the Canberra Bushwalking Club is vital to ensure user group input into the long-term management of this important track. … In 1998, the AALC allocated funding for the development of a management strategy to ensure the continuing and consistent management of the track by all three states” (AALC 1999, 22). This was undertaken by the AAWT Committee, membership of which includes representatives of non-agency groups. Much effort has been devoted to track stabilization and maintenance. A guidebook has been published (AALC nd) and an information kit was developed in 2000 for those undertaking the walk. A new introductory brochure, including a map, was released in 2002. The minutes of the 5.2.02 AALC meeting indicated that, at least in terms of the AAWT, efforts were being made to increase stakeholder involvement in its management and to explore additional funding initiatives.

Horse riding in the Australian Alps is a controversial issue, essentially because it is such a long-established activity, has links with cattle grazing, and because of its associated
environmental impacts. It is valid to ask how the continuation of horse riding can be permitted given the problems created by livestock grazing and feral horses? However, it is an activity that can be controlled and restricted to specified routes – and there are many trails for horse riding. The best known is the section through the Alps of the Bicentennial National Trail (formerly the National Horse Trail), which extends for a total length 5,330 km, from Healesville in Victoria to Cooktown in north Queensland, the longest marked trekking route of its kind in the world. As well as being suitable for horse riding, it is also suitable for walking and mountain biking. Horse yards and facilities have been provided at a number of locations along the route in the Alps. A report on a horse riding management strategy was completed in 1993 in an endeavour to bring consistency to management of recreational riding and finalisation of an Alps-wide permit system (Gibbs 1993; Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter, 4, 1993, 1).

A strategy for the consistent management of recreational horseriding was prepared. This strategy addresses the inconsistencies currently occurring between the agencies, and evaluated advantages and constraints in alleviating these. Agreement was reached between the agencies in terms of a range of conditions and practices required of horseriders and a long-term strategy was developed for implementation of some management practices (AALC 1993, 15).

The 1993-94 AALC Annual Report noted issues of horse riding impact monitoring; the importance of managing of horse riding activity; and concerns over trail stabilization (AALC 1994, 11). In 1997 it was indicated that the Strategy was being reviewed, including an assessment of what had been implemented (AALC 1997, 11). Horse riding impact monitoring was being undertaken at Mansfield, Mt Buffalo, Tumut, and in Namadgi National Park.

With the growing numbers of visitors to the Australian Alps, recreation management is of increasing importance. It involves the management of recreational activities, their impacts and the recreational environments. Back-country recreation management was an early concern, involving such activities as ski-touring, canoeing, bushwalking, and mountain biking, those undertaken away from the resorts. In 1995, an Australian Alps National Parks Back-Country Recreation Strategy was completed (Mackay and Nixon 1995). For a number of years, the RTWG has been endeavouring to develop a recreational planning model that park managers could use to gather information and assist in making decisions about recreational settings and activities within Australian Alps national parks. Known as the Recreation Strategy Project, its purpose was to:

- identify and map recreation settings (Recreation Opportunity Classes) across the Alps national parks;
- identify visitor activities, facilities and major visitor management issues;
- identify priority sites for application of the visitor management model; and
- enhance visitor use understanding of parks staff.

A pilot study was completed 1998, and a plan was developed for the western parts of Namadgi National Park and the northern sections of Kosciuszko National Park (AALC 2001, 27), followed by a recreation planning strategy applicable to all of the Alps (Mackay and Virtanen 2001).

A key feature of visitor and recreation management is the encouragement of their minimal impacts on the environments of the Australian Alps. To this end, brochures have been published setting out codes of ethics for minimal impact for a number of activities undertaken throughout the Australian Alps national parks. There are brochures on Bushwalking, Car-Based Camping, Cross-Country Skiing, Horse Riding, Huts, Mountain Bike Riding, River Users, and Snow Camping. They were based on the earlier success of a Tasmanian minimal impact bushwalking campaign and were aimed at “making visitors aware of why and how they should modify their behaviour to lessen their impact” (Beckmann 2003). Most of the brochures were prepared in the early 1990s, some with the support of those who engage in the activities (e.g. Australian Cycling Federation and Mountain Bike Commission). An evaluation of the codes brochures and their effectiveness undertaken in 1998 indicated that knowledge of human impacts remained limited (Beckmann 1998). Whilst the

75 However, the minutes of the 29.1.93 meeting indicate that the preparation of a guide to horse riding was shelved, seemingly because of political difficulties. Political difficulties were also reported over the implementation of a pilot permit system for horse riding (24.3.93).
brochures were valued, they needed to be improved, the messages needed to be revised, and a generic code containing the main messages for all visitors was required. The new brochure, Care for the Alps: leave no trace, was released in 2002, together with a much-improved Huts code. In 1999 (23.8.99), the AALC noted that the distribution of the codes brochures needed to be improved. On the basis of observations made at parks offices and visitor centres while undertaking this study, improvement is still needed.

The RTWG and the CRWG have important roles in promoting tourism and liaising with the tourist industry in the Australian Alps. As was noted earlier in this study, tourism and recreation is the major industry in the Alps, worth many millions of dollars a year. This has been confirmed by a study undertaken in partnership with the CRC for Sustainable Tourism, The Economic Values of Tourism to the Australian Alps (Mules et al. 2002). It is thus not surprising that the AALC has concerned itself with the many activities undertaken in the area of tourism and marketing. In 1992, a Tourism Marketing and Promotion Strategy was prepared (Virtanen 1992). Numerous on-ground signs and displays have been installed and the AALC contributed to the ‘Talking Window’ displays installed at such places as Mt Beauty, Bairnsdale, Tumut, Jindabyne, Mansfield, and Canberra. An important undertaking was the publication of the substantive touring guide, Explore the Australian Alps (AALC 1998b). The Australian Alps Benchmark Awareness and Satisfaction Report (Worthington and Di Mazio 1999) highlighted the need to embark on a more sustained, planned and targeted approach to marketing and communication and was the precursor to the ‘Marketing and Public Relations Plan’ developed in 2000/01. Key components of the Plan were an audit of past and current projects and the development of a three-year marketing plan based on two target audiences, rural neighbours and park visitors (AALC 2001, 17).

4. In terms of Increasing Community Awareness of the Alps

For the cooperative program’s KRA of Community Awareness, the specified required outcome is “Key audiences are aware of the unique natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks as a single biogeographical entity, the management actions that are necessary to protect these intrinsic values, and the cross-border management program and its achievements”. Since the signing of the first MOU, much attention has been devoted to raising public awareness of the Australian Alps and the cooperative management program as this has always been seen as fundamental to achieving the program’s goals. There are many aspects to the work that has been undertaken.

The Community Projects Officer plays a major role in promoting the Alps through the press, radio and television, particularly to the general public (often non-visiting) within the broad region of Sydney-Albury-Melbourne-Sale and the closer rural neighbours. This is done through media releases, displays about the program and ecotourism in the Alps, and 30 and 60 seconds community service announcements on radio and television. New film is being prepared (AALC 25.2.02). Large inserts have been prepared for local and regional newspapers on the Australian Alps and the 2002 International Year of Mountains. The program’s website, which was set up in 1996, has a wider audience. Many of these activities have potentially high returns for small outlays (7.12.98). In 1996, a range of products – posters, bumper stickers, t-shirts – was produced to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the program. In the same year, “The Ministers sought an increase in efforts to raise community awareness of the Australian Alps and further work to improve the awareness of State/Territory tourism agencies and ski operators in relation to the cross-border management arrangements and values” (Ministerial meeting 21.2.96).

One of the first products of the program was a poster of the Australian Alps and the national parks, published in 1987, followed by a tourist map in 1992. A new Australian Alps national parks touring map and a video, ‘Stories among the Snow Gums: a journey through the Australian Alps’, were produced in 1999. The aim of Wild Guide: plants and animals of the Australian Alps (Cameron-Smith 1999) is to help visitors to identify commonly seen habitats, plants and animals and increase community understanding and appreciation of the unique natural heritage.

76 Recognition of the Alps and the program has been raised by these, but they have been confused by very similar ones for Kosciusko National Park, a matter that has been the subject of some criticism.
values of the alpine and sub-alpine environments and the importance of conserving them.

A key part of the community awareness program has been the work in primary and secondary education, through a number of publications and workshops for teachers. One of the program’s first publications was the Australian Alps Education Kit (Gowland 1992), which received an Australian Geography Teachers Association award. A new kit is being developed. A field studies guide for teachers and group leaders was published in 1994 (Slattery 1994). The Australian Alps Clue Kit (Garnett and Kessing 1995) is an activity booklet that introduces children to why the Alps are special, covering selected conservation issues, plant and animal adaptations to the extreme cold, common Alps wildlife, and rare animals (such as the pygmy possum and corroboree frog). Over the years, a number of teacher awareness workshops have been run (22.5.91, 25.2.02) as have alpine ecology and management courses for biology, geography, and environmental studies teachers (at Namadgi, Kosciuszko and Lake Mountain in 1992 and 1993).

Much effort has been devoted to raising the awareness and knowledge of those working in the tourist industry. In 1994, an Australian Alps National Parks: tour operators manual (Gibbs and Mackay 1994) was released, containing material for tour operators and information for tourists, a draft version forming the basis of a pilot workshop held at Khancoban in 1993 (23.6.93). The manual covered natural and cultural values of the Alps, management issues, environmental education, safety and policy issues. Training programs and workshops have been run for commercial tourist operators, as at Mt Buffalo and Charlotte Pass in 1996 and Kosciusko National Park in 1998. The Liaison Committee (7.12.98) gave much consideration to the training of tour operators in the Australian Alps national parks in order to provide endorsement for them and to encourage them to know and implement three themes, accurate information on the Alps, interpretive style, and practice of minimal impact techniques for visitors. Because of the need to maximise the credibility of accreditation, minimise the workload on parks staff, and cut costs, efforts were made to have the courses run by the Canberra Institute of Technology (25.6.98). These would use a formal curriculum and accredited training module, based on materials compiled by parks staff, and those undertaking the courses would be formally accredited.

The training module interpreting the Australian Alps national parks for tour guides was accredited late in 1999. Since then a package of learning materials has been developed. This project will be used in delivering high quality training modules to tour guides operating throughout the Australian Alps national parks (AALC 2000a, 12).

The development was fully supported by the AALC (20.10.00) and the Heads of Agencies (23.11.00), but it has yet to come to fruition, in large measure because the industry itself is unwilling to take up the module.

Frequent community awareness training courses have been held for public contact staff from parks and the tourist information industry (rangers, park workers, and visitor centres staff). These ‘Frontline of the Alps’ courses (also known as ‘Alps All Over’) are aimed at increasing knowledge of the Australian Alps, increasing staff skills, interpretation methods, and networking. Courses have been held at various centres in the Alps, in Kosciuszko National Park (1993), Falls Creek (1994), Namadgi (1997), and Jindabyne (2000).

Stimulated by the forthcoming International Year of Mountains 2002, the CRWG undertook a ‘Benchmark Awareness and Satisfaction Survey’ in 1999. Of those surveyed, 67 per cent of rural residents and 6 per cent of park visitors were aware of the Australian Alps cooperative management program (AALC 1999, 13). The survey highlighted the need for a more sustained,

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77 At a Ministerial Meeting in 1994 (3.11.94), Mark Birrell (Victoria) “said that he supported the MOU and the work being done under its auspices but noted that he would prefer the AALC to strengthen its interagency cooperative role rather than putting a particular emphasis on production of products such as publications”. The evidence clearly indicates that there was no valid basis for such a comment.

78 Topics covered are as follows: The Australian Alps – an introduction; Geology and geomorphology of the Australian Alps; Soils of the Australian Alps; Vegetation of the Australian Alps; Fauna of the Australian Alps; Who owns the Alps?; Seasonal grazing in the Australian Alps; Recreation in the Australian Alps; Water catchment in the Australian Alps; Nature conservation in the Australian Alps; and Bibliography. The Kit also included 48 colour slides and commentary.
planned and targeted approach to marketing and communication. It was the precursor to the ‘Marketing and Public Relations Plan’ developed in 2001, which will guide the work of the CRWG for the next three years. It involves an audit of past and current projects and the development of a three-year marketing plan based on two target audiences, rural neighbours and park visitors (AALC 2001, 17).

5. **In terms of Australian Alps Program Development**

The specified outcome of this KRA is “To ensure that the Australian Alps national parks program is well managed, maintains its effectiveness and operates within the relevant policy context of each participating agency”. This is an important area for the Liaison Committee and the Program Coordinator. Other sections of this study amply demonstrate that this is being achieved with considerable success and does not require further discussion here.

6. **In terms of Management expertise**

For the cooperative program’s KRA of Management Expertise, the specified required outcome is “Staff, volunteers and other park-based workers are knowledgeable about the values of the Australian Alps, and are skilled in the best-practice techniques for managing the natural environment, cultural resources, visitors and threats to the Australian Alps national parks”. Improving the skills and knowledge of park staff through training and professional development is critical to the success of the program. Much of this has already been demonstrated, but some activities are of a more all-embracing nature.

Following the Howmans Gap workshop that led to the establishment of the cooperative management program, a field workshop has been held each year (Table 11.1). This is regarded as “the primary opportunity to gather together field staff from the Australian Alps national parks and to provide training to a wide cross-section of park managers” (AALC 1999, 25). These bring together as many people as possible from all levels of the parks agencies. Each workshop has a particular focus. In terms of these annual workshops, “Where it is unlikely that consistency may be achieved on some of these issues in the short term, at least staff from other agencies understand and can interpret the reasons for the differences” (Mackay and Worboys 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Howmans Gap</td>
<td>Management of Grazing, Fire, Resorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Perisher</td>
<td>Ecotourism, Recreation Monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Birrigai, Namadgi National Park</td>
<td>Wilderness, recreation, fire management</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Dinner Plain, nr Mt. Hotham</td>
<td>Cultural landscapes, recreation site management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Adaminaby</td>
<td>Natural heritage management issues, including future and long-term threats to the Australian Alps national parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Jindabyne</td>
<td>Community education and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Mt Buffalo</td>
<td>Recreational management issues relating to the balance and protection of park values; Visitor management over 100 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Walwa</td>
<td>Working with volunteers and neighbour relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Dinner Plain</td>
<td>Program Development: past, present and future strategies aimed at achieving MOU outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Walwa</td>
<td>Program Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Jindabyne</td>
<td>‘Celebrating Mountains’ Conference (in place of the field meeting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Walwa</td>
<td>Cooperative Management – Looking Ahead; Aboriginal Heritage Management – Everybody’s Business</td>
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</table>
As has been indicated, many workshops and other sessions are held to focus on specific issues. According to participants, these have real outcomes, including research and management projects that are undertaken. In addition, some have been concerned with more general issues, such as training in remote area first aid. At Khancoban in 1997, a staff/ranger training session was concerned with sharing and disseminating information on the positive and negative impacts of park management practices. The following year, a workshop was held in Tumut, primarily for working group members, which dealt with the principles and elements of project and contract management and the importance of contracting and procurement skills in achieving the outcomes of Australian Alps Strategic Plans. In March 2000, an international five-day Human Waste Management workshop was held in Canberra and Jindabyne, with over 80 participants from other parts of Australia, the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and other countries, as well as Alps parks staff. It dealt with contemporary approaches to human faecal waste management at visitor facilities, trailheads and in back-country protected areas, including issues of maintenance and cleaning (AALC 2000c). In addition, the cooperative program has facilitated the participation of parks staff in training programs and activities provided by neighbouring Alps park agencies.

In November 1995, the IUCN sponsored a Transfrontier Mountains Area Workshop that travelled from Canberra to Melbourne and took in locations in the Namadgi, Kosciuszko and Alpine National Parks, including participation in the annual field meeting at Dinner Plain. The workshop was attended by representatives from 19 countries. Its focus was ‘Transborder Protected Area Cooperation’ (Hamilton et al. 1996).

A particular issue for the Alps program from its inception has been that of cross-border law enforcement and the inability of staff from one jurisdiction to operate officially in another. In early 1987, a Task Force on Cross-Border Access was formed (26.2.87) and the problem was discussed by the Ministers in 1991 (26.4.91). Ministers could authorize particular individuals from other jurisdictions to perform functions and exercise powers under legislation under their control, but NSW had no mechanisms for automatic or ‘generic’ appointments. The Ministers agreed that particular positions should be identified for enforcement of legislation from adjacent administrations. By late 1992, the AALC (16.10.92) recorded that a cross-border law enforcement policy guidelines paper had been endorsed by all agencies and implementation meetings held. With this, the Law Enforcement Working Group’s objectives had been achieved and the group was disbanded. In 1992, the Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter, (3, 1992, 6) reported that authorization of officers to carry out law enforcement in adjacent border areas was virtually complete.

In following years, on-ground familiarization field inspections to assist cross-border law enforcement were undertaken and cross-border law enforcement training workshops were held in Kosciusko and Alpine national parks (AALC 1995) and Namadgi in 1996. Following the training, the rangers were able to be appointed as authorized officers for both agencies. In 1998-99, a workshop was held at Namadgi with NSW and ACT parks staff and NSW and Australian Federal Police officers to discuss such issues as authorization, information exchange, and illegal pig hunting (AALC 1999, 24). It was also reported that protocols were being investigated to allow authorization across the NSW-ACT border, as well as access to a common radio frequency.

Conclusion
This chapter has demonstrated that the achievements of the AALC and especially the working groups are substantial, especially as much of the work involved has been undertaken in addition to the regular work of the people involved. They have contributed significantly to increased knowledge and better management of the national parks and other protected areas in the Australian Alps, as a whole and individually.
Chapter 12. Of More than National Significance?

The various national parks and other protected areas that now exist are clear acknowledgement of the national significance of the Australian Alps. This has been reinforced over many years by scientists, conservationists, and politicians, as well as the parks’ staffs, as was discussed in Chapter 3. But many people and organisations have gone further, stating that many of the values of the Australian Alps are of international significance. This is the view of many scientists and it has been put forward collectively by the Australian Academy of Science. There have been numerous statements from conservationists and their organisations, such as the Victorian National Parks Association, the National Parks Association of New South Wales, and the National Parks Association of the ACT. Some of the individuals and organisations have gone on to press for some formal international recognition of all or parts of the Australian Alps, such as Ramsar sites, Biosphere Reserves, and World Heritage listing (see for example, Mosley 1988).

However, the MOU has been clearly written in terms of the national values of the Australian Alps and has been from the initial ‘Framework’ and first MOU through to the 1998 version (see Appendix 6). A number of clauses refer to “the national significance of the Australian Alps” (2.1, 2.2) and “the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks” (3.1). There is no reference in the first four MOUs to the international significance of the Alps, though the 1990-93 Cooperative Management Plan and subsequent Strategic Plans do contain such references (see Appendices 12 and 13). However, as indicated earlier (Chapter 7), in Clause 4.11, the 2003 MOU does refer to the internationally significant values of the Australian Alps national parks.

In spite of this, the AALC has, throughout its existence, devoted much time and energy to establishing, demonstrating, confirming the international significance of the Australian Alps; and as a consequence, trying to secure some formal international recognition of this. Clearly, the question has to be asked why this activity has been – and perhaps continues to be – undertaken. Some suggestions can be made:

- pressures from and lobbying by conservation groups, not least to get rid of what they consider problems, such as grazing in Victoria’s Alpine National Park;
- the perceived status and prestige that such a listing would bring, especially in terms of raising the international profile of the Alps;
- the economic benefits that would follow;
- additional protection from developments within the parks, especially the winter resorts, and, in part, protection from the states,79 and
- international scrutiny of the management of the Alps.

There is clearly a dilemma here for the AALC and one that remains unresolved.80

Consideration of this issue is made somewhat difficult by the fact that ‘demonstrating international significance’ and ‘securing some formal international recognition’ are separate issues that have often been seen as one and the same. National and international values of the Australian Alps have been and frequently are mixed up with international recognition, especially the desire for World Heritage Listing. This has resulted in confusion and often disappointment at its non-achievement. The issues are closely interconnected and not easily separated, but they need to be.

Establishing international significance

Minutes of AALC meetings in 1989 and the early 1990s indicate lengthy discussions on the international significance of the Alps and that reports had been and were being prepared on the subject for various parts of the Alps by the different agencies. The Committee supported these studies in various ways, in Victoria (Busby 1990), Namadgi (Boden 1991), and Kosciuszko

79 This was especially true after the Tasmanian dams controversy. The views were shared by some parks staff.
80 At its 22.4.99 meeting, “The Committee agreed that ‘international’ significance is marginally relevant as the MOU relates to ‘nationally significant values’. This focus will also rule the Commonwealth participation in the agreement”.
(Good 1992a), including contributing to printing costs (11.9.92). There was recognition of the value of and need for a complete Alps-wide document on the international significance of the Alps and considerable discussion of the matter (5.4.89, 11.10.89, 22.2.90, and a meeting on 13.7.89 of a large sub-committee). There was support for recognition of the international significance of the Alps from activities in which the AALC was involved, including a special issue of the Revue de Géographie Alpine, published by the Institut de Géographie Alpine in France (Grenier and Good 1992) and the first Fenner Conference on the Environment held in 1988 (Good 1989). In the case of the latter, the support came in many of the papers presented and in the conference resolutions:

This Conference:
- affirms the outstanding importance of the scientific values of the Australian Alps in the ACT, NSW and Victoria, and recognises that these values include many which have international scientific significance;
- considers that collectively these values warrant the area being identified as part of the world heritage and it being nominated for the world heritage list;
- calls on the Commonwealth and State governments to achieve the highest level of co-operative management to protect the Australian Alps, in view of their scientific and other values;
- emphasises the great aesthetic values of the environments of the Australian Alps and their importance to the Australian heritage; and
- emphasises the need for further and ongoing studies and commends the scientific study of the Australian Alps to all scientists (Good 1989, 392).

Despite the level of reported activity in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT, it took some time to produce an Alps-wide study, this being finally achieved in a report entitled The International Significance of the Natural Values of the Australian Alps (Kirkpatrick 1993). Kirkpatrick summarized his report in the following way:

1. The Australian Alps have been argued to have international significance for many of their natural properties, including their geology, geomorphology, alpine ecosystems, the catena of eucalypt-dominated communities and their aesthetic qualities. Kosciusko National Park is already a Biosphere Reserve and is recognised internationally for biological diversity of its plants.
2. The parks in the MOU area have undoubted international significance under the Convention of Biological Diversity and have qualities as a whole that should allow them to be readily recognised as the core of an enlarged Biosphere Reserve.
3. The Australian Alps have outstanding international significance on the criteria used in the World Heritage Convention in a variety of areas, most notably their outstanding representation of a highly diverse and unusual assemblage of communities dominated by eucalypts, their evidence of geomorphological, edaphic and ecological processes in the alpine and treeless subalpine zones, and their character as a globally unusual intraplate mountain range.
4. The outstanding natural attributes of the Australian Alps compare well with those that have been used as a basis for the recent successful nominations for World Heritage of other areas in Australia.
5. Unfortunately, the integrity of some parts of the Australian Alps, while being reasonable on an international scale, is comparatively poor compared to the same recent nominations, both as a result of past development and exotic species invasion, and as a result of continuing use of part of the area for purposes inconsistent with the maintenance of World Heritage qualities. The perception of poor integrity could put any nomination at risk of failure.
6. The chances for a successful nomination for World Heritage would be improved by further commitment to the elimination of current threatening processes, and the mitigation of the effects of past disturbances. A commitment to the removal of stock grazing would be important.
7. Any nomination should exclude development areas, unless they are highly significant for threatened species. The arguments in the nomination would be improved by the inclusion of the Mt Buffalo National Park, the Baw Baw National Park, the Errinundra National Park, the Coopacambra National Park and the Croajingolong National Park. However, non-contiguity and the non-inclusion of the parks in southeastern NSW reduce the potential strength of the East Gippsland inclusions (Kirkpatrick 1993, 4-5).

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81 The publication of Kosciusko Heritage (Good 1992a) was assisted by the AALC as “a contribution to the inter-state co-operative Alps management program”.

82 Some of these areas were included in proposals for World Heritage listing of areas in the far south of south-east of NSW (Mosley and Costin 1992).
The main conclusions of his report were as follows:

‘… the Australian Alps present to the world a large and irreplaceable sample of Australian natural history with the prospect that it can be preserved for a very long time’ (Costin 1989, 18). This quotation directs attention towards two major attributes of the study area that help give it outstanding international significance. The first is that it includes one of the major extremes of environment and biota on a continent that has the most distinct biota of any other large landmass. The biota is not only very different, it is also very large. Australia is rightly regarded as one of the few megabiodiversity countries. The second attribute is its size, largely natural state and environmental diversity. These ensure that, with minimal appropriate management and after certain integrity issues have been addressed, World Heritage qualities have a high likelihood of persisting (Kirkpatrick 1993, 16).

The focus of the reports mentioned thus far, as well as others, is on the natural heritage of the Australian Alps. There is only limited consideration of the cultural heritage. This was in spite of the fact that a complete picture of the area’s international (or national) significance could not be presented without such an assessment. Whilst the AALC early on established a Cultural Heritage Working Group, organised a major symposium in 1991 (Scougall 1992), and supported much work in the area, it was not until 1999 that a companion report to the Kirkpatrick study was completed, The International Significance of the Cultural Values of the Australian Alps National Parks (Lennon 1999; for further discussion, see Chapter 11).

The cultural values ranged from Aboriginal heritage through various phases of occupation and use such as exploration, grazing and mining to more recent land uses of tourism and hydro-electricity generation. The assessment against international criteria has documented the significance of the cultural values in international terms and provides a greater understanding of the need to protect the cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks (AALC 1999, 20).

There can be no denying the validity of the view that much – if not all – of the Australian Alps is of international significance.

Securing formal international recognition
Parts of the Australian Alps have already gained international recognition. In 1996, Blue Lake, a glacial lake in Kosciuszko National Park, and Ginini Flat, a sphagnum peat wetland important for the northern Corroboree frog and migrating birds in Namadgi National Park, was added to the Ramsar list of international wetlands.

In 1977, Kosciuszko National Park was declared a World Biosphere Reserve and a Centre of Biological Diversity under the UNESCO ‘Man and the Biosphere’ program. As Kirkpatrick commented, this “can reasonably be taken to testify to an international acceptance of this part of the study area as an outstanding example of alpine environments, and of the significance of the park for its unique communities and unusual natural features” (Kirkpatrick 1993, 15). Proposals for other areas to be designated Biosphere Reserves have also been made, including part of Namadgi National Park. The Biosphere Reserve concept “is designed to cover a range of land uses in a given bioclimate region – encompassing protected areas and adjacent lands under other uses, potentially including forestry, agriculture and urban development. Biosphere reserves are intended to provide for conservation, land rehabilitation, research, education, traditional use, and demonstration of land management under different controlled use regimes” (Davey 1986, 6). The concept and the environment are thus well suited for an extension of the Reserve well beyond Kosciuszko, not only taking in more protected areas but also the wider communities beyond them, not least many of the adjoining forests (Mosley 1999, 162). Whilst there was some support for the concept of an Australian Alps Biosphere Reserve in the AALC, the Ministers at their meeting in 1994 (3.11.94) stated that it was a matter that should be left to the states and territory.83 This was in spite of the fact that a Biosphere Reserve was seen as a means of raising the profile of the Australian Alps both nationally and internationally and providing a framework that could be used to increase cooperation between park managers and neighbouring land managers (a not insignificant consideration).

83 At the meeting, Mark Birrell (Victoria) “suggested that the issue of the designation of other Alps reserves as Biosphere reserves is one which should be addressed by individual jurisdictions; he felt that, as the AALC is not a policy making body, it was not appropriate for such a proposal to be considered within that forum”. To say the least, this was a very narrow and unhelpful comment.
However, a constantly recurring goal has been World Heritage Area listing. This was suggested by the Australian Academy of Science in 1977 (according to Mosley [1992a], largely at the urging of Costin), and again in 1985 with its support for the MOU (see Chapter 6), followed by proposals from the Victorian National Parks Association (Johnson 1988; Mosley 1988). Since 1987, it has been a topic of discussion at many AALC and Heads of Agencies meetings. The discussions and proposals for action have been based on the reports prepared by the states, scientists and conservation groups, and those prepared for the AALC by Kirkpatrick and Lennon. Both reports had much to say about World Heritage listing (WHL). Like many previous studies, Kirkpatrick concluded that there was a strong case in terms of the Alps natural values to support nomination, but he also recognized there were integrity problems (Kirkpatrick 1993, 38-44). There were a number of issues relating to management, especially skiing and ski resorts in KNP and the Alpine National Park and grazing in Victoria. As has been indicated, consideration of the cultural values of the Australian Alps came later, in spite of recognition of the need to undertake such work. There were clearly concerns about the Alps cultural significance in terms of World Heritage criteria. At an AALC meeting (12.6.92), the opinion was offered “that the cultural significance of the Alps is not sufficient to ensure World Heritage listing” (see also Titchen 1992). However, Lennon’s study concluded that a strong case could be made on the four cultural criteria … for the listing of most of the MOU area under the WH Convention.

In 1994 Kirkpatrick argued that there was a strong case for the same area on the grounds of all four natural criteria. With the current merger of criteria for cultural and natural properties and that the conditions of integrity including appropriate notions of authenticity be related directly to each of the criteria, it seems more likely that a nomination for listing of the Australian Alps as a place of outstanding universal value would succeed (Lennon 1999, 63).

Clearly, the conclusions are not unequivocal.

There have been varying levels of political support; at different times, support has been expressed by New South Wales and Victoria (sometimes in the form of a policy statement). Quite apart from any perceived ‘prestige’, there are clearly substantial economic benefits of WHL, as it would be one of the largest marketing tools for the Alps as an integrated entity (Heads of Agencies 6.11.98). There has always been strong support from conservation and other community organisations, such as the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and the National Parks Association of the ACT. The Victorian Government backed the proposal of the VNPA (Mosley 1988). As indicated above, there was support at the Fenner Conference in 1988 (Good 1989). At a joint meeting with the AALC (2.4.96), the Chairpersons of the Parks Advisory Committees supported the World Heritage nomination as it would highlight the international values of the area, as well as creating economic benefits. The AALC has long recognised that nominations for individual parks would not succeed and that any nomination for the Alps as a whole would require thorough documentation and an integrated approach.

Whilst there has always been support for World Heritage listing, there have also been frequent indications that a nomination would not be able to be adequately documented, that it could not meet the required criteria for nomination, that it would not be fully supported, and that it would not succeed. There was clearly a lack of Federal ministerial support through the early to mid-1990s and at a meeting of Ministers responsible for the Alps on 26.4.91, “Ministers were strongly of the opinion that they were not prepared to nominate the Alps for World Heritage listing if there is a chance that the nomination will be rejected by IUCN”. Nomination was raised at the 1990 meeting of the Australian Committee for IUCN and a sub-committee formed to consider the matter. The only advance was an indication that the Australian Alps may be placed on an Indicative List of possible World Heritage properties, but this does not appear to have been done.

Even though there was no real encouragement to proceed to nomination, WHL kept being raised. At their meeting on 3.11.94, the Ministers recognised the importance of the findings on international conservation values in Kirkpatrick’s report and encouraged discussion between the parties to ensure that these values were protected. However, Senator Faulkner, the Commonwealth Minister, noted that there was not a great deal of pressure on him to pursue a WHL nomination of the Alps. A year later (16.11.95), the Heads of Agencies felt that without unequivocal support
from each jurisdiction, a World Heritage nomination was unlikely to succeed. They also agreed that further work was required in the area of cultural heritage before there was any further consideration of a nomination. At its 12.10.95 meeting, the AALC reported that after discussions with the World Heritage Unit of the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories, it was evident the Alps nomination had a low priority. It was also evident that some exploitive activities within the parks would have to end before consideration for WHL could proceed. On 25.7.96, the AALC was informed that an Alps nomination was “not on the agenda” of the World Heritage Unit unless the States wanted it to be considered.\textsuperscript{84} In any case, additional assessment of cultural heritage values was still needed. At their meeting on 23.11.00, the Heads of Agencies were informed by the Commonwealth’s World Heritage Unit that “the low evidence of cultural heritage values of the Alps would be an impediment to listing”. With the IUCN moving towards thematic listings and only taking one nomination a year from each country, WHL for the Alps is even less likely.

In spite of the obstacles, there is no doubt that support for WHL remains. There is also no doubt that it is a worthy long-term goal. But what has come out of all this effort by the AALC? In brief, much that is positive:

- it has helped to raise the profile of the Australian Alps and increase community awareness of them in Australia;
- the studies on an Alps-wide basis of the natural and cultural heritage values and of the requirements for World Heritage listing have added significantly to the overall knowledge-base of the Australian Alps; and
- the studies have highlighted what needs to be done to ‘protect/conserve’ the natural and cultural heritage values of the Alps.

But if WHL is not a current option, what alternative is there to gaining further recognition of the international significance of the Australian Alps?

One option would be to extend the Biosphere Reserve from Kosciuszko National Park. This has been raised on a number of occasions and it was given much support by Kirkpatrick:

There is no doubt that the natural features of the study area outside Kosciuszko would justify such an extension. The representation of the alpine and eucalypt forest biomas would be markedly improved, and the larger area and environmental range would increase the probability of the survival of their constituent ecosystems (Kirkpatrick 1993, 15).

His view was that “there would seem to be no criterion-based barrier to extending Biosphere Reserve status to all of the MOU area” (Kirkpatrick 1993, 62). Such a proposal has been considered within the Alps forums on a number of occasions. The AALC gave it in-principle support (18.4.94; Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter, 9, 1994, 11). The concept was suggested again at the 23.11.00 Heads of Agencies meeting. It has also been noted that extending the Kosciuszko Biosphere Reserve to the whole of the Australian Alps would strengthen any future case for WHL.

But should formal international recognition be pursued? Is it necessary for the preservation and complete protection of the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps? New heritage legislation before the Commonwealth Parliament provides another option. The Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2002 makes amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and establishes a new heritage regime at the national level. The implications of this legislation for the Australian Alps are considered in Chapter 15.

\textsuperscript{84} This was in spite of comments suggesting that it was a potential nomination in the Autumn 1996 Australian World Heritage News.
Chapter 13. Beyond the Australian Alps

The influence of the MOU and the cooperative management program extends well beyond the Australian Alps. There are at least three aspects of this influence that merit brief consideration.

**Connecting with others**

As was indicated in Chapter 1, the Australian Alps are the only alpine areas on the mainland of Australia, but there is a larger area in Tasmania. It is thus hardly surprising that early in the history of the AALC, there was recognition of ‘common ground’. At the 15.11.91 meeting, it was recorded that Tasmania was duplicating or carrying out similar work to the AALC. It was also realised that the same observation could be made with respect to New Zealand. As a result, it was agreed that “representatives from Tasmania and/or New Zealand be invited to attend meetings of the Liaison Committee once a year”. This was followed by invitations to the agencies in both jurisdictions to send representatives to the September 1992 meeting. Links with Tasmania have developed further than those with New Zealand.

There were – and are – benefits to be gained from closer ties with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, not least in sharing knowledge and experience and avoiding duplication of work that is done. To this end, “Tasmania has been involved in a number of projects under the co-operative management program” (AALC 1995, 17). On 2.12.99, the AALC held one of its regular meetings in Hobart and an extended meeting with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service staff: Max Kitchell, the Director, said the Tasmanian Service was interested in exploring closer liaison, but not full membership of the Agreement with a financial commitment. The object of the new arrangement was membership in a non-contiguous bioregional approach to alpine park management, refining best practice management expertise with associated economies of scale. This was made possible by the removal of the ‘contiguous’ requirement with the 1998 revision of the MOU. Tasmania had much to offer the Alps, as well as much to gain from closer cooperation, with good work being done on both sides of Bass Strait, but duplication needs to be avoided. For example, Tasmanian staff made a valued contribution to the Mountain Walking Tracks Forum (AALC 2001, 33). Initially, the arrangements would involve:

- the appointment of a Tasmanian liaison officer to the AALC; the officer would be invited as an observer to at least one meeting per year (preferably early in the project planning cycle);
- the AALC would establish closer liaison with the Tasmanian Service and provide copies of minutes and other relevant material to the Tasmanian Service;
- a Tasmanian column would be included in the News from the Alps and the newsletter would be made available to Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service staff (at least on the Web page); and
- Tasmanian staff would be formally invited to Alps workshops, with appropriate notification to Tasmanian staff.

These arrangements were endorsed by the Heads of Agencies at their meeting on 4.2.00. However, there is no evidence that these arrangements have been followed through or that any links have been established with New Zealand agencies. There are clear benefits to be gained from a revival of connections with both Tasmania and New Zealand.

Further afield, though outside the cooperative program, links have been established between Kosciuszko National Park and Jigme Dorji Park in Bhutan, by means of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Government and the Royal Government of Bhutan. The link has already resulted in staff exchanges and assistance by Kosciuszko National Park.

**External agency connections**

The AALC has established formal links with the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, whose members include government tourism organisations such as the Tourism Council of Australia, Tourism New South Wales and Tourism Victoria, and universities including La Trobe, Griffith and Canberra. The Centre has identified mountain tourism as a large, important and distinctive component of the tourism industry in Australia. The AALC has carried out and facilitated a number of research projects with the Centre (Pickering 1999). In 2002 (29.4.02), the Heads of Agencies proposed the investigation of further collaborative research with the university sector.
The AALC has (or has had) contacts with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), national parks in other countries, and the Institut de Géographie Alpine in Grenoble, France. There are benefits from these international contacts and the positive views of overseas experts on the cooperative program.

The AALC has assisted the activities of the Australian Institute of Alpine Studies (AIAS), which was launched at the ‘Global Threats to Snow’ conference in February 1998. The AIAS is an umbrella organization for alpine researchers in all disciplines. It has no permanent location other than a website (www.aias.org.au). Its aims are to promote research in the alpine and sub-alpine areas of Australia, to share information on current alpine research in Australia and overseas while liaising with international mountain research organisations, and holding a biennial seminar on alpine research. The seminars have been held in the Australian Alps and in Tasmania. Closer links between the AALC and the Institute would be beneficial.

Transferring the knowledge and experience
In Chapter 1, it was stated that the Australian Alps cooperative management program was a good example of inter-jurisdictional or trans-boundary co-operation in the area of natural resource and environmental management. In the early days of the program, the same point was noted by some of the politicians involved. The NSW Minister Bob Carr stated in a letter to Senator Graham Richardson, dated 9.12.87: “I feel that the MOU marks a significant step towards providing a framework within which other co-operative agreements between various agencies of nature conservation could ensure the protection of areas of importance to all Australians”. At the 25.7.90 Heads of Agencies meeting, the NSW officer “Mr Gillooly said that he and the NSW Minister were strongly supportive of cooperative management and were looking at a number of areas bordering Queensland, South Australia and Commonwealth Waters”. In late 1990, an ANPWS paper stated that the success of the Australian Alps program “led to the suggestion that a similar program be established for the management of a proposed tri-state national park on the Murray Floodplains between Renmark and Wentworth”. A meeting was held on 2.10.90 with NSW, Victoria, South Australia and ANPWS representatives. More recently, it has been indicated that Victoria is looking at other cross-border protected areas, such as river red gum forests along the River Murray. As indicated elsewhere in this study, knowledge gained from the cooperative program is being transferred to a number of overseas countries.

Much greater use could be made of the model provided in the Australian Alps. However, there are two areas where the Alps cooperative program has influenced inter-jurisdictional resource management activities, the Mallee Lands and Jervis Bay.

The Mallee Lands
The ‘Murray Mallee Partnership: Conservation without Borders: Memorandum of Understanding’ was signed on March 12, 1999. It covers the parks and other conservation reserves in the Murray Mallee areas of NSW, Victoria and South Australia. It had its beginnings in the late 1970s with informal meetings of local on-ground agencies’ staff, who were doing similar things and seeking to do them better (Paul Seager, pers. com.). In particular, the “the need for co-operation and cross-border authorisations was identified with respect to the Kuklyne parks in North West Victoria, following co-operative survey work on kangaroos and mallee fowl” (Byrne 1998). The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the Commonwealth (though Environment Australia has no day-to-day interest or involvement). The Partnership is seen as ‘Conservation without Borders’, through the growth and enhancement of co-operative management. The work of the Partnership is undertaken by a Steering Committee and an Operations Committee, members being drawn from relevant government agencies and the community-based Bookmark Biosphere Trust (in South Australia), with an executive officer to organise Partnership activities, including regular workshops to increase field staff skills.

The main points of the Partnership are set out in terms of the ‘Objectives’ and ‘Working Arrangements’:

**Objectives**

The Partners agree to pursue the growth and enhancement of co-operative management that may include:

- protection of the landscape;
- protection of flora and fauna habitats and ecosystems;
- amelioration of threatening processes;
- protection of cultural values;
- provision of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities;
- promotion of the appreciation and understanding of the Murray Mallee; and
- efficiency and effectiveness in delivering programs.

**Working arrangements**

The partners have agreed to, where possible and appropriate:
- facilitate joint operations;
- cooperate in the provision of staff training and development opportunities;
- share relevant information, ideas and expertise;
- promote public awareness, participation and improved services to the community;
- undertake cooperative analysis of information arising from research; and
- consult in the preparation of management plans and guidelines that complement management practices.

The Australian Alps MOU provided a model for a formalised agreement and some direct sharing of experiences through the Program Coordinator. Though there are significant differences, the Partnership operates in a similar manner to the Alps program. It has Ministerial and agency support but no resources and is dependent on the commitment of the people involved.

**Jervis Bay**

For many years, conservationists have worked hard for formal protection of the lands and water around Jervis Bay on the NSW South Coast. At different times, they have opposed many ‘development projects’, including a nuclear power station and a naval fleet base. “The legacy of the environment movement is a rare example of a largely intact natural environment on the NSW south coast” (NSWNPWS 2001, 1). Now, in the Territory of Jervis Bay and adjoining areas of NSW, there are a number of protected areas: Booderee National Park (formerly the Jervis Bay National Park), which is jointly managed by Environment Australia and the local Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council; the NSW Jervis Bay National Park; and the Jervis Bay Marine Park. The three parks make up a significant portion of the Jervis Bay region. In response to concerns raised by the community, industry and government agencies (not least the parks staff) about the need for a more cooperative approach to managing the region, as well as the large increases in visitor numbers (e.g. around 700,000 a year to Booderee National Park), the Jervis Bay Integrated Management Project was initiated by NSW NPWS (NSWNPWS 1999).

The aim of the project is to develop a strategy for a cooperative and integrated approach to managing the Jervis Bay region in collaboration with the region’s stakeholders, namely the three levels of government, the community and the private sector (NSWNPWS 2001, 2).

At the present time,

There is an MOU between NPWS and Parks Australia in regard to the cooperative management of conservation reserves and a NPWS/Parks Australia joint management committee has been in operation for more than five years. There is also a MOU with the Marine Park Authority for the cooperative management of the Jervis Bay waters (BNPBM 2002, 117).

The plans for the Booderee and Marine parks “are generally complementary and consistent with each other” (EA 2002, 32). There is a commitment to integrated management, but with so many parties involved, it is clearly not an easy task. There are the existing agreements to build on and there is potential in the Biosphere Reserve concept. A draft strategy is under further review.

The development of the Jervis Bay Integrated Management Project owes much to the Alps program and its philosophy and the experience of a number of people involved in the Alps in earlier years, namely Graeme Worboys, Diane Garood and Sue Feary (Anon. 2002).

**Conclusion**

For many other trans-border locations, there is much to be learned from the Australian Alps experiences. Further, in the course of this study, it has been pointed out that the program provides a cross-agency forum of value well beyond the Australian Alps (in a comparable way, though on a much smaller scale, to the roles of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and Commission).
Chapter 14. A Critical Assessment

A critical assessment of the program is an essential part of this study as well as for the program’s continuation and improvement. Some critical comment has already been presented, especially in the discussion of the AACM Review (Chapter 10). Here, the discussion is of the program as a whole. It is based on the records of the AALC and the cooperative program; the small number of written commentaries on the program (apart from the AACM Review) (e.g. Good 1992c; Worboys 1996); and, primarily, on interviews with people who are or have been involved with the program.

Over forty people were interviewed, covering all of the agencies and all levels of involvement in the cooperative program. The interviews were conducted in an informal way, in an endeavour to obtain not only factual information, but also people’s views on the program, the kinds of material not contained in the written records. The interviews provided a wealth of information and comment, every person adding something to the body of knowledge collected in the course of the study. Most of the material obtained from the interviews is contained in this chapter, though some has been used in other chapters where it was most relevant. Clearly, many people have a real ‘love affair’ with the Australian Alps. But if there is any over-riding conclusion from the interviews it is the tremendous support for the cooperative program, at all levels, and the enormous goodwill that it continues to generate.

Acknowledgement of achievements – the positives
Quite apart from the views expressed in the AACM Review, the program has received much commendation, both nationally and internationally.

From its early days, the Australian Alps cooperative management program has been praised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), based in Gland, Switzerland, especially through its Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas. In 1990, representatives of the Commission stated that it was “the most advanced operating border park now in existence” (Thorsell and Harrison 1990). The holding of the Commission’s 1995 international workshop on mountain transborder protected area management in the Australian Alps provided further international recognition for the MOU and program as providing world’s best practice in cross-border management of protected areas and a model for other cross-border protected areas (Hamilton et al. 1996). The high regard for the Alps program held by the IUCN was reaffirmed by Professor Lawrence Hamilton, the IUCN Vice-Chair (Mountains), at the ‘Celebrating Mountains’ Conference held in Jindabyne in November 2002, the major Australian event for of the International Year of Mountains.

Of interest has been the recognition of the program within Australia from beyond those specifically concerned with protected area management. In 2001, as part of the Canberra Region Tourism Awards, the Community Awareness Program received an award for excellence in the ‘General Tourism Services’ category. The award acknowledged the effectiveness of the key components of the program, including publications and other products and their marketing, the web site, community service announcements, ‘Frontline of the Alps’ workshops, and the focus on developing links with the tourism industry.

At a meeting with the AALC on 2.4.96, the chairpersons of the Alps parks Advisory Committees stated that “the MOU is the best kept secret of the nation”. The view may be a little over-stated, though not in the context of protected area management.

In one of the very few assessments of the program, presented at the IUCN workshop held in the Australian Alps, Mackay and Worboys (1995), stated:

The overriding advantage of the cooperative management program lies in the increased protection of the resource. The Alps can be recognized and managed as one ecosystem with enhanced protection of species. There is a significant reduction in duplication of effort which can be reflected in the sharing of research, the sharing of ideas, and the sharing of products such as publications. For the community there is a benefit in the development of complementary policies, the provision of consistent messages and information, and the promotion of a greater range of opportunities. As a positive incentive to staff, there are clear efficiencies in economic terms which, in times of financial restraint, may assist in freeing funding for other areas.
Given the many political, administrative and staffing changes in all of the agencies since the inception of the program, perhaps its greatest achievement is its very survival. One of those involved in its establishment expressed some surprise, but at the same time delight, that it remains in operation. Clearly, the program is not only good for park management, but it demonstrates those qualities that are necessary for success and survival (Crabb 2003a). As indicated in Chapter 13, it is a program from which others can learn.

The MOU and cooperative program were and remain visionary in their endeavour to do away with the jurisdictional boundaries, recognizing the biogeographical unity of the Australian Alps, even though this took some years to become the stated basis of the MOU. The Program enables – even causes – people to look beyond their own parks and jurisdictions, to see the Alps as a whole, taking them beyond purely local issues, though this continues to take some people longer than others. Some working group members have played very significant roles in this respect. It is a ‘beyond states’ forum, a place of dialogue, and any cross-border collaboration on protected area management is ‘a plus’. The ‘concrete’ products or achievements have already been discussed in previous chapters. However, the nature of the cooperative program’s arrangements generates many other positive aspects, especially in cross-border terms, which, in the views of many people, are far more important. Many are of an intangible nature, but nonetheless of great value. They are by no means easy to categorise.

As has been indicated, people are passionate about the Australian Alps. The major strength of the program is in the agency people who are involved, even though this inevitably means that it can wax and wane with particular individuals. Overall, the commitment and dedication to the conservation of the Alps is very strong. This has been strengthened by the bonds between like-minded people that have developed through the program. Staff relationships are generally strong, there is enormous goodwill, understanding and trust are developed; the program was described as ‘a brotherhood’, being involved was ‘a fantastic experience’. Given the relative remoteness and small groups in which many parks staff work, these are important benefits. There is added peer support, which is as important for senior managers as it is for rangers. Of enormous value is the networking, the formal and informal links with others, the ability to share information, knowledge and experiences (especially for specialists) and, as a consequence, reduce duplication of effort, and to be able to draw on the skills of others. Networking was described as the key to the program, having its special basis in people doing things together (as in the working groups), rather than just from meetings. People clearly value the opportunities to get away from their own agencies, to meet with others at a professional level in other locations, to be enabled to see the larger picture. Such meetings, as with the program as a whole, contribute to the breaking down of barriers and bringing people together. Understanding and respect for the work of other agencies develops. There is a will to work together and to make things work, especially on common problems. Some believe that the level of on-ground cooperation that occurs is not fully appreciated and understood at senior levels. The program is a facilitator, providing access to a great body of knowledge that is used in all kinds of ways, which is of great value to lone individuals as well as to agencies, not least the relatively small ACT Parks and Conservation Service. A number of people believe there is not enough meeting and interchange between staff of the various agencies.

The program contributes substantially to the professional development of all levels of parks staff, not only through the annual field days (some are not sure they involve as many staff as they used to) and specialist workshops and seminars, but also ranger and staff exchanges and undertaking projects on secondment, rather than employing consultants. Many of the projects undertaken by parks staff were described as real achievements. In terms of the latter, the people concerned usually have a firm basis on which to build and the knowledge and experience gained are retained within the Alps community. Much more could be made of the professional development potential of such activities; like so many features of the program, the benefits outweigh the costs. For all of those who have occupied the Program Coordinator position, it has been a stepping-stone to a more senior position. The funds available through the annual work programs provide opportunities for rangers and

85 The practical difficulties that these involve, such as moving for short periods especially with families, merit investigation by the AALC.
other staff to initiate and undertake their own discretionary work, to make decisions about them, which would not be possible in their own agencies. The freedom and opportunity to get things done that might not otherwise be possible is highly valued, especially as it is free of bureaucratic constraints, for once the program funds committed, they remain, whereas within the agencies they can be moved to other tasks, especially those of an operational nature. As the Heads of Agencies have acknowledged (4.2.00), such opportunities contribute significantly to the high level of enthusiasm and dedication of field staff. How to maintain the enthusiasm, motivation and involvement of field staff (as well as others) in the face of increasing difficulties (which are discussed later in this chapter) also merits the acknowledgement and attention of the Heads of Agencies and their Ministers, especially as so many believe that the strength of the program resides with the field staff.

The program provides a positive working relationship between the four agencies at all levels, even with the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding. Four groups working together gives greater strength to protected area management. A strength of the program is that it works at so many different levels – politicians, heads of agencies, the AALC, working groups, and on-ground staff. There is communication between colleagues at the different levels. Each level may have waxed and waned, but one or more have been strong at different times.

The initial concerns of some that the program would reduce everything to the ‘lowest common denominator’ have not eventuated. At the same time, others have seen the program as an opportunity to press for the ‘highest common denominator’, as they have done in terms of World Heritage listing (Chapter 12) and the concept of ‘one park’ (Chapter 15). Thus a perceived weakness of the program has become a strength. For many of those involved, they are aware of the things that may not have happened without the program. They are also aware that, increasingly, the projects that are undertaken must be seen to be working

Acknowledgement of weaknesses and failings – the negatives
As was indicated at the start of this chapter, almost all of the people interviewed were highly supportive of the program. Their acknowledgement of its weaknesses and their criticisms were made with concern and at times, frustration. Like the program’s founders, they want to do things better, and they know that, given the necessary resources, they can do so. Not surprisingly, the issues were both real and not so real, but perceptions cannot be ignored. For the future well-being of the program, they need to be addressed.

The fundamental issue is the inadequate staffing and resourcing of the parks agencies as a whole and the parks and other protected areas in particular. True though it is, such a statement has to be seen in the wider context of what most people would regard as inadequate resources for almost all areas of government activity, such as health, education, and roads and railways. However, the observation is particularly true in Victoria, which in recent years has experienced major changes in the philosophy and resourcing of protected areas management (Coffey 2001; Parslow 2002); there have been staff reductions (one interviewee stated from 4,000 to 1,000) and vacancies remain unfilled. In NSW, there have been increases in resources, though these have been paralleled by significant increases in the areas of parks and other protected areas. In 1995, the AALC (21.2.95) was told that NSW staff would no longer be able to be seconded to do project work. The staffing situation has got worse over recent years and for virtually all staff, their time is fully committed to agency tasks.

As has been indicated, the success and even survival of the program is dependent on the interest and enthusiasm of agency staff, at all levels. These values are now under serious threat, as more and more people are (in the words of a manager) no longer able and/or willing ‘to put their hands up’ do the extra work. It has to be acknowledged that a lack of time to do program work, certainly to do it properly, has been a problem from the beginning of the program and one often commented on in the minutes of AALC and Heads of Agencies meetings. The following are some illustrations:

- 1.12.88: working group “members had experienced some difficulty in that their working group work was considered ‘outside of’ their normal work”.
- 13.11.97: highlighted a point raised in the AACM Report that it is becoming more difficult to incorporate tasks into the normal duties of park staff. There is an increasing...
need to structure Alps tasks into individual work programs for officers involved in various projects so that management is fully aware of the officers’ commitment and full support is obtained. Care should be taken not to rely on field staff to do unplanned or additional work.

- 10.3.98: becoming more difficult to incorporate Alps tasks into normal duties of parks staffs.
- 25.2.98: “Clear that many members struggle to do working group work on top of regular jobs”.
- Heads of Agencies 6.11.98: workload problems raised; problems outlined in Victorian letter stated workloads inhibiting progress; pressure on budgets “making it imperative that the program is seen to be efficient and a productive use of funds”.
- 16.8.00: Parks Victoria has difficulty recruiting new working group members due to line responsibilities; NSW staff also struggling with heavy line responsibilities.
- Heads of Agencies 23.11.00: Common sentiment expressed by working group members is a feeling of being over-committed. Alps projects work and involvement seen as secondary to day-to-day agency obligations. In some instances, Alps work not viewed by working group members’ supervisors as agency core business. Requires a further commitment from agencies at all levels, supporting the involvement of staff in the Alps program.
- Heads of Agencies 29.4.02: an AALC member “thanked the working groups for their time and commitment to the AALC, which is often in their own time”.

In the course of the interviews, the overwhelming issue raised by almost everyone was the lack of time available for Alps program work. People may be involved for the ‘love of it’, but everything is limited by available time. Program activities are over and above normal duties, with varying levels of acknowledgement and time allocation by managers and more senior staff. Much of the work is done in people’s own time, with figures of 60 per cent and more being stated. Some are clearly more fortunate. Whilst the various meetings are valued, the travel time involved is part of the problem, making it essential that meetings are focused and relevant. However, the program relies significantly on volunteer work. It is thus not surprising that some things fail. The problem has got worse over recent years, in part due to cuts in resourcing, and people are loath to take on extra work. As a result, while there are the problems of high staff turnover in terms of involvement with the program, others remain for long periods and often suffer burn-out. In many respects, the program has all the ‘pluses’ and ‘minuses’ of a volunteer organization, including being dependent on a small band of committed people. If the program is to really work well, those involved need the necessary time.

The issue of funding has already been discussed in the context of the withdrawal of the Commonwealth’s financial contribution (Chapter 9), but there are other aspects that were raised. More funds could be put into the common fund, but all agencies and individuals are working with squeezed resources and not all of the program’s work is productive. A number of people felt that, on occasions, money could have been better spent. However, especially with the funding cut, it is even harder to fund projects.

Given their role and the size of their involvement in the program, the working groups merit particular attention. They are a major strength of the program. As was indicated earlier, they undertake most of the program’s work; they can demonstrate results, which in total constitute a solid achievement (Chapter 11). But they are particularly prone to the program’s many negative features. For the vast majority of members, the groups clearly provide significant stimulus and satisfaction; for some, there can also be frustration. The meetings take people away from their regular jobs to other locations, the work is focused, they work with like-minded people, and they achieve results through the projects that are undertaken. The meetings, and the program as a whole, also provide forums for field staff and rangers that would not otherwise exist.

However, there are concerns, some of them long-term, some of them rather contentious. There is far too little contact between the different groups, particularly in terms of the work each is doing:

86 This is also a problem within agencies and within the larger parks, especially Victoria’s Alpine National Park.
there needs to better links with the AALC; and there needs to be better communication with the agencies (not just preparing reports, but those who do the research actually visiting parks and passing on the results). There are no rules regarding membership, and so whilst most of the groups have a core of long-standing members, there can be a high turnover of others. One view was that it takes some time to get into the work of a group, to learn what is being done, and then make a contribution. This in particular makes high turnover a problem. It was claimed that some people ‘hang on’ to group positions; there is an element of ‘nepotism’, when ‘new blood’ is needed and opportunities should be given to willing people. At the same time, it is often difficult to find needed members. It was suggested there should be community members on the groups, though it was agreed this would be difficult to handle. It was claimed that members do not pass on information to others; that the groups undertake members’ ‘pet projects’ (though in terms of cultural heritage, it would appear that no proposals come from outside the group).

The working groups work as well as they can. However, there are concerns over their future, especially with the impact of the funding cut on work that can be done and consequently on the groups. If there are only one or two projects, or none, there is little or no point in them. However, it is claimed the groups are valuable to the agencies and to other stakeholders which do not have direct involvement in the program, such as the RTWG’s links with the tourist industry.

Apart from the overall funding and staffing of the agencies, what are some of the reasons for ‘time’ being such a problem, one that obviously affects the well-being of the program? Clearly, some people do not think outside their own park boundaries (one person observed that there was a ‘fortress mentality’ among some parks staff) and relatively small numbers people from each agency are involved in the program. This appears to be especially true for NSW, though not the ACT, which makes a small financial contribution but a relatively larger one in terms of staff (though limited numbers from Namadgi?). One person observed that there could be more support for the program within Kosciuszko. More involvement would make the tasks much easier, but the program is inadequately known and publicised within the agencies. The program needs better promotion among a much wider range of staff. Among other things, staff should ask: How can I be involved? Why should I be involved? What’s in it for me? And what can I contribute? In the absence of knowledge, inadequate perceptions prevail. People need to be kept informed about the program, especially staff new to the Alps parks, and those who are involved have a responsibility to keep others informed about the program’s work and achievements, a responsibility that some do not seem to meet.

The program is recognised and accepted by the responsible Ministers and the Heads of Agencies, but its activities need to be accepted as part of core business for those who are involved, as well as for agencies as a whole. From the responses of interviewees, this is clearly a complex and contentious issue. The level of support for the program varies. From the Ministers, it is rare, except after their very occasional meetings. Clearly, the Ministerial side of the MOU needs attention, perhaps writing a requirement for regular meetings into the agreement. The current situation is in contrast to the early period of the program.

Clearly, as has been indicated, some staff are more fortunate than others. Some indicated they had the support of their managers, others were not so sure. One manager permitted no more than one person from his area per working group, that person having a responsibility to keep other staff informed (more people were able to attend specific workshops, etc.), in an effort to balance his support for the program and the demands of his own agency. Staff are encouraged to participate, but there is no reduction in agency work-load. Some staff believe there is a lack of recognition of the program work they do by the agencies and their senior staff; those involved get satisfaction from the program work but little recognition from within own agencies; program work is not part of an individual’s core business or normal work. Some people believe that those with office

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87 The 18.7.94 AALC meeting minutes recorded resistance from a few NSW park staff to

88 This was evident from the responses of a number of people to the paper given by the author at the ‘Celebrating Mountains’ conference in Jindabyne (Crabb 2003b).
positions are better able to cope with the demands compared with those in field and operational positions, who never know when an emergency is going to demand their complete attention. But the office positions bring their own pressures and deadlines. For all of those involved in the Alps program, it should be part of their core business.

But all people are caught in the same problem – rangers, supervisors, managers and heads of agencies. There are managers who wish they could free staff for more involvement in the Alps program, but their resources are limited, and the people who are of most value to them are often those who are of most value to the program. The issue is a complex one, with many sides to it, as was evident from the observations of the management staff who were interviewed. The problems are as great, if not greater, for the members of the AALC as for the members of the working groups. However, there are lessons to be learned from the more favourable responses of those who have the genuine and stated support of their superiors.

The work programs

There were a number of matters relating to the annual work programs that were raised in the interviews.

There is concern about the nature of some of the work. It was generally agreed that the program has to have a basis in good scientific research, but especially given the small budget, the research has to be on projects that will change management. The point was made in a number of ways: projects should have park management outcomes; research must be targeted at park management; management issues must drive research; research must be management focused, what is needed for park management (‘ask the managers’); there needs to be more interaction between researchers and managers and rangers; research and other endeavours must help on-ground work. For example, valuable scientific work was done on Smoky Mouse populations in Kosciuszko and Namadgi national parks, but the results had few implications for management, as all the animals were in protected wilderness areas. By contrast, research on the wild horse populations and poison baiting wild dogs has clear and needed management application. At the same time, whilst the program may not have the money for basic research, such research must be fostered and facilitated in order to provide the scientific basis for what the program does and needs to do. An important response to the issue is that the working groups are now assessing applications for funds on the basis of their relevance to on-ground management.

Another matter is the relevance of program work to that of the agencies and especially the parks and their incorporation into park management. This issue was raised in the independent review (AACM 1997, 39); the extent of any improvement is not clear. Program work appears to have been of value in terms of background information for the revisions of the Kosciuszko and Namadgi management plans, but provided little in terms of policy development and overall management. A related problem is the lack of implementation of reports of Alps-wide projects and the strategies that are developed from them. A number of people commented that the program is good on research and the development of strategies, but falls down in terms of their dissemination and implementation at the agency level. Examples mentioned included the back-country recreation study. One person observed that the AALC was good at initiating projects but not at maintaining existing ones. Other work has not been completed or seen through to fruition. Examples include the continuing lack of a common horse riding licence system (in spite of the work done on the Bicentennial National Trail); the non-completion of the tour operator training for Alps interpretation and accreditation; inconsistencies in managing some adjoining areas (e.g. state-wide policies mean that mountain bikes are permitted in the NSW part of the Bimberi wilderness, but not in the ACT part); and a long history of incomplete work on visitor monitoring (Healy 1999). Thus far, the program seems to have done little to remove the problem of visitors having to contend with different requirements for the same activity in different parts of the Australian Alps. There are no comprehensive Alps-wide data on numbers of visitors, when the visits occur, and what activities the visitors engage in. Even for individual parks and particular locations within them, the data are unavailable or inadequate. It is acknowledged that the early work was not good, and that it is really an individual park issue. Also, the collection of such data is extremely difficult, even for specific

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89 One interviewee stated that research gaps identified with the first Kosciuszko Plan of Management still existed and the earlier situation was being repeated.
locations such as the Kosciuszko alpine area where some surveys have been undertaken. There have been proposals for surveys, workshops and a strategy “to develop consistent methodologies for monitoring use, impacts, characteristics and attitudes of visitors to the Australian Alps national parks, to provide on-going and comparable records and trends” (Australian Alps National Parks Newsletter, 9, 1994, 8-9). A workshop was held at Beechworth in 1999 to facilitate meaningful visitor statistics across the Alps and to help people understand the value of visitor monitoring. But the lack of data remains and this is a real problem. As was commented, the absence of consistent Alps-wide visitor data is ‘like a manufacturer with no sales data’.

In response to the above observations, the question has to be asked ‘Why?’ With so many projects, it is inevitable that some will be questionable, some will fail, some will not be kept up-to-date, and others will not be completed. But given that the work undertaken is largely determined by the working groups and these are largely made up of parks staff, why is their work not of more direct relevance? Why is it not being taken up? This is a problem that is by no means limited to the Australian Alps, but given the involvement of all levels of staff in the program, quite apart from its limited funds, it is a matter of concern. Part of the explanation may be such things as the ‘time’ problem, staff changes (people move before they are able to see a task through to completion), and the priority of agency work. But there must also be communication problems; it was observed that there are inadequate links between program work and the agencies, resulting in a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude to the former. Work undertaken must be what is needed for the better management of the parks and other protected areas.

In a paper given to the IUCN Trans-Border Workshop in 1995, Greg Hayes set out some of the lessons that had been learned in running a trans-border pest species program and some of the consequent key requirements for ensuring success in undertaking co-operative programs (Hayes 1995):
- insist that projects have an identifiable benefit for the majority of parties;
- support the continued monitoring and reporting on the outcome of projects after the on-ground work is completed;
- encourage staff to initiate projects that are of direct benefit to them – foster a sense of ownership of the project;
- ensure that all staff of the agencies are informed of the program and its results;
- encourage projects which lead to a sharing of knowledge and skills across agencies; and
- build skills of local staff by encouraging their involvement in projects carried by others in their park.

The lessons and requirements are still valid. Recently, acknowledgement of the problems has resulted in a positive response by two of the working groups. The Natural Heritage Working Group “is currently trying to consolidate some of the work that has been amassed over the last 15 years of cooperative management and finalise some outstanding projects, including the preservation of photographs from the research collection of Dr Alec Costin and the development of the ‘Alpine Rehabilitation Manual’” (News from the Alps, 27, 2002, 11). Further, the group is to hold a series of workshops on feral animals to bring together available knowledge, identify gaps in the knowledge, and develop management programs. In 2001, the Recreation and Tourism Working Group engaged a consultant to develop a strategic approach to the group’s focus over the next three years, including a review of previous recreation and tourism projects, an analysis of their effectiveness, and the development of a three year works program (News from the Alps, 28, 2002, 6; Mackay & Associates 2002). There is a need for all working groups to look at all projects in a strategic plan context.

Some hard issues
Many concerns were expressed about the fact that a major purpose of the program is to deal with Alps-wide issues, yet it is failing to do so or is doing so inadequately. If the Australian Alps really are of national significance, if the MOU and program are to do more than deal with ‘cosmetic’ issues and really fulfill their purpose, then there are issues that should be taken to the national level, rather than staying at that of individual parks and jurisdictions. Wild horses are perhaps the best example. They have been discussed at numerous meetings of the AALC, Heads of Agencies, and even the Ministers. As was indicated in Chapter 11, the program has funded much research and other activity. There also appears to have been a
meeting of staff from the Kosciuszko and Alpine national parks on wild horses, but it was not followed through. Tackling the problem is extremely difficult and complex, not least because of the cultural and political aspects (especially in NSW), but doing so at the ‘national’ level would take the pressure off individuals and particular parks, as well as providing more leverage. There is great value in peer support in dealing with such an issue. The same observation could be made with respect to issues within individual jurisdictions that impinge in some way on the others; they should be matters for the AALC and the program. Cattle grazing in Victoria’s Alpine National Park and resort expansion in KNP are perhaps the best examples, for though they may be restricted to the one park, they are Alps-wide issues. These are among the hard issues and perhaps the most ‘high profile’ ones facing the program and they illustrate the fact that the solution of such difficult issues needs the commitment at the highest levels (Ministers, politicians and Heads of Agencies). At the Heads of Agencies 29.10.97 meeting, concern was expressed over new high country grazing licences in Victoria. The minutes of the 13.11.97 AALC meeting recorded:

Greater emphasis in the future into catchment ‘Bigger Picture’ issues such as climate change, water issues, alpine grazing, future developments will be needed.

But very little, if anything, seems to have came of this. To date, the real and potential power of cooperation is being lost.

In terms of both wild horses and cattle grazing, there is a need and an opportunity for the AALC to look for innovative ways to preserve the cultural heritage of these activities, but in ways that do not compromise the natural heritage (Fraser and Chisholm 2000). This does not mean that the activities themselves have to be retained. Concern was expressed by some interviewees that the increased attention being given to cultural values should not result in the denial of well-founded scientific research with respect to environmental values of the Alps. Much effort has been rightly expended on preserving the mining heritage of the Alps, but there has been no suggestion that uneconomic mining and the destructive mining methods should be re-activated.

There are other hard issues. Much of the work that needs to be done is of a long-term nature, involving long-term monitoring, but there seems to be a focus on new projects rather than persisting with long-term tasks. As one interviewee observed, such work is not fashionable. Also, the program and it would seem the individual parks, are not able to commit to long-term work, a problem that needs to be addressed and eliminated. If research is to be undertaken on flora and fauna, there is a need to know, as far as possible, the entire populations, taking account of the total environmental conditions through the long cycles. Some years earlier, one scientist was quoted as follows:

Williams says it takes at least 40-50 years to document the full cycle of natural fluctuations in Australia’s subalpine vegetation. ‘Long-term research is needed for long-term processes such as the healing process such as that follows disturbance’, he says (Bennett 1995).

Similar points have been made more recently (Bowman 2002). The values of the monitoring plots established many years ago by individual scientists have already been discussed (Chapters 3 and 11), but much more could be done. Relevant to many of the affected areas was the observation that whilst much research has been undertaken on threatened species, very little if any attention has been given to the more extensive ones, such as the Snow Gums, or to increasing understanding of whole ecosystems. Given the implications for flora, fauna and snow cover across the Australian Alps, climate change is an area where research is obviously needed (Green 1998; Green 2002b). For example, research in the Mt Hotham area indicates a rise in the tree line of the sub-alpine Snow Gum forest (Australian Institute of Alpine Studies Newsletter, 11, 2000; Wearne and Morgan 2001).

The expectation of poor snow years, in itself, is likely to increase the pressures to establish more snow making infrastructure, to engage in cloud seeding and to extend skiing infrastructure to higher altitudes. All of these activities are likely to have substantial negative impacts on natural values and naturalness (Kirkpatrick 2002).

90 As one person observed, there are also the not so hard and smaller issues that no doubt have Alps-wide relevance, such as the use of salt on roads in winter and the impacts on vegetation and aquatic systems.
Ken Green has reported that only a 0.9ºC increase in temperature could wipe out the Mountain Pygmy Possum, whilst the Broad-Toothed Rat (*Mastacomys fuscus*), which has been monitored since 1978, is at its lowest recorded numbers, with numbers plummeting to 10-15 per cent of the usual populations following the poor snow winter of 1998 (quoted in the *Snowy Times*, Summer 2002-2003, 7). Also, the absence of the winter snow cover enables animals (including kangaroos and rabbits) to range much further, with unknown impacts on the alpine vegetation. Obviously, some research work is being undertaken, but there appears to be no overall effort. Whilst it may not be possible for the AALC to fund such work, it could surely coordinate the work that is being done or considered by state and federal agencies, CSIRO and universities. It could even coordinate the funding.91

There appears to be very little, if any, research on people-management issues in the Australian Alps. Like some of the other issues, this is a contentious issue, but people are in the parks just as are the flora and fauna. So are the resorts. Some interviewees took the view that human beings and their activities were in the parks and needed to be catered for in the most appropriate places; manage them in ‘site-hardened areas’, ones that are confined, and they will not spread out. When activities are banned rather than being managed, they frequently become illegal ones undertaken in widespread and inappropriate locations. It was claimed that there is massive united opposition to aspects of park management by horse riders, yet they could be used to tackle the wild horse problem. If the people are managed, they will protect the resource. These are controversial views, but, for example, they appear to accord with aspects of management processes of Parks Canada (Banff-Bow Valley Task Force 1996; Parks Canada 1997). They certainly merit investigation. Nonetheless, coping with increased numbers at environmentally sensitive locations, such as the Kosciuszko alpine area, presents real challenges, whatever the precise visitor numbers92 (Hill and Pickering 2002; Worboys and Pickering 2003).

Until the cooperative management program tackles the big issues such as have been discussed above, it will not achieve the objectives of those who initiated it.

**Maintaining the research community**

A matter related to almost all of the issues discussed thus far is the maintenance of a research community and capability and the links between its members. This applies within the parks agencies and beyond, in the CSIRO, universities, and other organisations. As was evident from the discussion in Chapter Three, it was largely the scientists who provided the necessary knowledge and who laid the foundations for the protected areas that exist today. Those who founded the cooperative program had no doubt that the management of the parks and other reserves had to have a sound scientific basis. A number of interviewees commented on the need for sound links between park management and science and hence between managers and scientists. More than once, the AALC has raised concerns about the current scientific capability, especially compared with that of previous times. A paper presented at the Heads of Agencies meeting in October 1997 stated: “The Australian Alps Liaison Committee needs to foster the development and retention of a pool of alpine ecological expertise to fill the widening gap left by the previous and ongoing retirement of researchers who developed strong understanding of the ecological processes in the Australian Alps”.93 But much more than ecological expertise is needed. The AALC continues to fund scientific research and has established formal links with the CRC for Sustainable Tourism. The overall issue is beyond the ability of the AALC to solve, but it does have lobbying and coordinating potential.

91 Without in any way detracting from the importance of Alps-wide studies and long-term monitoring, much more use could be made of ‘sample’ studies in specific locations (including ones that involve long-term monitoring), especially where these would have wider application.

92 Some of the figures presented in recent studies are disputed by Thredbo Alpine Village (Denise Allardice, pers.com.).

93 Without in any way being critical, the membership of the Independent Scientific Committee undertaking *An Assessment of the Values of Kosciuszko National Park*, as part of the review of the Park’s Plan of Management, does seem to give weight to the statement.
Beyond the parks agencies
The MOU and the cooperative program constitute an agreement between governments and their parks agencies. It has to be recognized that the agencies have statutory responsibilities for the land they manage and the ways in which they do so, while the involvement of other parties could mean a reduction or the loss of the agreement’s clear purpose and cohesiveness. However, a number of interviewees raised the issue of the lack of involvement of groups outside park agencies in the cooperative program. Not only that, there is concern about the lack of communication and consultation with other interested parties. This has been a concern and a problem from very early in the program’s history. The MOU is not silent on the matter. Clause 3.5 in the original version stated:

The agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps National Parks by
a) arranging joint meetings of representatives of such advisory groups as are in existence for the areas listed in Schedule 1; and
b) providing venues and similar assistance for the display of plans of management and other material placed on public exhibition by any participating agency which affects management of the areas listed in Schedule 1.

This was repeated as Clause 4.5 in the 1989 revision. In the subsequent revisions of the MOU, Clause 4.5 was shortened (Clause 4.8 in the 2003 MOU), but the original intent remained:

The agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks.

However, as with so many similar statements of intent, what does it mean? Who or what is the ‘public’ and what is ‘public participation’? The independent review pointed out the need to strengthen linkages with neighbours and other stakeholders (AACM 1997, 6).

Whilst there may be increasing evidence of public consultation in terms of individual parks, there is little or no evidence that the AALC and agencies “co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks” on an Alps-wide basis.94

There have been no meetings between the AALC and the parks advisory committees since 1996, as was indicated in Chapter 8. Further, links with the many special interest groups, such as the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, Kosciuszko Huts Association, ACF, National Parks Associations, horse riders, off-road vehicle groups and the resorts, also seem to be lacking, except with regard to the Australian Alps Walking Track and the review and development of the minimal impact messages (see Chapter 11). Again, this is surprising and difficult to understand, given at least some of the statements from various meetings calling for more community involvement. It is not easy to really involve ‘the community’, whatever that means, but the lack of communication with such groups is a matter of concern to many people. The one aspect of positive change is the increased contact with the Aboriginal communities, those within the immediate neighbourhood of the parks as well as those now distant but still with links to the areas, especially in Kosciuszko (see Chapter 2). The cross-border connections have reinforced the importance of Aboriginal support for and interest in the program, largely because of their lack of concern for state and territory boundaries (see the discussion of the work of the CHWG in Chapter 11).95

The national parks and other protected areas of the Australian Alps are not ‘islands’ and they must be seen in a wider context, certainly that of the wider alpine region. It is interesting to note that regional planning was a key part of the original 1985 ‘Framework for Cooperation’. Whilst this was not included in the first or subsequent MOUs, Clause 4.9 in the latest revision retains at least a suggestion of the need for regional planning. In 2000, the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning provided a lead in its NSW Alpine Region Strategy:

Policy 21: Support a cooperative approach for the protection and use of the Australian Alps national parks.


To what extent is the CHWG work being coordinated/integrated with the ‘Kosciuszko Aboriginal Heritage Study’ being undertaken in connection with the review of the park’s plan of management? If the program is working, they should be integrated, if for no other reason than to avoid duplication.

94 This would seem to be in contrast to what is regarded as best practice for public participation
Actions plans and priorities:
- Support the work of the AALC in their cooperative approach to the management and protection of the Australian Alps national parks.
- Explore opportunities to expand this cooperative approach beyond the reserve system in areas such as mountain tourism, catchment protection and pest management.

Outcomes:
Protection of the nationally important value of the Australian Alps national parks (Planning NSW 2000, 36).

There are other government and semi-government agencies that operate within the Australian Alps national parks and who are managers of neighbouring lands. In NSW, following the Walker inquiry into the NPWS responsibilities for the management of urban communities and road maintenance, resulting from the Coronial Inquiry into the 1997 Thredbo landslide, certain responsibilities were removed from the NPWS and Kosciuszko National Park. In conjunction with NPWS, the NSW Department of Planning is now responsible for all major developments in the ski resorts in line with a new Regional Environmental Plan. Major roads will become the responsibility of the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority. In Victoria, the major alpine resorts are outside the national parks and therefore not part of the Alps cooperative program. They are the responsibility of the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council (ARCC), with an Alpine Resort Management Board for each of the six resorts: Mt Buller, Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Baw Baw, Mt Stirling, and Lake Mountain. They cover a total area of 105 km², 3.5 per cent of the Victorian alpine bioregion and 10-11 per cent of the true treeless alpine area (DNRE 2002, 10).

In both NSW and Victoria, the resorts have significant economic and political power with respect to the parks. There is clearly a need for improved communications and relations between the resorts and other commercial organizations and the parks and the AALC. In 1996, the Ministers expressed the wish to see consideration given to involving the tourism and resort agencies in the Australian Alps program. At the Heads of Agencies meeting 23.11.00, it was indicated that the Victorian Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council wanted closer relationships with the Alps Program and meetings to this end were started in 2000, recognizing the need for effective communication, sharing experiences, and dealing with common issues (News from the Alps, 24, 2000, 2). Similar observations can be made with respect to Snowy Hydro (which has much of its infrastructure within Kosciuszko National Park) and Southern Hydro (with parts of the Kiewa scheme in the Alpine National Park). An interesting question raised was whether or not some of the ‘stakeholders’ in the Alps, especially those that are dependent in some way on them and their good management, should contribute financially to the individual parks and the cooperative program. For example, the water produced – long a concern of catchment management – has been the subject of various estimated values over many years (e.g. Costin 1972), with figures of up to about $320 million a year, and an accurate assessment is long overdue; none of this is returned to the mountains, and Snowy Hydro is not paid for storing water for irrigation along the Murray and Murrumbidgee.

By no means least in terms of ‘the community’ are the many owners and managers of the private lands that surround the parks, the parks’ neighbours. They make up an important community, one that frequently has an uneasy relationship with the parks, largely as a result of their common problems. For them, the individual parks and the cooperative management program, there is much to learn from the successful cooperative wild dog control program operating in the Wee Jasper and Brindabella valleys, taking in parts of the Brindabella and Kosciuszko National Parks (Hunt 2003; Hunt et al. 2002).

Whether or not other government and non-government organisations should be directly involved in the MOU and cooperative program is a complex issue. The costs and benefits would have to be carefully assessed. However, there is much to be gained from greater cooperation and consultation between the AALC, the parks and the many other groups with an interest in the Australian Alps. There is much to be lost if it does not take place. For example, very early in the history of the program, at a public forum in Canberra organised by the Australian Academy of Science on October 1, 1986, strong lobby groups organised themselves prior to the evening to attack such issues as the lack of consistency in cross-border four-wheel driving policies (McNamara 96)

According to a letter written to ANPWS on 2.9.86, the former Snowy Mountains Authority learned about the MOU and related developments through the media and had to write for further information.

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The lesson was not learned. The Wee Jasper and Brindabella Valleys program shows that doing away with blame and eliminating the property boundaries – the ‘nil tenure’ approach – does work and it can be applied to the Alps as a whole. Cooperation and consultation are much better than confrontation.

What has changed as a result of the Program?
This question elicits much contradictory and conflicting comment, as will be evident from the discussion thus far. It is a question that also raises other questions. What has the program changed and what is done differently as a result of it? Have there been any practical outcomes?

It is clear that the Agreement and program are easily overlooked, easily slip out of sight, certainly when people want it to and especially in terms of funding. It was claimed that for many, certainly at the more senior levels, it was just another piece of paper.

In spite of this, there are strong claims that the program has made a significant contribution to park management in the Alps. This study has documented much to support this view, such as the greatly increased knowledge base and the improved management that has come from this, the strength that has come from the cross-border personal contacts and networking. There was and still is a real dearth of information on such subjects. The ecological management issues differ in each jurisdiction; there is strength and learning in diversity. Things are done that might not otherwise have been done. It has sped up the process of raising competency levels of staff, bringing higher levels of sophistication to park management. The program is meeting its objectives, but needs to move on.

At the same time, there are those who claim the program has not contributed significantly to park management. The question was asked: has the program missed the mark? Again, this study provides support for this position, not least in terms of the lack of implementation at the park level of much of the work that has been done, the lack of clear links with agency needs, the continuing lack of consistency between agencies where it is needed, and the fact that the program has still to tackle some major Alps-wide issues. Some people questioned whether there had been many practical outcomes. Few projects have resulted in on-ground work in individual parks, though it is far from clear what the expectations are in terms of ‘on-ground works’. Even if the program does not have the funds for a significant research program of its own, it could contribute to better research arrangements by undertaking a coordinating role. What collaborative arrangements have been made, such as a common program to deal with wild dogs? What has been done in the area of tourism?

At a wider scale, the Australian Alps cooperative program has made an important contribution to protected area and other land management in other locations in Australia and overseas, not least in terms of professional development and overall levels of professionalism. Among other things, the greatest contribution lies in an ecosystem approach to management which results in agencies looking at the total environment and habitat rather than on one or other side of an artificial administrative boundary. It has provided recognition that the solo approach to land management on two sides of borders is a futile endeavour resulting in duplication of effort, inconsistencies resulting in community confusion, and reduced conservation values (Mackay and Worboys 1995).

Cooperative Management in the Australian Alps protected areas
In the discussion thus far, many positives and negatives have been set out in terms of what has and has not been done. But what of things overall, especially in terms of what needs to be done, the concerns of people for the continued well-being and development of cross-border cooperation in the Alps? It is a complex situation, the interviews provided much material and it is not easy to present it in a straightforward manner.

To begin with, what happens to all the good ideas, especially those put forward at the series of AALC meetings in early 2001 following the removal of Commonwealth funding? In reading through the minutes of AALC and Heads of Agencies meetings, the research proposals and elsewhere, there are many good ideas, but very little – if any – progress on many of them, e.g. on the resorts, alternative funding sources, etc. They are discussed briefly, but most are never heard of again. Are they yet more casualties of the lack of

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97 At the NSW Rural Lands Protection Boards annual conference in Narooma in June 2002, the process was adopted as a model for pest species management across the state.
time and resources? The program keeps itself under review, but does not seem to change a great deal. Some claim the program needs another full review.

So, what of the current state of the program? ‘Inadequate funding’ was one of the most frequently made observations, though one person did say ‘they can find the money when they really want to’ (though ‘they’ was not defined). It is clear that the expectations of those involved in the program cannot be met with current levels of funding and support.

In terms of the program’s institutions, some believe there is a need for more involvement of the Heads of Agencies than the (usually) annual meeting. Some believe there should be more Ministerial involvement, though others do not. They believe there is also a need for a stronger commitment from senior bureaucrats. Agency commitment to the program waxes and wanes, and this is most evident in the activities of the AALC, about which there were numerous concerns. Among the points made, some felt there should perhaps be more members; there was a lack of continuity of membership and attendance at meetings; the Committee was suffering because members were too busy with their agency duties. Clearly, AALC members are plagued by the time problem as much as everyone else involved in the program, but it may also be a reflection of the overall priority given to the program by each agency. The AALC must ‘wave the flag’ for the program. As one interviewee observed, the ‘enthusiasm of AALC members is crucial and it has not always been there’. The Committee clearly needs more support and the suggestion was made for a group ‘below’ the AALC, made up of one full-time person from each agency, specifically to deal with Alps issues, among other things to get things done, to increase output and efficiency as well as staff involvement, to ensure research and strategies are implemented. Another proposal has been for an Alps Parks Management Committee, made up of area managers, senior rangers, and operations coordinators from each of the agencies, which would report to the AALC (22.8.02). It would meet twice a year and would facilitate cooperative operational management across the Alps, identify opportunities for new areas of cooperative management, and report on the implementation of Alps projects. The AALC needs an advisory committee, be it the chairs of the various parks advisory committees, with which it used to meet, or a new one similar to the Community Advisory Committee that is part of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement structure (Crabb 2003a).

The Program Coordinator and the Community Projects Officer are the ‘glue’ that holds things together and keeps things going. Yet at the present time, the Program Coordinator does not even have any secretarial support. As well as the latter, at least one other full-time position is needed; in the view of some, it should be a scientific officer. Clearly, many field staff believe the Program Coordinator and AALC members should ‘get out among staff’ more than they do. The News from the Alps is appreciated, but the on-ground contact is essential. The Working Groups have been and are a major strength of the program, but given the agency pressures on staff, they cannot be relied on as much as in the past. As one person said, commitment to a working group has ‘a shelf life’. Perhaps the number of groups should be reduced. Certainly more use could be made of ‘task forces’ which would involve shorter time commitments and could involve more people. With many people struggling to do all that is asked of them, involvement in the working groups and other parts of the program needs to be made more achievable.

What were the views of the current state of the program? They were numerous and many were critical (though by no means were all of them valid) and some were contradictory. It is ‘a gravy train’ (hardly), ‘a bit of junket’ (the only one?); it’s very nice to go from ACT to Omeo for a meeting (but a three-day round trip involves a lot of driving). More seriously, the program is at a low point, it has lost momentum (‘the states have gone back to the bunkers’), there is ‘not the same commitment’, it is ‘cruising’ at present, there is ‘not the same energy and drive as a few years ago’, ‘involvement from the ground is drying up’, ‘good projects are not being proposed’, it is on ‘a plateau’, may even be ‘declining’. ‘The Agreement doesn’t go far enough’, ‘no teeth’, ‘new life needs to breathed into the program’, it needs ‘reinvigoration’, ‘new energy’, ‘to go up a notch’, there is a need to ‘ratchet-up’ the program, there is ‘only dialogue’ when ‘action is needed’. The program is being driven and run from Canberra and Jindabyne. Whilst the limitations of the program must be recognized, its potential has not been realized: it ‘could be used as a cudgel’; it could and should have significant leverage, for
example, in helping individual parks deal with difficult issues. Gains that have been made can be used to leverage further progress. ‘There is a need to broaden the base of experience and commitment’.

In different ways, many people asked and answered the question as to how to keep the program relevant. It must maintain its focus and relevance and be at the cutting edge. It ‘must sell its message’ and ‘market its knowledge’. It needs to re-focus on things that matter, the real issues, to tackle the really hard issues, as well as the on-ground, ‘bread and butter’ ones. It must continue doing what it does well, though limitations of time and money may mean the program will have to be narrowed down (though a minimum quantity of work is needed to justify the existence of the working groups). Clearly, many want the program ‘back at the grass-roots level’, as that is where the practical management issues are dealt with. Field staff recognize that there is an important corporate role, but they argue that the program is about on-ground issues. Even though it took time to win them over, it was argued that the strength of the program is now with the field staff, the ‘one park’ proposal being clear evidence of this (see Chapter 15). There is clearly a need for a balance between on-ground, strategic and policy issues in the program. Much greater interaction with the wider general and scientific communities is also needed. The program needs something like the critically important combination of events in the early 1990s that resulted in the Program Coordinator, the common fund, the strategic plan, and the logo (see Chapter 8). There has been nothing like it since, though in time, the May 2003 Ministerial Council meeting may be seen as a critical occasion.

Another question that was asked in different ways by numerous people was what is the purpose of the Alps program, what is it for? ‘What are we managing the Alps for?’ There were similar questions. Is there a need to re-define the Alps, with parts of the Snowy River National Park going to no less than 200m above sea level? Where are the Alps going strategically? How can the objectives be better achieved? How can the program benefit the agencies? What are the major issues for each agency and park? Are the major issues for the parks in accord with - or rather reflected in - the Alps program? What are the issues in common? These are questions that need to be resolved if the program is to continue to make a positive contribution to the present and future well-being of the Australian Alps.

Conclusion
Have the MOU and cooperative program really made a difference? Whilst it may not be an entirely unequivocal response, and many of the benefits are difficult to ‘prove’ or value in monetary terms, the answer has to be a positive one. Against a long background of state parochialism, a lack of involvement in land management issues beyond a jurisdiction’s own borders, and the many differences in the ways that the various agencies operate, the program’s achievements in a period of less than twenty years are considerable. The program has made significant progress in a short period of time, as evident in the latest MOU, and the acknowledged deficiencies have to be seen in this context. The parks are now coping with greatly increased use and have experienced many other changes since the first MOU was signed. There will always be threats to the program, such as political decision-making and ending funding or participation, but in this respect the program is no different to any other arrangement. Perhaps too modestly, one of the founders was somewhat surprised that the program has kept going. But it is still operating, still achieving, and still solving problems, in spite of its limited resources. For those who still have doubts about the MOU and cooperative program, what would or could the Australian Alps have been like without them?
The presence of some of Australia’s major national parks and the existence of the MOU are testament to the fact that the Alps comprise areas of prime natural heritage value. They also contain prime destinations for tourism and recreation. As the AALC was reminded in the early 1990s (18.2.91), the Australian Alps are within a day’s drive for close to half of the Australian population. The twin tasks of conserving the environment and catering for tourism and recreation is the constant dilemma for the parks agencies. The inherent conflict was evident at the ‘Celebrating Mountains’ Conference held in Jindabyne in 2002 and put succinctly by Roberts (2003): ‘Can mountains survive tourism?’ or ‘Can mountain environments survive without tourism?’ He argued that tourism will ensure the survival of the mountain environments and their communities. On the other hand, the people pressure issues, put so strongly more than twenty years ago in the Kosciuszko National Park booklet (NSWNPWS 1980a) were again stressed by Macdonald (2003).

Whatever view is taken, there is little doubt that the protected areas are in need of protection. Much has been achieved by the agencies themselves within the individual parks and other protected areas. Similarly, much has been achieved through the MOU and the cooperative management program. But, as has been indicated, the full potential of cooperative management - the ‘strength in numbers’, the breaking-down the boundaries - has yet to be realized. So, what is next for the Australian Alps national parks and the Alps as a whole?

There is a need to extend the protected areas to ensure the viability of the Alps ecosystems and all that they encompass. The gaps need to be filled and the corridors widened in the interests of ecological integrity and saving the ecosystems, especially in Victoria. Beyond such extensions, there needs to be cooperation beyond the protected areas, either through the Biosphere Reserve concept or the ‘nil tenure’ concept discussed in the previous chapter (Hunt 2003). Both provide a wider basis for cooperation, not limited to protected areas. If the flora and fauna and their ecosystems are to survive, then they need much larger areas in which to do so.

Of considerable interest, now and for the future, is the concept of one Australian Alps National Park, transcending state and territory boundaries and encompassing all of the protected areas in the Alps and perhaps more. It is a concept that has received much attention over recent years from those involved at all levels with the Alps national parks.

The idea, however, is by no means a new one. Earlier proposals for a trans-border park were discussed in previous chapters (including 3 and 4). Whilst the concept of a single park was not included in the initial ‘Framework’ or the MOU, it was certainly discussed at the time (see Chapter 6). Among others, a 1986 ANPWS statement is of interest:

Being keenly aware of the national significance of the Alps, ANPWS has participated actively in moves to bring together the nature conservation agencies of Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT so that management activities can develop along co-ordinated lines and the concept of a true Alps National Park can proceed (Submission by ANPWS to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation Inquiry into Administrative Arrangements for the Management of Namadgi National Park, March 1986).

The issues of one park and a single management authority were raised in some of the legal advice that was sought in the context of a more formal agreement than the MOU (see Chapters 6 and 8). At a Heads of Agencies meeting on 25.7.90, it was recorded that “Dr Bridgewater [the Commonwealth representative] felt that the Minister and ANPWS would support the ‘national park’ approach however, the Commonwealth would provide support rather than direct intervention via proclamation under the NPWC Act etc.” Also of interest is a short paragraph in the independent review:

Deviation from original intent – one stakeholder identified that an objective of the original MOU was to work towards the creation of a single formal authority or institution for the management of the Australian Alps. This objective has never been emphasized in the MOU. Note: the Ministers agreed in 1995 not to pursue this (AACM 1997, 6).

Some of the correspondence relating to the legal status of the MOU and the establishment of a more
formal agreement would certainly give support to this ‘stakeholder’s’ view. At the Ministerial Meeting on 26.4.91, Ministers Crabb (Victoria) and Moore (NSW) advised that their states should be able to prepare joint plans of management for adjoining parks, an arrangement that would assist in cross-border co-operation. Unfortunately, this did not eventuate.

The next development in the story of ‘one park’ for the Alps took place at the annual field meeting held at Dinner Plain, near Mt. Hotham, in 2000. Part of the meeting was a ‘program planning workshop’, in which those present – primarily rangers and other field staff – looked ten years ahead for the Alps parks. Their vision was a single jointly managed ‘Australian Alps National Park’, making use of the proposed Commonwealth National Heritage legislation. The participants noted that the MOU had refined cross-border field cooperation and joint project management, with reports now being used and the outcomes being implemented in the field, but it was time to go further. They had no illusion that joint management would be a challenge, but felt that it was possible. Representatives from the Dinner Plain meeting reported the proposal to the Heads of Agencies meeting on 23.11.2000. In the ensuing discussion, the Heads of Agencies made the following suggestions:

- the nature of partnerships implies joint funding with controls over jointly funded products;
- separate agencies are less efficient;
- choosing to do something “creative”, especially as new plans were due for Kosciuszko, Namadgi and the Alpine National Parks (the ‘Big Three’);
- a core plan does not preclude individual park variations, i.e. cooperative diversity, with precedents in the Wet Tropics and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission;
- the ‘Man and the Biosphere Program’ (MAB) could be used as an umbrella concept, in preference to World Heritage listing; and
- looking at economics and water issues across the region.

The potential of the proposal was seen and it was given an encouraging reception; it was not regarded as threatening, as would have been the case in earlier years. Thus an idea that had come from the on-ground staff was able to ‘move up the line’ and be taken up by the Heads of Agencies – in true Alps fashion.

On May 1, 2001, the managers of the Australian Alps national parks, with the support of their agencies, met in Queanbeyan, NSW, to discuss “a more consistent and complementary approach to management planning for the Alps as a whole”. Whilst this was not a formal program meeting, it can certainly be seen as having been facilitated by and taken place within the context of the cooperative program. The outcome was an ‘Agreement on Approach to Planning in the Australian Alps national Parks (Table 15.1). This Agreement marked an important step forward, though some interviewees believed it could have gone further.

An immediate outcome was a high level of cooperation and coordination in the reviews of the Kosciuszko and Namadgi national parks plans of management, which were about to commence, with the review of the Alpine National Park plan to follow at a later date (Scott 2002). The commitment to work together was a recognition of what the cooperative program had achieved and the benefits that could continue to be gained (Heads of Agencies 20.3.01 and AALC 6.4.01). There have been regular meetings between the Kosciuszko and Namadgi planning teams and consideration has been given to a staff exchange in the Kosciuszko and Alpine planning teams (Heads of Agencies, 29.4.02). An integrated planning workshop, involving people from the three major parks, was held in Canberra in May, 2003. The plans will have an Alps-wide context, including statements of principles, and the teams are pushing commonality and consistency as far as is possible. Among other things, the revised plans should bring greater consistency in cross-border issues,

Also in progress are the Kosciuszko Alpine Resorts Regional Environment Plan (being prepared by Planning NSW in conjunction with NPWS and the Review of the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management) and Snowy Hydro’s Environmental Management Plan.

The learning that will come from such cooperation will provide significant cost savings for a relatively small investment, especially for Parks Victoria. This is yet another example within the cooperative program of the benefits outweighing the costs. In a similar vein, much has been learned from the experiences and processes of Parks Canada in its work on Banff National Park (Banff-Bow Valley Task Force 1996).
Table 15.1 Agreement on Approach to Planning in the Australian Alps National Parks, 1 May 2001, Queanbeyan, NSW

The Australian Alps Memorandum of Understanding for the cooperative management of the Alps national parks in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT has been in effective operation since 1986. The managers of these parks and their relevant directors agree that it is now time to take the cooperation generated under this MOU to a new level, and to look at a more consistent and complementary approach to management planning for the Alps parks as a whole.

The managers of the Australian Alps national parks from New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT agree that:

(i) they will cooperate to achieve a consistency of intent and objectives for management plans that protect, restore and enhance the ecosystems and catchments of the Australian Alps;

(ii) they will recognize the need for involvement of Aboriginal people and communities in setting objectives for management of the Australian Alps reserves;

(iii) they will jointly prepare a directional statement and a set of consistent and/or complementary management objectives for the future management and monitoring of the Australian Alps national parks;

(iv) they will participate in an ongoing forum:
   - consultation on management plan preparation or review processes, and the cooperative research of planning issues. As a minimum, each jurisdiction will have regard to those Alps parks management plans (and other relevant plans and strategies) already prepared or under preparation in other jurisdictions in the preparation of any new or revised management plan for an Alps park;
   - resolution of policy differences and integration of policy into an Alps wide policy framework (such as are appropriate within the constraints of state/territory legislation and government policy) for the improvement of conservation outcomes for the Australian Alps ecosystems and catchments.

The Alps park managers acknowledge the importance of reaching agreement on outcomes of management even if management approaches differ.

though such changes should not have had to wait for new plans if the program was really working to its potential. The cooperation that is taking place is an important step, indicating a willingness to integrate planning between the three agencies. The MOU and cooperative program provide a substantial basis of knowledge and contacts, not least in terms of staff dialogue, on which to build and progress. This will be the first time in which the plans for the three major parks will be aligned and in keeping with the revised MOU and Strategic Plan, though this commonality may be limited by the time frame for the completion of the Kosciuszko review. The cooperation process was given further support by the Australian Alps Ministerial Council meeting on 23.5.03, which recommended that Victoria, NSW and the ACT adopt, where possible, a common terminology, objectives, zoning scheme and style to their respective management plans under development for those parks listed in the MOU schedule.

However, many believe that the cooperation should have started much earlier, especially given Clause 4.1 in the MOU:

The Agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area in Schedule 1 or in amendments to existing plans, and will aim to ensure that such management plans provide for complementary policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps national parks.
Had that been done, in terms of the review process and the content of the three plans, there would have been an opportunity for real change. Nonetheless, the plans may well have to be revised before their notional 10-15 life periods.

In early 2002, Parks Victoria presented a Discussion Paper to the Heads of Agencies (29.4.02), and to meetings of the AALC, entitled ‘Australian Alps National Park Concept’. 100 In brief, this was a proposal for a single Alps national park. Among other things, the Discussion Paper stated the following:

The MOU is only limited by the structural impediments arising from three agencies managing the one bioregion. On numerous occasions the idea of creating one park to fully realize the benefits of consistent management has been discussed. There now appears to be sufficient impetus to pursue the concept further.

There is potential; with a renewed commitment to the MOU and the vision of one park, to make further inroads towards fully integrated operations and management.

Models for implementation of a single Park:
- extending the MOU;
- establish an overarching management authority with the state/territory remaining responsible for management
- create a new park under Commonwealth legislation with either a Commonwealth or new management agency.

The proposal received a generally positive reception, though it was clearly too big a step to take at the one time for some people. However, apart from the fact that people did not want a single management authority, the proposal was not rejected, and at the Heads of Agencies meeting (29.4.02), it was agreed “To rework the current ‘One Park’ paper to amend the concept of a single park to one of joint-management and to reflect that in a revised MOU”. The revised paper, ‘Australian Alps national parks – a Discussion Paper’, putting forward the ‘One Plan Concept’ was circulated to the Heads of Agencies and AALC members by Parks Victoria. The paper stated that it was seeking a commitment to the vision of the ‘one park’ concept, but as a principle rather than an absolute.

What have been the reactions to the Victorian proposals within the cooperative program community? They have been mixed, as is evident in the minutes of AALC meetings. For the supporters, it is worth pursuing as it will bring significant advantages, including national recognition, an increased capacity to manage the hard issues in a seamless manner (such as feral animals, weeds, recreation), a greatly increased marketing potential from seeing the Alps as a whole. It is a real opportunity to bring to the Alps common principles and best-practice management, the ‘highest common denominator’ can be pushed rather than the ‘lowest common denominator’. After all, the agencies are essentially in agreement on the main management issues. It has the potential to bring increased resources. It is exciting, it is needed, it can be achieved in time.

At the same time, there are those who see only obstacles instead of the ‘big picture’ of an Australian Alps National Park; they are unable to see principles only details. There are significant political, legislative and administrative obstacles. For example, the parks have to satisfy specific legal requirements and their management plans are statutory documents. Some are concerned with the ‘lowest common denominator’, not wanting to lose battles won long ago (grazing in the Alpine National Park is a real issue), and there are concerns about the resorts in New South Wales and Victoria. What relationships would employees of the one park authority have with their current agencies? How could diversity and the mix of staff (seen as a significant asset) be retained with ‘one park’? It is ‘just not practical’, it is ‘not on’. It was pointed out that ‘one plan’ or ‘one park’ is not a community concern, though community concerns clearly do go beyond individual parks, as with such issues as wild horses, wild dogs, pigs, etc. An important element is that up to the present, the MOU and cooperative program have been seen as ‘non-threatening’, whereas ‘one park’ is threatening for all kinds of reasons, though if the program is to really tackle some of the ‘hard issues’ discussed in the previous chapter, it may have to become ‘threatening’. Some see it as trespassing. However, as one person pointed out, especially with like-minded governments and some bold politicians, anything is possible, including one park.

An issue related to the concept of one park is the need for a universal name for the Australian Alps. For many people, this is needed regardless of ‘one park’ or ‘one plan’. Again, there are those who

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100 At the outset, it must be pointed out that there has been at least some confusion over the concept of ‘one park’ and/or ‘one plan’. They are not the same.
see this as a threat, especially at any suggestion of a name change for Kosciuszko (except for the incorporation of an Aboriginal name). For some, the very name Kosciuszko is an icon in itself. Whilst names can be changed, there is no suggestion of changing or removing the current names. The existing parks will remain under ‘one plan’ or as major sections of ‘one park’. What is needed is the focus to be placed on the Alps as a whole and a universal name would assist this. Canada provides an example. There, Banff is undoubtedly its most well-known national park (Parks Canada 1997), but it is seen as a part of the Rockies, in a way that Kosciuszko is not – but needs to be – seen as part of the Australian Alps. As one person observed, Kosciuszko needs an Alps vision.

There is much more support for ‘One plan’, which is a less threatening ‘umbrella’ concept. It is limited to common principles on which there is already general agreement. There are incentives with ‘one plan’ that are not there with ‘one park’. Also, it maintains the positive features of separate management; absolute consistency is not necessary and ‘there is value in chaos!’ Again, people can see the maintenance of their parks’ highest achievements, such as the high conservation values of the closed Cotter catchment in the Namadgi National Park. With flexibility, one plan is achievable, as is being demonstrated by the current collaborative work with the Kosciuszko and Namadgi reviews, which could be seen as the final step before ‘one plan’. Certainly at the present time, there is more merit in pursuing the ‘one plan’ concept. Some people doubted that the program thus far had produced the material that would be needed to produce ‘one plan’, a point supported by the current reviews of the Kosciuszko and Namadgi parks.

However, for the parks’ staff, the objective was one park (even if they do have concerns about operational and on-ground issues). It was stated that one park or plan is not an issue for the public, as it did not come up in the community consultation of the KNP review, in contrast to major issues such as fire management, weeds, access, and 4WD vehicles. But how was the question asked, because clearly the issues mentioned are cross-border ones? It may well not be an issue for some members of the public. On the other hand, there has long been strong support from some members of the public for ‘One Park’, most recently evident in a presentation at the ‘Celebrating Mountains’ Conference (Reeves 2002) and the publication of the National Parks Associations’ brochure, An Australian Alps National Park: one of Australia’s greatest protected areas (NPA 2002). The three Associations are to be commended for their publication, but it raises some questions. Parts of it read more like support for ‘one plan’ than ‘one park’:

A logical extension of this understanding [the MOU and program] is the creation of a single protected area, with a single name (sections of the park can retain local names) and united, consistent management plans. Management of the tri-state [sic] national park can remain the responsibility of the existing agencies in the ACT, NSW and Victoria, and remain under their current legislation.

It is inaccurate to describe the existing parks as “accidents of history”, whilst many on-going improvements to parks management are ignored. Of most interest, however, is that the proposal is for such a ‘limited’ park. It leaves out a number of areas currently covered by the MOU, namely Avon, Mt Buffalo and especially Scabby and Bimberi (which are important links in the contiguity of Namadgi and Kosciuszko). There is no reference to the two areas that have been added to the program, namely Tidbinbilla and Baw Baw, and no suggestion of adding more land to a single park, especially to expand the very narrow corridors that currently link parts of the Alpine National Park.

‘One plan’ and especially ‘one park’ would bring unity to the Australian Alps and their management. So would other measures, such as the application of the Biosphere Reserve concept and World Heritage listing discussed in Chapter 12. Certainly at the present time, separate World Heritage listing is not possible, though there may be some scope in the extension to the Blue Mountains eucalypts-based listing, with the agreement to assess other areas of eucalypts to complement the Blue Mountains, such as the Snow Gum and Alpine Ash, though this would not see the Alps as a discrete unit.

The best current opportunity for bringing the management of all of the Australian Alps protected areas together lies in the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill currently in passage through the Commonwealth Parliament. Among other things, the legislation
will identify, conserve and protect places of national heritage significance. It focuses the Commonwealth’s responsibility for areas of national heritage significance. The focus, however, is on heritage values rather than simply places. Once locations have been placed on the National Heritage List, this will give recognition to their heritage values and provide for the protection of national heritage in a similar manner to that which already applies to the protection of Australia’s World Heritage properties (Leaver 2003; Environment Australia information sheets). There is no doubt that National Heritage listing will bring added publicity and economic benefits to the areas concerned. Listing can be citizen as well government initiated and once places are on the List, their values must not be diluted. Placing the Australian Alps on the National Heritage List would involve the assessment of heritage values across all jurisdictions. The MOU and cooperative program are certainly in accord with the National Heritage legislation. The Alps are clearly ideally suited to placing on the National Heritage list and at the May 2003 meeting of the Australian Alps Ministerial Council, “The Ministers agreed to cooperate on assessment of the Alps for nomination to the National Heritage List subject to legislation being passed” (Ministerial Council 23.5.03). An interesting question is whether or not any Commonwealth financial assistance provided in connection with the listing of the Alps would go to the individual jurisdictions and/or to the cooperative program.

However, questions remain regarding the ability of the legislation to unequivocally protect heritage values and locations, for example, as in the kinds of concerns expressed by Lembit (2002) of the National Parks Association of NSW – concerns over the new management plan being developed for Kosciusko National Park, especially with control of ski resorts transferred to Planning NSW, proposed major expansion of Perisher Blue to a year-round resort (Canberra Times, June 15, 2003), and excising access roads from NPWS responsibility. The concerns are similar to those that were expressed twenty years and more ago over developments in Kosciuszko National Park and why people then were pressing for World Heritage listing. So, while being hopeful, some wonder if the new legislation will protect the protected areas from developers, the states and even the Commonwealth. As with any future elimination of grazing from all of the Alpine National Park, so controls on the equally difficult issue of future resort expansion in KNP and other locations in the Australian Alps national parks will be essentially political decisions. As was acknowledged at the Australian Alps Ministerial Council meeting on 23.5.03, such issues “are unlikely to be resolved through a management planning process”.

**Larger views and settings**

Before bringing this chapter to a close, it is important to recognize that just as places like Kosciuszko have a setting in the Australian Alps, so the latter have a setting within eastern Australia’s upland areas and, on an even larger stage, within the world’s mountain areas. The proposed Eastern Australia Conservation Corridor would extend from Walhalla at the southern end of the Australian Alps to the wet tropics near Cairns, incorporating existing protected areas and other lands in public ownership. Such a continental-scale conservation corridor would make a major contribution to biodiversity and landscape conservation (Pulsford et al. 2003). The Australian Alps would be a major component of the corridor (14.2.02).

In 1992, the United Nation’s Agenda 21 devoted a separate chapter to mountains, Chapter 13, ‘Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development’ (UN 1992). Among other things, it stated:

> As a major ecosystem representing the complex and interrelated ecology of our planet, mountain environments are essential to the survival of the global ecosystem.

At the ‘Celebrating Mountains’ Conference in Jindabyne, Hamilton expanded on this statement by responding to the question: “Why are mountains important and ‘special’?” He gave a number of reasons:

- they invariably have deep cultural significance for people who live in and around them;
- they are home to at least one-tenth of the world’s population, including the most endangered minority groups;
- they are the water towers of the world; and...
- they are often the last bastion of wild nature, ‘islands’ in a sea of transformed lowlands and they provide a home for much of the world’s remaining biodiversity (Hamilton 2002a, 2002b).

The United Nations proclaimed 2002 as ‘International Year of Mountains’, its purpose being to foster greater recognition of the special places mountains hold in society (Douglas 2002). The Jindabyne gatherings were the main Australian contribution to the year. The major international event was the Global Mountain Summit held in Bishket in Kyrgyzstan. The Summit produced the Bishket Mountain Platform, which, among other things, expressed the participants’ “long-term commitment and determination to achieving the goals of sustainable development in mountain areas” and “to protecting the Earth’s mountain ecosystems”. The Australian Alps may be smaller in area and certainly lower in altitude than most of the world’s mountain systems, but the observations made with respect to the latter are no less relevant and applicable to the Alps.
Chapter 16. What of the future?

The months of December 2002 through to March 2003 provided stark demonstration of a number of the key themes and findings of this study. In a perverse yet natural way, nature again brought the Australian Alps and the national parks together, through drought, summer storms and the consequent fires. Nature also brought together those who care for and have the responsibility for managing this unique part of Australia. These latest events cannot be ignored in a history of cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks, events that are a reminder that the early cooperative endeavours were in the interests of fire management and control.

The summer of 2002-2003

Developing through 2002 was one of the worst, if not the worst, drought to affect most of eastern Australia. It was not the driest in terms of rainfall, but it was certainly the hottest drought on record. Maximum and minimum temperatures that were well above average and consequent very high evaporation produced tinder-dry environments over large areas. Throughout parts of NSW, fires were burning from July, with reports of unusual fire behaviour from many bush fire brigades. In Kosciuszko National Park, the first fires were started by lightning strikes in mid-December, 2002, and they became more serious with the increasing summer temperatures and windy weather. However, they were contained before the main onslaught occurred. On January 8, 2003, a storm system moved rapidly through the entire Australian Alps, starting numerous fires from Gippsland and the Alpine National Park north through Kosciuszko and Namadgi National Parks to the Brindabella National Park and some neighbouring areas. Summer storms normally bring relief from high temperatures with their refreshing rains, but this was a dry storm with a near unprecedented level of lightning strikes.

The large numbers of fires that were started in the tinder-dry environments, exacerbated by the extreme fire weather conditions (high temperatures, strong winds, very low humidity levels) on numerous days through the rest of January and into February, resulted in numerous large fire fronts, rapidly moving fires, and, in some locations, fire storm conditions. The fires resulted in severe damage to parts of the ACT, especially on Saturday, January 18, 2003, including a number of the western suburban areas of Canberra, most of the Territory’s pine plantations, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Namadgi National Park, and many of the rural areas. As a result of the original lightning strikes and numerous later ones, as well as spotting, fires burned through large areas of the Brindabella and Kosciuszko National Parks and neighbouring areas, the Alpine and Mt Buffalo National Parks and large neighbouring areas, and later, the Snowy River National Park (Figure 16.1). The fires burned for weeks, some through to late March. Again, much of the fire behaviour was different to what had been previously experienced.

The causes of the fires and the damage they have done, their costs, have been and will continue to be the subject of much debate, ‘blame-placing’, anger and many other emotions. The fires and everything related to them are the subject of a number of coronial and other official inquires, in all of the jurisdictions, as well as other formal and informal gatherings. Particular issues have been the management of national parks and the extent of fuel load reduction work undertaken (though this is clearly as much an issue for lands outside national parks as for those within them). Comparisons have been made with previous fires, especially the one that started in similar environmental conditions in Victoria on ‘Black Friday’ January 13, 1939 (Johnson 1974, 70-76). Then, there was – and had been for many years –

103 A brief comment on the debate. If ‘society’ and/or politicians, decide that more fuel reduction should be undertaken (in those ecosystems and locations where it is possible to do so), then the parks and land management agencies must be given the resources to do the work. This appears to be the case with the Department of Conservation and Land Management in Western Australia; it does not appear to be the case in other jurisdictions. The outcomes of the numerous inquiries may well have implications for ‘society’ or the ‘community’ and the parks agencies in terms of the many issues related to bushfire management, that will inevitably involve costs, benefits and compromise.

102 Various reports indicate the storm started 57 fires in northeast Victoria, 45 in KNP, some in Namadgi and Brindabella National Parks, and many others outside the park boundaries.
extensive grazing (with its associated burning) and logging throughout much of the Australian Alps. Compared with today, there were very few built structures in and around the Alps; there was no Thredbo, Mt Hotham, hydro-electric facilities, and few rural properties.

Fire is a part of Australia’s natural environment, including the Australian Alps. Sediments in Yarrangobilly caves in KNP indicate the occurrence of bushfires over a period of more than 400,000 years (Spate 2002). However, the fires of the summer of 2002-03 constitute a whole of landscape event. The impacts have been variable, dependent on the particular locations, the nature of the vegetation, the intensity of the fires (this varied considerably), and the prevailing weather conditions at the time of the fires. The result is a mosaic, ranging from the blackened skeletal remains of trees to areas untouched by fire. The full extent of the damage and losses to vegetation, fauna and soils must await detailed surveys. There is real concern for some ecosystems, especially in the alpine and sub-alpine areas, but also areas of the more widespread ones, such as the Snow Gums and Alpine Ash forests. The impact on the fauna has also been substantial, especially endangered species such as the Pygmy Possum and the Northern and Southern Corroboree Frogs, with loss of animals, habitat, food supplies and added concerns with the approach of winter. However, a replication of the 2002 ‘Biodiversity Blitz’ (Green 2002a) indicated that whilst numbers had been reduced, there had been no loss of biodiversity (Canberra Times, June 3, 2003).

Given the extent of the fires and the severity of many of them, the overall losses of built structures were remarkably small. However, there were significant losses in terms of park visitor facilities.
and infrastructure (including the wildlife breeding programs in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve) and structures of cultural heritage value, such as Aboriginal sites, many of the alpine huts, including Mt Franklin in Namadgi National Park (Higgins 2003), and relics of the gold mining industry in Victoria. Among other damage was that to facilities of Snowy Hydro and the surface works of the Red Robin mine near Mt Hotham. Where fires burned out of the parks and from fires started outside the parks, there have also been significant losses for surrounding pastoral and agricultural activities, including smoke damage to vineyards and grapes for wine production. In addition, the fires have had a direct impact on the region’s tourist industries. These will also take varying periods of time to recover. The full extent of the areas affected by the fires and the consequent losses and damage have yet to be determined.

After the fires
The consequences of the widespread fires in the Australian Alps are considerable and will remain so for many years, for the natural environments, cultural heritage, tourist industries, and many neighbours of the parks. Rehabilitation times will be very variable. Especially in terms of the natural landscape, there will be on-going change as the vegetation recovers. In some areas, however, the landscape change may be permanent, as has been suggested for parts of Namadgi, with what regrows being significantly different from what has been lost.

For the national parks and other protected areas, dealing with the consequences of the fires will be the prime management issue for managers, staff and many others for some time to come, even though much will have to be left to nature to heal and restore itself. As noted earlier, the fires have provided another demonstration of the biogeographical unity of the Australian Alps, the parks themselves and the neighbouring lands. Just as the fires have impacted on the individual parks, and will continue to do so, so they have on the cooperative management program and the MOU.

In considering the future of the program, the fires and their consequences cannot be ignored. How does the program cope with and respond to the current situation? Is it a new situation, or a variation on previous ones? In many respects, the fires have served to reinforce many of the points made throughout this study. Because the fires were so widespread, they are not simply the problem of an individual park or agency, but of everyone. Now is not the time for people to be too busy for the cooperative program and its business. Rather, it is a time to draw on the main strengths of the program. In facing common problems, parks staff can draw on the values of the program, in particular peer support at all levels, especially in responding to the contentious issues that are already following the fires. As one park manager observed in early May, 2003, “The bush is recovering quicker than the people”. In such difficult situations, it is much easier to tackle the issues collegially than as individuals. Working together improves the ability to access knowledge and find solutions to common problems. The enormous cooperation that was so evident in all aspects of fighting the fires will need to continue in the very much longer recovery and rehabilitation periods. And just as the financial and other resources were provided to fight the fires, so they will need to be provided for these long-term subsequent phases.

For the immediate future, the focus of the individual parks and their agencies and the cooperative program will have to be on rehabilitation and monitoring, from the small scale to the whole of landscape level. To this end, numerous meetings have taken place, both within and beyond the structures of the cooperative program (though it is almost impossible to draw a line between them), to plan the recovery work, to share knowledge (Tasmanian representatives have participated in some of the discussions), to plan research programs, and to avoid duplication of effort. Monitoring programs have been put in place, including returning to fire ecology sites established in Namadgi some years ago as part of an Alps-wide program. Monitoring the recovery of the native fauna is equally important. The fires have once again drawn attention to the issues of long-term monitoring and the long-term cycles of populations and ecosystems that were discussed earlier.

105 For further information on the losses to the huts throughout the Alps, see the website of the Kosciusko Huts Association, << www.kosciuskohtuts.org.au >>.
106 It is worth noting that for lands managed by the NSW NPWS for the period 1995-2002, of 1,956 fires on parks, 179 (9%) moved out of parks, while 424 (22%) moved into parks (NSWNPWS 2002b, 69).
Post-fires recovery and rehabilitation will now have to be the focus of the next Strategic Plan and the activities of the Working Groups for a number of years. Some of the issues for the groups can be mentioned. For the NHWG, where possible and appropriate, it will have to assist the natural recovery processes, especially in terms of restricting soil erosion, recognizing that some parts of the parks will be very different, certainly in the short term, and that they may not return to what they were before the fires. For the CHWG, there is much rescue work to be done and decisions made as to what can be rehabilitated and how it should be done. Measures will have to be taken to protect what has survived from future fires. The RTWG will have to participate in the reconstruction of visitor facilities and park infrastructure and assist in the recovery of the tourism and recreation industries. The CRWG has a major task in informing the community of what has happened and how the parks are recovering, in informing the public of what to do and what not do in fire-affected areas, and explaining why some areas will have to be closed to the public for varying periods of time, some for a long time. Not least, there is the need to continue to provide good images of the Australian Alps.

The fires have also provided some opportunities. Just as they have reduced the populations of native species, so they have impacted on the feral ones, perhaps to an even greater extent. With immediate action, there may be a window of opportunity to get on top of some of the feral animals and weeds (though it has to be acknowledged that the immediate post-fire situation can be ready-made for weed growth). This is important in the interests of the unburned areas, which have to provide habitats for the surviving native fauna. It is an opportunity for cooperation with others who have an interest in the parks, such as demonstrated by the management of Perisher Blue Resort in KNP placing a ski run off limits in the interest of the rehabilitation of the Pygmy Possum and the financial assistance of Snowy Hydro towards wildlife recovery in KNP. In Victoria, the Victorian High Country Huts Association has been formed “to ensure the future and heritage of the High Country huts are restored”. There may be an opportunity to go beyond the park boundaries to help deal with some issues, such as feral animals, and in so doing including some who may be seen as ‘opponents’ of the parks, situations where the ‘nil tenure’ approach will be of value:

The nil tenure approach highlights the benefit of focusing on the ‘common problem’. The implementation of this simple approach [in the Wee Jasper and Brindabella valleys] has swept aside over twenty years of negative relations between private and public land managers in the area (Hunt 2003).

It is perhaps an opportunity to bring an end to grazing in Victoria’s ANP and to broaden discussions with the resort owners in both NSW and Victoria.

There is also a need to focus on the Alps as a whole, not only for the parks and their values, but also for the areas as the upper catchments of some of the country’s major rivers, which are already severely stressed as a result of drought and many other factors (Norris et al. 2001; MDBMC 2002). This is by no means a new concern, but a reminder of much earlier ones in the work of Byles (1932) and others (see Chapter 3) and an aspect of the cooperative program that the AACM review highlighted as not having received the attention it merited, namely catchment management (AACM 1997, 29). The damage to vegetation cover in catchments has potential implications in terms of siltation of waterways and reservoirs and water quality.

The fires have reinforced another concern for the management of the Australian Alps, namely the maintenance and expansion of scientific research. Issues relating to fires in the mountain areas are extremely complex (Leaver 2002). There is much to learn about the fires themselves and from the recovery and rehabilitation. Scientific research is absolutely fundamental, in terms of the fires and the post-fires period, including the implications of climate change for future fires. Contacts must be established and maintained with the scientific community, including those with bushfire expertise, on an Alps-wide basis, not just with individual parks and agencies, for immediate research and so that expertise is readily available in future when it is needed. Fires will happen again and the parks and other agencies must be better prepared for the next time.

At the May 2003 Australian Alps Ministerial Council meeting, the Ministers agreed on a set principles for fire management in the Australian Alps national parks and other protected areas and

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the development of fire management strategies and plans of management. They also agreed that the “conservation agencies and relevant fire authorities of each jurisdiction work closely together to ensure that there is a coherent and strategic approach to fire management across the Australian Alps protected area system”. The Ministers also agreed to the establishment of an expert scientific panel, similar to that established for the Review of the Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park (NSWNPWS 2002a). Reporting to the AALC, its task will be:

To provide advice on issues of common concern to all jurisdictions relating to the recovery of the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps protected area system following the 2003 fires and other issues affecting the natural and cultural values of the Alps as requested.

Whilst no time-frame has been placed on the work of the panel and its terms of reference have yet to be determined (by the ‘Heads of Agencies Group’), a widening of its scope along the lines of the Banff-Bow Valley study, would be even more beneficial. The Task Force’s report contains much that is relevant to the Australian Alps, in terms of its content and especially its process (Banff-Bow Valley Task Force 1996).

The future of cooperative management in the Australian Alps

The research undertaken in the course of this study has identified two key ‘occasions’ in the history of cooperative management in the Australian Alps. The first was the establishment of the cooperative management program and the first MOU. The second was in the late 1980s-early 1990s, with confirmation of the MOU as the most appropriate form of cooperative agreement, the setting up of the common fund, the Program Coordinator, the first Strategic Plan, and the logo. In the course of discussions, a number of interviewees concluded the program was in need of not simply reinvigoration, but a new ‘occasion’. The Alps-wide fires and their consequences have certainly provided one. A revitalized cooperative management program, encouraged by the May 2003 Ministerial Council meeting, can be a positive outcome of the fires and the vigorous discussions regarding ‘one plan’ and/or ‘one park’ that have taken place since late 2000.

As has been stated, the fires are yet another reminder of the biogeographical unity of the Australian Alps, a fact that merits emphasis in activities to inform people of the fires and their consequences. So, too, do the facts that fires and their consequences, including erosion and sedimentation, are natural processes (even though we may wish to control them in the interests of community safety, water supply and storage, etc.).

The relevance of and need for the cooperative program have been dramatically confirmed. If the biogeographical unity – now set out in the MOU – is to mean anything, the focus of management has to be on establishing and maintaining the ‘oneness’, to overcome the boundaries. The fires have drawn attention to the major cross-border issues and to the fact that the pre-eminence of the natural environment, the natural heritage values, must be maintained. The essential natural heritage values of the Australian Alps have not been destroyed. They remain and are fundamental to the parks and everything associated with them. However, if they are lost or diminished, everything and everyone will be the losers. Some years ago, Neville Gare observed:

Our ‘common’ is the high country. It can’t be all things to all people forever. The greater the demands we place on it, the more compromises and personal restrictions we will have to accept – unless we want the essential values destroyed (Gare 1988).

Also of relevance is the concept of the ‘irreproducible’ nature of natural resources and therefore of their increasing value, developed by John Krutilla and his colleagues (Krutilla and Fisher 1975). It is a concept that is readily applicable to the natural and cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps, especially as they come under increasing pressures from visitors and developers. In these respects, the stronger vision statement in the latest MOU is a start:

The vision of the Australian Alps co-operative management program is of Agencies working in partnership to achieve excellence in conservation management of its natural and cultural values and sustainable use through an active program of cross border co-operation (Clause 2.5)

Both now and beyond, the focus of the cooperative management program must be on the major cross-border issues, not those that are really individual

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108 There is a parallel in the Murray-Darling Basin where the powers that be are struggling with the need to give priority to healthy rivers which are fundamental to the well-being of the Basin as whole.
park core business, in terms of both on-ground action and research. The program will need be tightened up and deal with fewer projects that are properly funded, recognising the limited available resources, though such an approach does not reflect the attitudes of the program’s founders. The program should be a spearhead; it must deal with the things that really matter and are really needed. From the examples considered earlier in the study, a few can be highlighted. The fires provide an opportunity for an enhanced program to reduce the numbers of feral animals and weeds (including preventing the re-establishment of weeds on bare ground). There is an even greater need to investigate the impacts of climate change, including fires. Research should be undertaken into the impacts of visitors and recreation activities, especially with the reduction in the areas that will be available for use following the fires. There is a need for Alps-wide publicity and education, with the individual parks seen as parts of the whole bioregion.

There is need for a revitalized and enlarged program structure. A group made up of a dedicated Alps officer in each agency would keep information flowing, assist in the implementation of program work and ensure that program work was relevant to the parks, and assist the working groups and the program coordinator. The program and those involved in it must have genuine agency support, not ‘tokenism’. Agency and government support must include greater financial support, both for the operation of the program and the work it undertakes. This study has shown that there is no doubt about the positive returns on past investment, in spite of the deficiencies that have been acknowledged. As has been mentioned before, the AALC has very limited resources, but there is no doubt that it could and should play a much greater coordinating role in terms of all Alps issues.

Even though the next Strategic Plan will have to focus on post-fires recovery and rehabilitation, it should also look further ahead. The revised MOU has set out a longer-term view for the program. The revision and signing of the MOU provided an opportunity for the re-involvement of the Ministers and an indication of greater political support for the program, both of which have been lacking in recent years. Whether or not it will result in greater re-involvement of the Commonwealth will remain to be seen. It also remains to be seen if the revised MOU will raise the profile of the Alps as a whole and the cooperative management program to the level they merit, within the community at large, the participating governments, and the park agencies and individual parks. As was suggested earlier, the signing of the revised MOU and the decisions taken at the Ministerial Council certainly have the potential to make a significant contribution to the cooperative management of the Alps.

The Australian Alps are a national asset and merit national-level recognition and support. The former, and hopefully the latter, will come with the National Heritage legislation and placing on the National Heritage List. So, too, will moves towards ‘one plan’ for the Alps parks and ‘one park’, the latter being a clear longer-term objective. To this end, Alps work should be part of core work and business for the parks and their agencies. The fires have added to the work that needs to be undertaken, but the program can remain a non-threatening arrangement, can continue to tackle the cross-border Alps-wide issues, and provide the basis for ‘one plan’ and ‘one park’.

This study has demonstrated that since its beginnings in the 1970s and the signing of the first MOU in 1986, the cooperative program has made a significant contribution to protected area management in the Australian Alps. The parks and their agencies are in a far better position to face the current and future challenges than they would have been without the program. In keeping with the resilience the Alps have demonstrated in the past – the natural environments, those who care for them, and those who live and work in and around them – the cooperative management program will continue to enhance the values of the nationally and internationally significant Australian Alps.

109 As recently as the 22.8.02 AALC meeting, the comment was recorded that the “Future of staff on Working Groups will depend on work commitments”. This is not in keeping with the letter or spirit of the MOU.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 The Australian Alps National Parks – a Framework for Co-operation

1. National Significance of the Australian Alps
The alpine region of the Australian mainland is of national significance because it contains:

· Australia’s highest peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
· plants and animals unique to the Australian alpine environment;
· a rich heritage of use by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
· an outstanding outdoor recreation resource for Australians;
· the headwaters of major river systems, supplying snowmelt waters vital to south-east Australia for domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydroelectric production; and
· an important tourist attraction.
This significance has been recognised by both State and Federal governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and other protected areas.

2. Managing the Alps
The management and protection of the Australian Alps to conserve them for all Australians, present and future, requires a national commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries. This joint commitment will focus on:

· the protection of outstanding landscapes and natural and cultural values;
· the provision of a range of outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with protection of the natural environment; and
· the conservation of water catchment values.

3. A National Commitment
The nationally important values of the Australian Alps will be protected by a formal Agreement between governments. This Agreement, titled ‘The Australian Alps National Parks Agreement, will:

· acknowledge State and Federal government responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps;
· identify the following key objectives for management:
  (a) protection of the landscape;
  (b) protection of plants, animals and cultural values;
  (c) provision of outdoor recreation opportunities to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the alpine environment;
  (d) protection of mountain catchments.
· prescribe co-operative arrangements to achieve the management objectives by:
  (a) development of compatible management plans;
  (b) encouragement of public participation in planning;
  (c) development of complementary recreation policies and management programs;
  (d) exchange of information, ideas and resources;
  (e) complementary and integrated research programs;
  (f) co-ordinated training programs;
  (g) co-ordinated information and education programs to foster appreciation of the Alps by the Australian community.
4. Responsibilities
The agencies subject to the Agreement will be the:
- ACT Parks and Conservation Service of the Department of Territories;
- Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service; and
- Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

These parties are responsible for co-operating to achieve the objectives of the Agreement and for liaising with other relevant government departments which may be affected by the Agreement. The Agreement will not alter the statutory or administrative responsibilities of any department or agency. The area subject to the Agreement will be described in a schedule to the Agreement.

5. Initial Action
(a) Liaison Committee
A liaison Committee, comprising senior officers of the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will organize activities. The Committee will draft the Australian Alps National Parks Agreement for consideration by Ministers.
(b) Public awareness program
The agencies will use their education and information resources to prepare:
- a public awareness strategy;
- a distinctive map and/or poster of the Australian Alps;
- publicity about recreation opportunities in the Alps;
- common interpretation and education themes;
- joint press releases and documentary material;
- a distinctive logo;
- a common code of ethics for recreational use of alpine areas.
(c) Natural resources management program
A natural resources management program will concentrate initially on the development of approaches to catchment management. Key issues are:
- rehabilitation of damaged catchments;
- water quality management;
- vegetation management;
- fire management;
- catchment monitoring.

The program will also address the development of data bases and use of computers as planning and management tools.
(d) Cultural resources program
A cultural resources program will address Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal historical issues such as:
- the collection and recording of oral history;
- recording of a comprehensive history of the Australian Alps;
- establishment and recording of historical patterns of human migration and use in the mountains;
- establishment of criteria for historical and cultural significance for conservation purposes;
- avenues for exchange of traditional skills, techniques and information.
(e) Recreation management program
A compatible approach to recreation management will be developed. The key issues include:
- the alpine walking track system extending from Victoria through NSW to the ACT;
• complementary wilderness declaration and management;
• a consistent approach to commercial back-country operation;
• complementary vehicle access policy in border areas;
• a joint approach to river recreation e.g. Murray-Indi/Snowy Rivers;
• a common approach to cave management and use;
• a common approach to visitor use data;
• a common approach to an inventory of current recreation opportunities.
(f) Park planning and public participation
A compatible approach to park planning will be developed which encompasses common management objectives where appropriate. Public participation including the involvement of non-government organizations will be encouraged.

(g) Regional planning
A compatible position on landuse planning in the precincts of protected areas in the Alps will be developed. A long term goal is the development of policies for recommendation to governments.

6. Implementation
Activities to be carried out under the Agreement will be submitted to Ministers annually, prior to implementation. This will be accompanied by a review of the operation of the Agreement.

Source: Davies 1986, 26-30.

Appendix 2 ‘Governments Unite to Protect Australian Alps’, News Release, 29 November 1985

A commitment to co-operative management of national parks in the Australian Alps was announced today by State and Federal Ministers responsible for National Parks and other protected areas.

The Federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, the Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Mrs Joan Kirner, the New South Wales Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Bob Carr and the Federal Minister for Territories, Mr Gordon Scholes, said that they will prepare an Australian Alps National Parks Agreement.

This Agreement will result in complementary policies to protect the scenery, water catchments, plants, animals and cultural heritage of the Alps. It will also promote greater awareness of the opportunities that these valuable resources provide for recreation and tourism in the mountains of south-east Australia.

Co-operative arrangements will focus on the exchange of information and resources, complementary and integrated research programs, planning of interstate trails and associated recreation opportunities and the provision of information and education about the Alps.

The Minister said the Australian Alps are of great national significance, because of their outstanding landscape, unique natural and cultural values, vital snow-fed water catchments and in providing for outdoor recreation.

The Agreement will involve the Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service of the Department of Territories, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

The Agreement will not alter the statutory or administrative responsibilities of any department or agency but rather encourage liaison and co-operation between all agencies with roles in the Alps.
The Australian Alps extend through the Namadgi National Park in the ACT, the adjacent Kosciusko National Park in NSW and the National Parks in the mountains of Victoria namely Tingaringy, Snowy River, Bogong and Wonnangatta-Moroka.

Preliminary discussions and a workshop involving representatives of the departments have been held already to assist in facilitating co-operative arrangements.

Both public and the parks will benefit from an increase in public awareness of the importance of the area, its requirements for protection and the wide range of opportunities available for recreation involving complementary policies and facilities in the three states.

Appendix 3 Australian Alps National Parks Memorandum of Understanding, 1986

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is made the fourth day of July 1986, between:

The Honourable Barry Cohen, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment of the Commonwealth of Australia being the Minister responsible under the Commonwealth National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 for giving directions to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife in respect of the performance of the functions and the exercise of the powers of the Director under that Act (“the Commonwealth Minister”) of the first part;

The Honourable Gordon Glen Denton Scholes, the Minister for Territories of the Commonwealth of Australia being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the Department of Territories which Department operates the service known as the Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service (“the Territories Minister”) of the second part;

The Honourable Joan Elizabeth Kirner, the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands of the State of Victoria being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands of the State of Victoria (“the Victorian Minister”) of the third part; and

The Honourable Robert John Carr, the Minister for Planning and Environment of the State of New South Wales being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales (“the New South Wales Minister”) of the fourth part.

WHEREAS

A. Under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 of the Commonwealth, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife has power to perform any of his functions in co-operation with a State, with an authority of the Commonwealth or of a State or with a local governing body, and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is established by that Act for the purpose of assisting the Director in the performance of his functions;

B. The Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service of the Department of Territories, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands of the State of Victoria and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales are the
agencies responsible for the care, control and management within their respective Territory or State of the areas described in Schedule 1 and which are hereinafter referred to as the Australian Alps National Parks,

NOW THE PARTIES have reached an understanding in regard to the following matters:
1. The parties hereto acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their governments that:
   1) The Australian Alps National Parks comprise an area of national significance containing:
      - Australia’s highest peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
      - plants and animals unique to Australian alpine environments;
      - a rich heritage of use by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
      - an outstanding outdoor recreation resource for Australians;
      - the headwaters of major river systems, supplying snowmelt waters vital to south-east Australia for domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydro-electric production; and
      - important tourist attractions.
   2) This national significance has been recognised by the Commonwealth and aforesaid State Governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and other protected areas within the region.
   3) The management and protection of the Australian Alps National Parks to conserve them for all Australians, present and future, require a national commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries.
   4) There exist Commonwealth and State responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps National Parks and the need for a joint commitment by the relevant Governments to conserve these values.

2. The parties agree:
   1) To pursue the development of a formal inter-governmental co-operative management agreement for the purpose of protecting the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.
   2) To co-operate in the management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 to achieve the following objectives:
      a) protection of the landscape;
      b) protection of native plants and animals and cultural values;
      c) provision of outdoor recreation opportunities to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the alpine environment; and
      d) protection of mountain catchments.

3. The parties further agree that the agencies mentioned in Recital B and the Director of National Parks and Wildlife of the Commonwealth (hereinafter referred to collectively as “the agencies”) will participate in the following working arrangements:
   1) The agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area in Schedule 1 or in amendments to existing management plans and shall
aim to ensure that management plans provide for appropriate policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps National Parks.

2) The agencies will consult on matters of resource data collection and policy formulation and other operations relevant to the co-ordination of protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.

3) The agencies will exchange information, ideas and expertise relevant to the protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.

4) The agencies will co-operate in the development of public awareness programs about the Australian Alps National Parks.

5) The agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps National Parks by:
   a) arranging joint meetings of representatives of such advisory groups as are in existence for the areas listed in Schedule 1; and
   b) providing venues and similar assistance for the display of plans of management and other material placed on public exhibition by any participating agency which affects management of the areas listed in Schedule 1.

6) Each agency will, within those areas listed in Schedule 1 for which it has management responsibility, adopt recreation management policies and where appropriate provide recreation facilities and services to enable visitors to effectively use adjacent areas in Schedule 1.

7) A Liaison Committee will be formed in which each agency will be represented by a senior officer at meetings. The function of this Committee will be to co-ordinate the development and implementation of co-operative work programs and other arrangements made under this Memorandum of Understanding. A co-operative work plan for each year or other agreed period will be submitted to the Ministers by the Committee for approval prior to implementation. This plan will be accompanied by a review of the operation of this Memorandum of Understanding in the preceding year or period.

4. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on and from the day and year first written above and may be amended or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

5. Additions to the areas listed in Schedule 1 gazetted after the date of commencement of this Memorandum of Understanding and any new national parks, nature reserves or wilderness areas contiguous with these areas, including the Victorian Alpine National Park proposal, will be included in Schedule 1 on and from their date of gazetral.

6. The parties further acknowledge that this Memorandum of Understanding shall not give rise to legal obligations between their respective governments.

SCHEDULE 1:
## AREAS COMPRISING THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Agency Responsible for Management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namadgi National Park</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosciusko National Park</td>
<td>NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bimberi Nature Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avon Wilderness</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, Victoria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Appendix 4

**Australian Alps National Parks Memorandum of Understanding, Revised 1989**

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is made the Second day of December 1989 between:

**Senator The Honourable Graham Frederick Richardson**, the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories of the Commonwealth of Australia being the Minister responsible under the Commonwealth National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 for giving directions to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife in respect of the performance of the functions and the exercise of the powers of the Director under that Act (“the Commonwealth Minister”) of the first part;

**The Honourable Timothy John Moore**, the Minister for the Environment of the State of New South Wales being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the National...
WHEREAS
A. On 4 July 1986, a Memorandum of Understanding was entered into in relation to the Co-operative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks,
B. Pursuant to clause 4 of that Memorandum the parties to it now wish to terminate that Memorandum and, with the Minister for Housing and Urban Services of the Australian Capital Territory, to enter into a new Memorandum of Understanding,
C. Under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 of the Commonwealth, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife has power to perform any of his functions in co-operation with a State, with an authority of the Commonwealth or of a State or with a local governing body, and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is established by that Act for the purpose of assisting the Director in the performance of his functions;
D. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands of the State of Victoria and the Parks and Conservation Service of the Australian Capital Territory, are the agencies responsible for the care, control and management within their respective State or Territory of the areas described in Schedule 1 and which are hereinafter referred to as the Australian Alps National Parks,

NOW THE PARTIES have reached an understanding in regard to the following matters:
1. The parties, other than the fourth party, as from the date of this Memorandum of Understanding, hereby terminate the Memorandum of Understanding dated 4 July 1986. The parties of this Memorandum agree that all matters presently being conducted under the former Memorandum of Understanding will continue to be conducted pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding.
2. The parties hereto acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their governments that:
   1) The Australian Alps National Parks comprise an area of national significance containing:
      - Australia’s highest peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
      - plants and animals unique to the Australian alpine environment;
      - a rich heritage of use by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
      - an outstanding outdoor recreation resource for Australians;
      - the headwaters of major river systems, supplying snowmelt waters vital to south-east Australia for domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydro-electric production; and
      - important tourist attractions.
   2) This national significance has been recognised by the Commonwealth and aforesaid State and Territory Governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and other protected areas within the region.
3) The management and protection of the Australian Alps National Parks to conserve them for all Australians, present and future, require a national commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries.

4) There exist Commonwealth and State and Territory responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps National Parks and the need for a joint commitment by the relevant Governments to conserve these values.

3. The parties agree:

1) To pursue the development of a formal inter-governmental co-operative management agreement for the purpose of protecting the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.

2) To co-operate in the management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 to achieve the following objectives:
   e) protection of the landscape;
   f) protection of native plants and animals and cultural values;
   g) provision of outdoor recreation opportunities to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the alpine environment; and
   h) protection of mountain catchments.

4. The parties further agree that the agencies mentioned in Recital D and the Director of National Parks and Wildlife of the Commonwealth (hereinafter referred to collectively as “the agencies”) will participate in the following working arrangements:

1) The agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area in Schedule 1 or in amendments to existing management plans and shall aim to ensure that management plans provide for appropriate policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps National Parks.

2) The agencies will consult on matters of resource data collection and policy formulation and other operations relevant to the co-ordination of protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.

3) The agencies will exchange information, ideas and expertise relevant to the protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps National Parks.

4) The agencies will co-operate in the development of public awareness programs about the Australian Alps National Parks.

5) The agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps National Parks by:
   a) arranging joint meetings of representatives of such advisory groups as are in existence for the areas listed in Schedule 1; and
b) providing venues and similar assistance for the display of plans of management and other material placed on public exhibition by any participating agency which affects management of the areas listed in Schedule 1.

6) Each agency will, within those areas listed in Schedule 1 for which it has management responsibility, adopt recreation management policies and where appropriate provide recreation facilities and services to enable visitors to effectively use adjacent areas in Schedule 1.

7) A Liaison Committee will be formed in which each agency will be represented by a senior officer at meetings. The function of this Committee will be to co-ordinate the development and implementation of co-operative work programs and other arrangements made under this Memorandum of Understanding. A co-operative work plan for each year or other agreed period will be submitted to the Ministers by the Committee for approval prior to implementation. This plan will be accompanied by a review of the operation of this Memorandum of Understanding in the preceding year or period.

5. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on and from the day and year first written above and may be amended or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

6. Additions to the areas listed in Schedule 1 gazetted after the date of commencement of this Memorandum of Understanding and any new national parks, nature reserves or wilderness areas contiguous with these areas, will be included in Schedule 1 on and from their date of gazettal.

7. The parties further acknowledge that this Memorandum of Understanding shall not give rise to legal obligations between their respective governments.

SCHEDULE 1
AREAS COMPRISING THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Agency Responsible for Management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namadgi National Park</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosciusko National Parks</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bimberi Nature Reserve</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5  Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the Co-operative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks, Revised 1996

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is made the 29th day of November 1996 between:

Senator the Hon Robert Hill, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment being the Minister responsible for the Commonwealth National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 of the first part;
The Hon Pam Allan MP, Minister for the Environment for the State of New South Wales being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales of the second part;
Mr Gary Humphries, MLA, Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning for the Australian Capital Territory being the Minister having responsibility for the administration of the Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service of the third part; and
The Hon Marie Tehan MP, Minister for Conservation and Land Management for the State of Victoria being the Minister having responsibility for the National Parks Service of Victoria of the fourth part;

WHEREAS
1. In June 1986 a Memorandum of Understanding was entered into in relation to the Co-operative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks,
2. The original Memorandum of Understanding was amended and re-signed on 2 December 1989,
3. Pursuant to clause 4 of that Memorandum the parties now wish to amend and upgrade the Memorandum to reflect changes in the operation of the Memorandum in the intervening years, and to set a focus for the future,
4. Under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 of the Commonwealth, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife has power to perform any of his/her functions in co-operation with a State or, with an authority of a State or Territory,
5. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, the Parks and Conservation Service of the Australian Capital Territory, and the National Parks Service of Victoria, are the agencies responsible for the care, control and management within their respective State or Territory of the areas described in Schedule 1 and which are hereinafter referred to as the Australian Alps national parks,

NOW THE PARTIES have reached an understanding in regard to the following matters:
1. The parties as from this date hereby amend the Memorandum of Understanding dated 2 December 1989. The parties to this Memorandum agree that all matters presently being conducted under the previous Memorandum of Understanding will continue to be conducted pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding.
2. The parties hereto acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their Governments that:
2.1 The Australian Alps national parks comprise an area of national significance containing:
   a) Australia’s highest mainland peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
   b) plants and animals unique to Australian alpine and sub-alpine environments;
   c) a rich heritage of use and belonging by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
   d) an outstanding outdoor recreation and tourism resource for Australians and overseas visitors;
   e) the headwaters of major river systems flowing from the Australian Alps national parks, supplying snowmelt waters vital for domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydro-electric production in NSW, Victoria, ACT and South Australia; and
   f) important tourist attractions.
2.2 The national significance of the Australian Alps has been recognised by the Commonwealth and aforesaid State and Territory Governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and other protected areas within the region.
2.3 The management and protection of the Australian Alps national parks to conserve them for all Australians, present and future, require a national commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries.
2.4 There exist Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps national parks and the need for joint commitment by the relevant Governments to conserve these values.

3. The parties agree to the following objectives:
3.1 To pursue the growth and enhancement of inter-governmental co-operative management to protect the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks.
3.2 To co-operate in the management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 to achieve the following objectives:
   a) protection of the landscape;
   b) protection of native plants and animals and cultural values;
   c) provision of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the alpine environment;
   d) protection of mountain catchments.

4. The parties further agree to the following working arrangements.
The Agencies mentioned in Schedule 1 and the Commonwealth Director of National Parks and Wildlife (hereinafter referred to collectively as “the Agencies”) will participate in the following working arrangements:
4.1 The Agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area or in amendments to existing plans, and shall aim to ensure that management plans provide for complementary policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps national parks.
4.2 The Agencies will consult on matters of resource data collection, policy formulation and, where possible and appropriate, will co-operate in joint actions and other operations relevant to the co-ordinated protection of the values of the Australian Alps national parks.
4.3 The Agencies will exchange information, ideas and expertise relevant to the protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks, and will co-operate in the training of staff to manage the Australian Alps national parks,
4.4 The Agencies will co-operate in the enhancement and monitoring of public awareness about the Australian Alps national parks.
4.5 The Agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks.

4.6 Each Agency will, within the areas for which it has management responsibility, strive to adopt complementary recreation management policies and where appropriate provide recreation facilities and services to enable visitors to effectively use adjacent areas listed in Schedule 1.

5. A liaison committee (known as the Australian Alps Liaison Committee) will be formed in which each Agency will be represented by a senior officer. The function of this committee will be to co-ordinate the development and implementation of co-operative work programs and other arrangements under this Memorandum of Understanding.

6. The Australian Alps Liaison Committee will ensure:
6.1 That a three-year Strategic Plan will be regularly prepared and submitted to the Ministers for approval, and will be accompanied by a review of the implementation of the previous Strategic Plan, and
6.2 That a co-operative work plan is developed consistent with the Strategic Plan for each year or other agreed period and is submitted to the chief administrator of each participating Agency for approval prior to implementation. This plan will be accompanied by a review of the operation of this Memorandum of Understanding in the preceding year or period.
6.3 Within the capacity of individual Agency budgets, Agencies will contribute funds to be managed by the Liaison Committee for the approved works program under the Memorandum of Understanding. The Liaison Committee may enter into cost-sharing arrangements with one or more State/Territory for projects within the works program.
6.4 In managing projects under the approved works program, parties agree that a nominated Agency may oversee the implementation of a particular project and act on behalf of other Agencies in the execution of legal contracts and similar arrangements.

7. The Liaison Committee may invite managers of other alpine and sub-alpine parks, conservation reserves or relevant bodies to participate in specific co-operative programs where benefits from consistent management of alpine and sub-alpine environments are expected.

8. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on and from the day and year written above and may be amended or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

9. Additions to the areas listed in Schedule 1 gazetted after the date of commencement of this Memorandum of Understanding and any new national parks, nature reserves, wilderness areas or other compatible conservation reserves contiguous with these areas, will be included in Schedule 1 on and from their date of gazetted.

10. The parties further acknowledge that this Memorandum of Understanding shall not give rise to legal obligations between their respective governments, except as described in Clause 6 above.

SCHEDULE 1
AREAS COMPRISING THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Agency responsible for management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
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</table>
### Appendix 6  

**Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks, 6 November 1998**

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is made the 6th day of November 1998 between:

- **Senator the Hon Robert Hill**, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage being the Minister responsible for the Commonwealth *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975* of the first part;
- **The Hon Pam Allan MP**, Minister for the Environment for the State of New South Wales being the Minister having responsibility for administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales of the second part;
- **Mr Brendan Smyth, MLA**, Minister for Urban Services for the Australian Capital Territory being the Minister having responsibility for the administration of Environment ACT of the third part; and
- **The Hon Marie Tehan MP**, Minister for Conservation and Land Management for the State of Victoria being the Minister having responsibility for Parks Victoria of the fourth part;

WHEREAS

1. In June 1986 a Memorandum of Understanding was entered into in relation to the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks,
2. The original Memorandum of Understanding was amended and re-signed on 2 December 1989 and again on the 29 November 1996.
3. Pursuant to the objectives of that Memorandum the parties now wish to amend and upgrade the Memorandum to reflect changes in the operation of the Memorandum in the intervening years, and to set a focus for the future,
4. Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975* of the Commonwealth, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife has power to perform any of his/her functions in co-operation with a State or, with an authority of a State or Territory,
5. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, Environment ACT, and Parks Victoria, are the agencies responsible for the care, control and management within their respective State or Territory of the areas described in Schedule 1. These areas are part of the same biogeographical unit and are hereinafter collectively referred to as the Australian Alps national parks.

NOW THE PARTIES have reached an understanding in regard to the following matters:

1. The parties as from this date hereby further amend the Memorandum of Understanding. The parties to the Memorandum agree that all matters being conducted under the terms

<table>
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<th>National Park</th>
<th>Administration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Snowy River National Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avon Wilderness</td>
<td>National Parks Service (Victoria)</td>
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<td><strong>New South Wales</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosciusko National Park</td>
<td>NSW National Parks &amp; Wildlife Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brindabella National Park <em>(added 21/6/96)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scabby Range Nature Reserve</td>
<td>NSW National Parks &amp; Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>Bimberi Nature Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Namadgi National Park</td>
<td>ACT Parks &amp; Conservation Service</td>
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</tbody>
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139
of the Memorandum of Understanding prior to this date will continue to be conducted pursuant to the terms set out herein.

2. The parties hereto acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their Governments that:
   2.1 The Australian Alps national parks comprise an area of national significance containing:
      (a) Australia’s highest mainland peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
      (b) plants and animals unique to Australian alpine and sub-alpine environments;
      (c) a rich heritage of use and belonging by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
      (d) an outstanding outdoor recreation and tourism resource for Australians and overseas visitors;
      (e) the headwaters of major river systems flowing from the Australian Alps national parks, supplying snowmelt waters vital for domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydro-electric production in NSW, Victoria, ACT and South Australia; and
      (f) important tourist attractions.
   2.2 The national significance of the Australian Alps has been recognised by the Commonwealth and aforesaid State and Territory Governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and other protected areas within the region.
   2.3 The management and protection of the Australian Alps national parks to conserve them for all Australians, present and future, require a national commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries.
   2.4 There exist Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities for the conservation of the unique values of the Australian Alps national parks and the need for joint commitment by the relevant Governments to conserve these values.
   2.5 The vision of the Australian Alps co-operative program is of participating Agencies working in partnership to achieve excellence in conservation management and sustainable use through an active program of cross border-co-operation.

3. The parties agree to the following objectives:
   3.1 To pursue the growth and enhancement of inter-governmental co-operative management to protect the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks.
   3.2 To co-operate in the best-practice management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 to achieve the following objectives:
      (a) protection of the unique mountain landscapes;
      (b) protection of the natural and cultural values specific to the Australian Alps;
      (c) provision of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities that encourage the enjoyment and understanding of alpine and sub-alpine environments; and
      (d) protection of mountain catchments.

4. The parties further agree to the following working arrangements.
   The Agencies mentioned in Schedule 1 and the Commonwealth Director of National Parks and Wildlife (hereinafter referred to collectively as “the Agencies”) will participate in the following working arrangements:
   4.1 The Agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area or in amendments to existing plans, and shall aim to ensure that management
plans provide for complementary policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps national parks;

4.2 The Agencies will consult on matters of resource data collection, policy formulation and, where possible and appropriate, will co-operate in joint actions and other operations relevant to the co-ordinated protection of the values of the Australian Alps national parks;

4.3 The Agencies will exchange information, ideas and expertise relevant to the protection of the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks, and will co-operate in the training of staff to manage the Australian Alps national parks;

4.4 The Agencies will co-operate in the enhancement and monitoring of public awareness about the Australian Alps national parks;

4.5 The Agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks; and

4.6 Each Agency will, within the areas for which it has management responsibility, strive to adopt complementary recreation management policies and where appropriate provide recreation facilities and services to enable visitors to effectively use adjacent areas listed in Schedule 1.

5. A liaison committee (known as the Australian Alps Liaison Committee) will be formed in which each Agency will be represented by a senior officer. The function of this committee will be to co-ordinate the development and implementation of co-operative work programs and other arrangements under this Memorandum of Understanding.
6. The Australian Alps Liaison Committee will ensure:
   6.1 That a three-year Strategic Plan is submitted to the Ministers through Heads of Agencies for approval, and will be accompanied by a review of the implementation of the previous Strategic Plan;
   6.2 That a co-operative work program is developed consistent with the Strategic Plan for each financial year;
   6.3 That a regular review of progress towards implementing the program is undertaken during the financial year to which it relates;
   6.4 That an annual report is submitted to the Ministers, through Heads of Agencies at the end of each financial year;
   6.5 Within the capacity of individual Agency budgets, Agencies will contribute funds to be managed by the Liaison Committee for the approved works program under the Memorandum of Understanding. The Liaison Committee may enter into cost-sharing arrangements with one or more State/Territory for projects within the works program; and
   6.6 In managing projects under the approved works program, parties agree that a nominated Agency may oversee the implementation of a particular project and act on behalf of other Agencies in the execution of legal contracts and similar arrangements.

7. The Liaison Committee may invite managers of other alpine and sub-alpine parks, conservation reserves or relevant bodies to participate in specific co-operative programs where benefits from consistent management of alpine and sub-alpine environments are expected.

8. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on and from the day and year written above and may be amended or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

9. The parties may agree to the inclusion within Schedule 1 of any national park, nature reserve, wilderness area or other compatible conservation reserve containing alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems or communities.

10. The parties further acknowledge that this Memorandum of Understanding shall not give rise to legal obligations between their respective governments, except as described in Clause 6 above.

SCHEDULE 1
AREAS COMPRISING THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Agency responsible for management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victoria</strong></td>
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<tr>
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Appendix 7

Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the Co-operative Management of the Australian Alps National Parks, 23 May 2003

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is made between:

The Minister having responsibility for the administration of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage;

The Minister having responsibility for administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales;

The Minister having responsibility for the administration of Environment ACT; and

The Minister having responsibility for the administration of Parks Victoria;

WHEREAS

1. In June 1986 a Memorandum of Understanding was first entered into in relation to the Co-operative Management of the Australian Alps national parks.
2. The original Memorandum of Understanding was amended and re-signed on 2 December 1989, again on the 29 November 1996 and again on the 6 November 1998.
3. Pursuant to the objectives of that Memorandum the parties now wish to amend and upgrade the Memorandum to reflect changes in the operation of the Memorandum in the intervening years, and to set a new focus for the future.
4. The Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage performs its functions to conserve biodiversity and heritage, in cooperation with the participating States and Territory.
5. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, Environment ACT, and Parks Victoria, are the agencies responsible for the care, control and management within their respective State or Territory of the areas described in Schedule 1. These areas are part of the same biogeographical unit and are in this Memorandum of Understanding collectively referred to as the Australian Alps national parks.

PREFACE

NOW THE PARTIES have reached an understanding in regard to the following matters:

1. The parties as from this date hereby further amend the Memorandum of Understanding dated 6 November 1998. The parties to the Memorandum agree that all matters being conducted under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding prior to this date will continue to be conducted pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding.
2. The parties hereto acknowledge for themselves and on behalf of their Governments that:
   2.1 The Australian Alps national parks comprise an area of major significance containing:
       (a) Australia’s highest mainland peaks and most spectacular mountain scenery;
       (b) flora and fauna, ecological processes and communities unique to Australian alpine and sub-alpine environments
       (c) a range of sites, places and landscapes valued by the community including those with a rich and diverse cultural heritage belonging to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
       (d) a significant outdoor recreation and tourism resource for Australians and international visitors; and
       (e) the headwaters of major river systems flowing from the Australian Alps national parks, supplying snowmelt waters vital for the maintenance of
ecological processes and communities, domestic use, industry, irrigation and hydro-electric production in NSW, Victoria, ACT and South Australia.

2.2 The significance of the Australian Alps has been recognised by the Commonwealth and aforesaid State and Territory Governments by the extensive reservation of national parks and creation of other protected areas within the region.

2.3 The coordinated management, protection and conservation of the Australian Alps national parks for all Australians, present and future, requires a joint commitment extending across State and Territory boundaries.

2.4 There exist Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities for the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks.

VISION

2.5 The vision of the Australian Alps co-operative management program is of Agencies working in partnership to achieve excellence in conservation management of its natural and cultural values and sustainable use through an active program of cross border co-operation.

MISSION

3. The parties agree to the following objectives:

3.1 To pursue the growth and enhancement of inter-governmental co-operative management to protect the important natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks.

3.2 To co-operate in the determination and implementation of best-practice management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 to achieve the:
   (a) protection of the unique mountain landscapes;
   (b) protection of the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps;
   (c) provision of an appropriate range of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities that encourage the enjoyment, education, understanding and conservation of the natural and cultural values; and
   (d) protection of mountain catchments.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

4. The parties agree to request or direct the agencies to participate wherever possible and appropriate in the following working arrangements:

4.1 the Agencies will consult in the preparation of management plans for each area in Schedule 1 or in amendments to existing plans, and will aim to ensure that such management plans provide for complementary policies and management practices throughout the Australian Alps national parks;

4.2 the Agencies will consult on matters of policy formulation and management;

4.3 the Agencies will consult in the formulation of regulations for the management of the Australian Alps national parks and the enforcement of those regulations;

4.4 the Agencies will collaborate on matters of research including resource data collection and will undertake joint actions and management operations relevant to the co-ordinated management, conservation and protection of the values of the Australian Alps national parks;

4.5 the Agencies will exchange information, ideas and expertise relevant to the protection of the values of the Australian Alps national parks, and will co-operate in the training of staff to manage the Australian Alps national parks;

4.6 the Agencies will co-operate to establish and implement processes for consultation with Aboriginal communities and foster their participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks;

4.7 the Agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for community education, interpretation and awareness of the values of Australian Alps national parks;
4.8 the Agencies will co-operate to provide opportunities for public participation in the management of the Australian Alps national parks; and
4.9 each Agency will, within the areas for which it has management responsibility, strive to adopt complementary recreation management policies and where appropriate provide recreation facilities and services to enable visitors to effectively use adjacent areas comprising the Australian Alps national parks listed in Schedule 1;
4.10 the Agencies will co-operate in the monitoring of use and public awareness about the Australian Alps national parks; and
4.11 the Agencies will collectively strive to identify opportunities for the recognition of regional, national and international significant values of the Australian Alps national parks.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
5. The parties agree to maintain a committee to be known as the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) in which each Agency will be represented by a senior officer. The function of this committee is to facilitate development, co-ordination, and implementation of co-operative management programs, including but not limited to the annual co-operative works program, and other arrangements under this Memorandum of Understanding.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS
6. The task of the AALC will be to ensure:
   6.1 that a Strategic Plan is submitted to the Australian Alps national parks heads of agencies group (Alps Heads of Agencies) for approval on a three-year cycle, and is accompanied by a review of the implementation of the previous Strategic Plan;
   6.2 that an Australian Alps national parks co-operative works program is developed consistent with the Strategic Plan for each financial year;
   6.3 that the primary focus of the annual co-operative works program is to foster innovation and best practice in the areas of policy and management planning, education, training, research and performance measurement;
   6.4 that the annual co-operative works program is consistent with and incorporated into the management programs undertaken by the Agencies;
   6.5 that a regular review of progress towards implementing the annual co-operative works program is undertaken during the financial year to which it relates;
   6.6 that an annual report is submitted to the parties, through Alps Heads of Agencies at the end of each financial year; and
   6.7 that opportunities for inter-agency liaison, in particular joint actions and management operations relevant to the co-ordinated management, conservation and protection of the values of the Australian Alps national parks are identified and supported where appropriate.

7. Any funds or in-kind support contributed by the Agencies as negotiated through the Alps Heads of Agencies will be managed for the annual co-operative works program under the Memorandum of Understanding.

8. The AALC may enter into cost-sharing arrangements with one or more State/Territory Agencies for projects within the annual co-operative works program.

9. Administrative support and program management tasks for the AALC will be undertaken by the State/Territory Agencies on a rotational basis as appropriate. The Commonwealth Agency will provide secretariat support to the AALC and may also undertake administrative support and program management tasks.
10. In managing projects under the annual co-operative works program, a nominated Agency may project manage a particular project.

THIRD PARTY OPPORTUNITIES
11. The AALC will investigate, foster and engage with national and international managers, of other alpine and sub-alpine parks or relevant government and non-government bodies, to learn about or participate in specific co-operative programs where management benefits are to be expected.
SCHEDULE 1
12. The parties may agree to the inclusion within Schedule 1 of any national park, nature reserve, wilderness area or other compatible conservation reserve which complements or contributes to the Australian Alps national parks as outlined in clause 2.1.

NATURE OF AGREEMENT
13. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into effect on and from the day and year written below and may be amended or terminated at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

14. The parties acknowledge that this Memorandum of Understanding does not give rise to legal obligations.

DEFINITIONS
In this agreement:

"Parties" means the Minister having responsibility for the administration of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage, the Minister having responsibility for administration of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, the Minister having responsibility for the administration of Environment ACT; and the Minister having responsibility for the administration of Parks Victoria;

"Agencies" means the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales, Environment ACT, Parks Victoria, and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage.

SCHEDULE 1: AREAS COMPRISING THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS

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### Australian Alps Liaison Committee Membership, 1986-2003

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## Appendix 9  
### Program Coordinators for the Australian Alps, 1991-2003

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**Media, Community Education, and Community Projects**  
**Officers for the Australian Alps, 1991-2003**  

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**Working Groups and Membership, 1986-2003¹**  

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<td>Natural Heritage</td>
<td>Amanda Carey / Lyn Nelson</td>
<td>Rob Hunt* / Graeme Enders / Genevieve Wright</td>
<td>Evan McDowell / Craig Hore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>Alistair Grinbergs / Ken Hefferman / Julie Ramsay</td>
<td>Debbie Argue / Dean Freeman</td>
<td>Pam O’Brien / Christian Hampson</td>
<td>Ray Supple* / David Foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>Recreation and Tourism</td>
<td>Frances Murray / Gillian Lee</td>
<td>Karen Civil* / Stephen Alegria</td>
<td>Simon Allender / Andrew Harrigan</td>
<td>Felicity Brooke / Fiona Colquhoun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategy I: Development of Increased Community Awareness

Rationale
Public support is vital to achieve the long term conservation of the Australian Alps. The viability of a co-operative management approach which transcends administrative boundaries and links national parks and reserves to form an Australian Alps conservation unit is dependent on public support. A key part of the strategy is increasing public awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of the Alps so that the community will value it and support its long term conservation.
Elements of the strategy

- Encouraging public participation in planning and management.
- The preparation of a community awareness plan and the implementation of the findings of that plan.
- The preparation of an interpretation works program. An Alps map has been produced as part of the interpretation program.
- Preparation of an Alps education program in conjunction with the States’ education agencies. This may include: teacher workshops; school information kits; and integration into course curricula.
- Joint meetings of advisory committees.
- The establishment of venues for environmental education which seek to inform the community about the natural and cultural heritage of the Alps and their conservation importance as the main themes. Facilities which provide opportunities for school visits and act as field studies centres are seen to be appropriate. Yarrangobilly Cave House within Kosciusko National Park will be closely evaluated as a suitable (stage one) venue for an Alps environmental education centre.
- The preparation of regular Alps productions, including a newsletter, to disseminate information about co-operative management programs and issues of interest to the general community and to staff.
- The provision of timely and regular media material about co-operative management achievements.
- The promotion of activities which emphasise the national significance of the area and continuity of the Alps across two States and the ACT.

Strategy II: The Provision of Visitor Services and Facilities

Rationale

The provision of appropriate visitor services and facilities within the Alps are potentially influenced by the location of administrative boundaries. Co-operative management across the Alps will ensure that the best planning possible for all sites occurs.

Elements of the strategy

- The planning and implementation of the Tri-State Walking Track.
- The provision of appropriate facilities for the National Horse Trail where it traverses the Alps National Parks.
- A review of the Mt Franklin Road, which serves Namadgi National Park (ACT) and Bimberi Nature Reserve (NSW), in terms of carrying capacity, maintenance standards, emergency procedures and rehabilitation requirements.
- The Cowombat Flat-Indi joint planning project (NSW/Victoria) to determine the most appropriate facilities and access for visitors at these sites.
- The planning and implementation of heritage walking trails where appropriate within the Alps parks.
- The undertaking of water quality (visitor health) studies (ACT/NSW/Victoria).
- Development of consistent standards in relation to concessionaire activities and tour operators.
- Development of a visitor use profile, including:
  - seasonal visitation;
  - overnight accommodation study;
  - visitor origins and destinations;
  - private versus commercial visitation.

Strategy III: Resource Conservation

Rationale
River systems flow interstate or form state boundaries, bushfires do not respect state and territory borders, and pest and native species migrate across borders. Resource conservation programs will achieve greater protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Alps by dealing with those matters co-operatively where necessary.

**Elements of the strategy**

- Investigation and recognition of the national and international significance of the Alps National Parks.
- The development and implementation of rare and endangered species management plans.
- The preparation of a comprehensive and common natural resources data base for the Alps.
- Upper Murray River weed control program.
- Snowy River weed control program.
- A cross-border weed and pest animal control plan (Victoria/NSW), wild pigs (NSW/ACT).
- Co-operative fire management planning and co-ordination of wildfire suppression (NSW/ACT, NSW/Victoria).
- Co-operative research projects in the following areas:
  - endangered species, to assist in the ongoing protection and management of these species;
  - environmental impacts of grazing;
  - the impact of feral horses and recreational horse riding;
  - fire ecology and management;
  - impact of pest species in natural environments including pigs, dogs, rabbits, deer and wild horses.
- Convene a national symposium on ‘Cultural Heritage of the Alps’.

**Strategy IV: Management Expertise**

**Rational**

Staff development and training programs are essential to ensure that conservation and appropriate use of the Alps resources are achieved.

**Elements of the strategy**

- The development of staff training and skills in the management of the Alps through the interstate exchange of staff, co-operative staff workshops and seminars.
- The investigation of the International and National significance of the Australian Alps Parks and the production of high quality books on the scientific significance of the respective parks in each State and the ACT.
- The achievement of cross-border field staff authorizations as a basis for co-operative law enforcement. Support measures for these authorizations will include training of interstate staff in laws applicable in adjoining jurisdictions.

To ensure the management and protection of the Australian Alps and their appreciation, use and enjoyment by the community

Mission Statement
The Memorandum of Understanding promotes cooperation in the management of the Australian Alps in order to achieve:

- Protection of the landscape;
- Protection of native plants, animals and cultural values;
- Provision of outdoor recreational opportunities to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the alpine environment; and
- Protection of mountain catchments.

In seeking to achieve this mission, the agencies which are party to the MOU will continue to strive for excellence in their own corporate missions.

Key Result Areas
Four key result areas have been identified for the period 1993-96. These reflect the same four strategies which were identified for the Cooperative Management Program in 1989. Evaluation of achievements since that time and of key factors for success of the MOU, indicate these areas should continue to be addressed as priorities in this strategic plan.

One: Community Awareness
Public support is vital to achieve the management, protection and appreciation of the important values of the Australian Alps.

Strategy Summary
Increased awareness of the Australian Alps will be targeted towards current users and park neighbours in the period 1993-1996.

Program 1993-96
- Increase staff understanding of the values of the Alps;
- Complement agency interpretation with Alps-wide information;
- Identify common issues of concern to park neighbours across the Alps and ensure action on priority tasks;
- Seek general community support for the Australian Alps on the basis of knowledge of the natural and cultural values, using the media where appropriate;
- Provide training to groups such as teachers and tourism industry representatives who are conveying information to a wide cross-section of user groups;
- Develop and convey a corporate image of the Australian Alps to the visiting public.

Two: Resource Conservation
The management and protection of the values of the Australian Alps is dependent on knowledge and conservation of a resource which is unrelated to state or territory boundaries and should hence reflect cooperative programs.

Strategy Summary
An accurate statement will be developed on the values of the Australian Alps and on the threats to their protection.

Program 1993-96
- An assessment of natural and cultural values will be undertaken using internationally recognized criteria and this will form the basis for resource conservation strategies;
- The development of common data bases for flora and fauna, rare and endangered species and for cultural heritage will provide critical input to future resource protection;
- Listing of threats to protection from pests with priority listing for control;
- Design of fire management regimes based on scientific knowledge of the effects of fire on the alpine ecology;
- Assessment of threats to catchment protection in the Alps including water quality;
- Improved knowledge of resource conservation practices.

**Three: Visitor Facilities and Services**

The provision of appropriate visitor facilities and services across the Alps is paramount to community appreciation and enjoyment of the alpine environment, and can be enhanced by cooperative actions.

**Strategy Summary**

Emphasis will be given to the development of a consistent approach to the provision of recreational facilities and services. These must not compromise the protection of the Australian Alps.

**Program 1993-96**

- Identify visitor facilities and services which may best enhance community understanding and enjoyment of the Alps;
- Develop base monitoring systems against which changes through use and development may be measured;
- Identify recreational activities which may adversely affect protection of the Alps, and propose methods of cooperative management to alleviate potential threats;
- Where management action is required to ensure protection from recreational activities, endeavour to ensure consistent approaches across the Alps.

**Four: Management Expertise**

The appreciation of the Alps in the wider community can be enhanced by fostering commitment to common goals in the development and training of staff.

**Strategy Summary**

Values of the Australian Alps and protection of the resource will be given primary emphases in development of management expertise in 1993-96.

**Program 1993-96**

- Communication between staff will be fostered by a regular newsletter and by exchanges of staff;
- Staff of all agencies will be invited to participate in the regular training courses run by each agency;
- Through appropriate reporting procedures, activities carried out under any of the key result areas, findings of research, new ideas etc., will be conveyed to staff of all agencies.

Source: AALC 1994, 6-7.

**Appendix 14**

**Australian Alps National Parks Cooperative Management Program Strategic Plan, 2000-2003 (edited)**

**Background**

The Australian Alps national parks cooperative management program is the subject of agreement between the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Victorian Governments.

The Australian Alps cooperative program consists of participating agencies working in partnership to achieve excellence in conservation management and sustainable use through a strong program of cross-border cooperation and liaison. A further objective of the agreement
is to pursue the growth and enhancement of cooperative management so as to protect the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in relation to the cooperative management program was originally signed by all parties in 1986 and revised in 1996 and 1998.

The Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) coordinates projects that encourage the consistent and cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks as a biogeographical area. As such, the AALC coordinates a program for member agencies to enhance their ability to meet their roles and responsibilities in managing the parks and reserves in alpine and sub-alpine regions of mainland Australia.

In this strategy, the outcomes for each Key Result Area will contribute to agency goals in relation to their cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks and to their respective management of the individual elements of the Australian Alps national parks. As purchasers of the outcomes of the Australian Alps cooperative program, agencies have contributed to the design of these outcomes, and have agreed to implement them as individual agency resources and priorities permit.

Performance measures will be incorporated into the annual works plan. This will identify how the AALC outcomes are being achieved.

For the purposes of this strategy cooperative management is defined as:

- fostering a culture of good will, involving complementary relationships, and adding value to those relationships through associated economies of scales,
- going beyond line management and individual agency constraints to ensure consistency across borders.

An assessment of the success of the MOU and annual cooperative works program is communicated to Ministers and other interested parties via the AALC’s Annual Report. The Annual Report details the outputs of the Alps program and their benefits to individual Agencies. Agencies may also report their implementation of the cooperative outcomes of the MOU program in their respective Annual Reports.

**Achievements to Date (1986 – 1999)**

An evaluation of the Alps program to date noted the following achievements –

- The significant natural values of the Australian Alps national parks have been well defined;
- Cultural values of the Alps are being defined but require further research and greater definition;
- World’s best practice in cross-border management of protected areas has been established;
- A culture of cooperation and goodwill amongst the participating agencies has been achieved;
- Uniform management policies and coordinated law enforcement, across borders has been achieved in many areas; and
- Significant efficiencies have been achieved through the coordination of training and research thus reducing duplication across agencies.

**VISION**

To achieve best-practice in cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks.
MISSION

To enhance cooperative management of the Australian Alps national parks.

To cooperate in the best-practice management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 of the MOU as one biogeographical region, to achieve the following objectives:
(a) protection of the unique mountain landscapes and the natural and cultural values specific to the Australian Alps; and
(b) to encourage the enjoyment and understanding of alpine and sub-alpine environments;

The Australian Alps national parks program has been very successful in delivering outputs within the identified Key Result Areas. The successful formula needs to be consolidated and further refined to address the identified threats and take advantage of the opportunities. In the next three years the Program will need to recognise and address the following challenges -

Opportunities
- Identification of emerging government policies relevant to the management of the Australian Alps national parks (e.g. aggregation of species recovery plans, focusing on key threatening processes and catchment management) and align the program with those policies;
- While the identification and quantification of important natural, cultural and recreational values of Australian Alps national parks is well advanced, these areas need constant development;
- The increasing importance of economic perspectives, challenges the AALC to identify and quantify the economic values of Australian Alps national parks;
- Opportunities exist for developing and broadening partnerships with IUCN, ANZECC, the Tasmanian Alps management authority and other relevant stakeholders;
- Emerging multiple-media technology provides a new opportunity to further promote the values of the program within the broader community;
- Utilise existing expertise to develop the Australian Alps cooperative management agreement as a centre of excellence in mountain protected area management; and
- As agency resources become more limiting, the cooperative program becomes more important as a cost-effective mechanism for efficient management of the Australian Alps national parks.

Threats
- Participating agencies and governments may question the values of the Alps program if the relevance of the program is not maintained and communicated; and
- Threats to nationally significant values need to be identified and methods promoted to ameliorate those threats.

Principles and Criteria for Project Funding
All project proposals are considered on their merits in terms of implementation of the Australian Alps Strategic Plan. Projects will also be considered if they meet the following criteria:
- have outcomes that have application to park management in at least two of the States/Territory,
- result (either directly or on implementation) in on-ground benefits to the management of the Australian Alps national parks.
The Australian Alps Liaison Committee will consider supporting on-ground works (on a cost sharing basis with an Agency) where the project:

- involves implementation of a strategic approach developed under the MOU,
- has direct cross-border benefits, and has priority support for continuance and/or maintenance by the Agency.

As a matter of policy, an on-ground works project will only be considered for funding where it is universally applicable and is in the interests of the cooperative management program.

**Structures to Implement the Program**

**Functional Relationships**

After nearly fifteen years the program has developed an administrative structure with low overheads and effective integration with agency structures. The administrative structure is accompanied by a parallel sequence of planning guidelines (MOU, strategic plan and annual works plans).

**Subsidiary Plans**

The MOU and the Strategic Plan will be implemented by an Annual Work Plan which is embedded in a three-year rolling project plan.

**Key Result Areas**

The AALC has developed the following six key result areas, four addressed by a working group consisting of up to two officers from each agency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Result Areas</th>
<th>Facilitated by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Heritage Conservation</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Tourism Management</td>
<td>Recreation and Tourism Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Awareness</td>
<td>Community Relations Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Heritage Conservation</td>
<td>Cultural Heritage Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development</td>
<td>Australian Alps Liaison Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Expertise</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following, outcomes and strategies have been developed for the key result areas. The Annual Works Program will be closely tied to the strategies. Performance measures will be clearly defined in the Annual Works Program and will be a focus for annual reporting.

1. **KEY RESULT AREA: NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION**
   **FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: NATURAL HERITAGE WORKING GROUP**

**OUTCOME:**

An improved understanding and enhanced management of the natural ecosystems of the Australian Alps national parks.

**STRATEGIES:**

1.1 Identify threats to the nationally significant values of the Australian Alps national parks and using a region-wide [bioregional] approach, develop appropriate threat-abatement strategies;

1.2 Develop principles and criteria to focus research and management action on priority species/habitats/communities and natural features of the Australian Alps;

1.3 Investigate the response of alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems to threatening processes or activities and develop appropriate management strategies;
1.4 Develop indicators to monitor the health, condition and trend of alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems and catchments; and

1.5 Involve interested stakeholders and encourage strategic partnerships in the activities of the Natural Heritage Working Group and its projects. Disseminate information and recommendations resulting from projects undertaken.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
Actions to address the strategies will be defined in the annual works program with performance indicators. These will then be assessed in the context of the annual report.

2. **KEY RESULT AREA: RECREATION AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT**
**FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: RECREATION AND TOURISM WORKING GROUP**

**OUTCOME:**
Implementation of contemporary approaches to visitor and tourism management, through supporting best-practice, sustainable use and minimal impact philosophy and principles.

**STRATEGIES:**
2.1 Provide a strategic framework to enable the development of complementary visitor facilities and information that promotes the Australian Alps for recreation and tourism, based on their natural and cultural values;

2.2 Develop strategies to monitor visitor impacts within identified and acceptable ecological and social limits, using methodologies which identify and monitor visitor needs, satisfaction and expectations;

2.3 Foster and facilitate contemporary visitor management techniques through the provision of ‘best practice workshops’ to agency staff and interested stakeholders; and

2.4 Foster and establish effective partnerships between park management agencies and the tourism sector to assist in supporting a sustainable tourism industry within the Australian Alps national parks.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
Actions to address the strategies will be defined in the annual works program with performance indicators. These will then be assessed in the context of the annual report.

3. **KEY RESULT AREA: COMMUNITY AWARENESS**
**FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: COMMUNITY RELATIONS WORKING GROUP**

**OUTCOMES:**
Key audiences are aware of the unique natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks as a single biogeographical entity, the management actions that are necessary to protect these intrinsic values, and the cross-border management program and its achievements.

**STRATEGIES:**
3.1 Identification of key community audiences, and benchmarking their knowledge of, as well as satisfaction and involvement with the Australian Alps national parks management program;

3.2 Develop appropriate awareness programs and increased promotion of the values, programs and opportunities of the Australian Alps national parks to target community audiences;
3.3 Utilise the important opportunity that the International Year of Mountains in 2002 provides for promoting the conservation and appreciation of mountain regions within the context of the Alps MOU;
3.4 Actively market and distribute saleable and free information, materials and products on the Australian Alps national parks, to retail and other appropriate outlets;
3.5 Utilise emerging multi-media technologies to further promote the value of the program; and
3.6 Ensure that best practice achievements are recorded and communicated.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
Actions to address the strategies will be defined in the annual works program with performance indicators. These will then be assessed in the context of the annual report.

4. **KEY RESULT AREA: CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION**
   **FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: CULTURAL HERITAGE WORKING GROUP**

**OUTCOME:**
An improved understanding of the unique Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps national parks which is incorporated into effective protection and management programs.

**STRATEGIES:**
4.1 Identify threats to the nationally significant cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks and develop appropriate threat abatement strategies;
4.2 Engender a sense of value and ownership within the agencies and community for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage of the Australian Alps national parks;
4.3 Identify and address gaps in current knowledge of cultural heritage values within the Australian Alps national parks;
4.4 Provide tools and processes that will assist agencies and relevant community groups to undertake cultural heritage projects within the Australian Alps national parks; and
4.5 Identify opportunities for the involvement of indigenous people in the management of the Australian Alps national parks.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
Actions to address the strategies will be defined in the annual works program with performance indicators. These will then be assessed in the context of the annual report.

5. **KEY RESULT AREA: AUSTRALIAN ALPS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**
   **FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: AUSTRALIAN ALPS LIAISON COMMITTEE**

**OUTCOME:**
To ensure that the Australian Alps national park program is well managed, maintains its effectiveness and operates within the relevant policy context of each participating agency.

**STRATEGIES:**
5.1 Sustain the program and approve the annual works program;
5.2 Monitor the performance of the program and the output of the Working Groups;
5.3 Develop and promote the Australian Alps cooperative management program as a centre of excellence in mountain protected area management;
5.4 Quantify, document and communicate the economic benefits of the Australian Alps national parks; and
5.5 Develop strategic partnership alliances with IUCN, ANZECC, national and international protected area management agencies and other relevant government and non-government stakeholders.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
The Liaison Committee will monitor and review the Alps program on an annual basis with the results documented within the context of the Annual Report.

At the end of this strategic plan, the Liaison Committee will commission a formal independent evaluation of the program and the implementation of this strategy.

6. **KEY RESULT AREA: MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE**

**FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: AUSTRALIAN ALPS NATIONAL PARKS PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

**OUTCOME:**
Staff, volunteers and other park-based workers are knowledgeable about the values of the Australian Alps, and are skilled in the best-practice techniques for managing the natural environment, cultural resources, visitors and threats to the Australian Alps national parks.

**STRATEGIES:**
6.1 Foster common goals and training, and encourage staff to share expertise and specialist skills in best-practice management of the natural and cultural resources of the Australian Alps national parks;
6.2 Encourage communication between agency staff and other cooperative management programs;
6.3 Encourage and support volunteer and other agency involvement in research, management and monitoring; and
6.4 Encourage staff to refine their expertise through appropriate short-term exchange or placement with other agencies, either within or outside the Alps program.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**
Actions to address the strategies will be defined in the annual works program with performance indicators. These will then be assessed in the context of the annual report.

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**Appendix 15 Australian Alps National Parks 25 Year Strategic Plan: ‘Protection at the highest level’**

This brief report explores the concept of a long-term Strategic Plan for the Australian Alps National Parks.

Need for such a plan
- The AANP are a biogeographically unique ecosystem of Australia.
- An integrated approach to their management is essential to ensuring appropriate attention is given to the relative values.
- The existing Memorandum of Understanding is based on the concept of co-operation in the things agencies individually undertake.
- A longer-term strategic approach would be based on collaborative alps-wide strategic planning and management.
A regional perspective is one of the MOU’s greatest strengths – this could be further enhanced by an alps-wide plan of strategic directions.

How would it vary from the current MOU arrangements?
- Greater involvement of a wide range of stakeholders rather than essentially land managers: local government, the tourism industry, commercial and recreational interests, conservationists, scientists and the Aboriginal community could be involved.
- Would set long-term objectives for identification and management of key issues affecting the AANP.
- Would encourage commitment to Alps-wide park planning and management by providing a regional perspective on this limited resource.
- 1996-99 Strategic Plan is predicated on relatively short-term co-operative actions; it is not a holistic approach to the resource needs. A 25 Strategic Plan would focus on needs of the resource rather than the agencies.
- Joint decision-making involving many stakeholders at a strategic level, rather than essentially in-house decision-making with some consultation and information-sharing at a detailed level.

Who’s Plan would it be?
Everybody’s. The whole community, particularly the key stakeholders in and around the Australian Alps, would be invited to contribute to the strategic directions for the Australian Alps.

Widespread involvement would ensure community and political support for the strategic directions.

How would it be developed?
Several approaches are possible, but greatest “ownership” by the community will come from early and in-depth involvement, as opposed to being asked to comment on a strategic approach developed by someone else or a single agency.

Clearly, local forums as well as key stakeholder forums will be needed to search out the major issues for inclusion in the Strategic Plan. An independent facilitator who can engender the confidence of a wide range of stakeholders would probably be needed to guide the discussions and ensure everyone’s opinion was fairly considered.

Timeframes and Resources
The Great Barrier Reef [GBR] 25 Year Strategic Plan took almost three years to fully develop, and then still had a number of unresolved issues (e.g. mining, Aboriginal interests) to be the subject of ongoing negotiations.

It is unknown what costs were involved in the development of the GBR 25 Year Strategic Plan, but it could be expected that an annual budget of $30,000 plus staff support time and facilitator fees would be needed.

Likely Outputs and Outcomes
- Strategic framework in which individual park management plans could be reviewed and revised.
- Regional (Alps-wide) determination of development areas and wilderness zones.
- Increased community ownership of the intrinsic values of the AANP and need for management approaches through the Strategic Plan process.
- Long-term plan to address information and resource management needs of threatened species.
Long-term consideration of management actions to address impacts of climate change, greenhouse effects, etc.

Local government planning schemes having strong consideration of potential effects on AANPs.

Possible topics for the strategic plan could include the following, however the stakeholder involvement would identify specific categories:

- Conservation – ensuring protection, conservation and presentation of the Australian Alps;
- Resource Management – ecologically sustainable use;
- Education, Consultation and Communication – informed and responsible community;
- Research and Monitoring – priorities for knowledge and understanding of the resource and its changes;
- Integrated Planning, Marketing and Promotion – links with surrounding and internal planning agencies, marketing and promotion opportunities;
- Aboriginal and Cultural Connections – native title considerations, cultural links and continuing associations;
- Park Management Processes and Legislative Issues – mechanisms for resolving issues, validation for resource allocation, enhances cross-border legislative support.

If desirable, how do we make it happen?

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**Appendix 16 Australian Alps Liaison Committee Annual Call for Projects, 2001-2002 and future years (edited)**

The Australian Alps national parks (AAnp’s) is a cooperative management program administered by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC).

The Australian Alps program consists of participating agencies working in partnership to achieve excellence in conservation management and sustainable use through a strong program of cross-border cooperation and liaison. A further objective of the agreement is to pursue the growth and enhancement of cooperative management so as to protect the nationally important values of the Australian Alps national parks.

As part of the 2001–2002 Cooperative Works Program, the AALC would welcome project proposals from any interested parties / individuals which assist in delivering the identified outcomes under the Australian Alps Strategic Plan 2000 – 2003. In addition the *International Year of Mountains in 2002* provides an opportunity for projects to highlight and promote this significant event. … Criteria for projects are listed below, however if you believe a proposed project is of high value to the improved management of the Australian Alps, but outside the criteria, please submit it for AALC’s consideration.

The timetable for consideration of project proposals is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 September 2000</td>
<td>Opening of Call-for-Projects 2001 / 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 November 2000</td>
<td>Close of Call-for-Projects 2001/2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2000- Jan 2001</td>
<td>Working Groups meet to assess and rate project proposals received within the context of Alps Strategic Plan 2000-2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22 February 2001</td>
<td>First Round Meeting, Jindabyne. Presentation by Working Group Convenors of project proposals to AALC. Consideration and development of preliminary listing of project proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2001</td>
<td>Working Groups call for external tenders if required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for projects under the Australian Alps Cooperative Management Program
All project proposals are considered on their merits in terms of implementation of the Australian Alps Strategic Plan 2000-2003. Projects have the greatest chance of success if they also meet the following criteria:
   a) Outcomes that have application to park management in at least two of the States/Territory,
   b) Result either directly or on implementation, in ‘on-ground’ benefits to the management of the AAnps,
   c) Promote and highlight the International Year of Mountains in 2002 within the context of the AAnps.

The Liaison Committee will consider supporting on-ground works (on a cost-sharing basis with an Agency) where the project:
   • involves implementation of a strategic approach developed under the MOU,
   • has direct cross-border benefits, and
   • has priority support for continuance and/or maintenance by the Agency.

The AANP program is operated on a budget of only $400,000 pa, and while no funding limits are set, for guidance, project funding in the range of $5,000 to $50,000 per annum should be considered.


Australian Alps National Parks Program Coordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Brief Project Description</th>
<th>Project Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Employ a Program Coordinator to ensure the continued efficient and effective operation and development of the cooperative program.</td>
<td>$57,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Administration and Support</td>
<td>Support the Program Coordinator with travel, phone/fax, vehicle lease arrangement, office stationery, computer support, Aus Info warehouse storage costs and employment of part-time administrative assistant.</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Alps Newsletter</td>
<td>Produce AAnp Newsletter for staff of Australian Alps agencies and for local community and interest groups/individuals.</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAnp Publication and Reference Material Reprint</td>
<td>Reprint popular AAnp reports, publications and materials currently at low stock volume, namely Alps Invaders, Alps Clue kit, AAnp lapel badges, management and technical reports.</td>
<td>$13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Report</td>
<td>Produce and distribute 2000/01 annual report of activities conducted under the Australian Alps Co-operative Management Program.</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>$109,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management Expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Brief Project Description</th>
<th>Project Budget</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Alps national parks Program Development Workshop</td>
<td>Convene a workshop in November 2000 with AAnp’s Working Group and AALC members to review and discuss enhancement and development of the cooperative management program in light of the Alps Strategic Plan. To identify possible opportunities for the Alps program in the International Year of Mountains 2002.</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,000</td>
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AALC Program Effectiveness

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<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Benefits Study: The Value of Tourism to the Australian Alps national parks</td>
<td>An assessment and quantification of the economic value of tourism and associated benefits flowing from Australian Alps national parks. The project will measure the economic value of the AAnps as an asset for Tourism. This will involve measuring tourism expenditure in the region and the associated multiplier effects of that expenditure.</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>$30,000</td>
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Natural Heritage Working Group

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Population Ecology of Feral Horses in the Australian Alps national parks</td>
<td>The project examines feral horse ecology in the Australian Alps. It aims to determine: distribution and abundance across the Alps; the spatial and temporal use of alpine habitat; population dynamics and movement patterns at three sites; and factors limiting population growth. The project commenced in March 1999 and will run until July 2002.</td>
<td>$18,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Education to Manage Feral Horses in the Australian Alps national parks</td>
<td>A precursor to any effective management of feral horses is the need to raise public awareness and hence support for managing populations of feral horses. Through other AAnp projects, work has begun on gathering sound scientific advice and evidence for effective management. This project proposes that a public education program should be fully scoped out with the view of a staged education program covering three years.</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Alps national parks Vegetation Fire Response Monitoring System: a review</td>
<td>Conduct a review into AAnp Vegetation Fire response system, based on three years of current use. The system may require refining to ensure its long-term use and viability in the AAnp. It is envisaged that minor adjustments will be required. Once implemented, a series of field workshops will be held to “re-introduce” the system to staff.</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of the Biological Control of Broom in the Australian Alps national parks</td>
<td>The project proposes to implement biological control through the involvement of park and agency staff as part of integrated management programs for broom throughout the AAnp. The AAnp Broom Management Strategy 1999 identifies biological</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
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control as an appropriate control method for large, long-standing boom infestations.

| Sub-total | $57,300 |

Recreation and Tourism Working Group

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<tr>
<td>Minimal Impact (MI) Codes</td>
<td>Act upon key recommendations contained in the Beckmann Report 1999 which investigated the strategic importance and evaluated the effectiveness of the AAnp. The project will: develop and produce an amalgamated generic MI brochure containing key minimal impact messages; investigate methods for publicity and distribution of MI messages, e.g. signs, posters etc.</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Alps Walking Track Working Committee</td>
<td>Provide ongoing support to representatives and stakeholders overseeing the management of the AAWT through an annual stakeholders meeting. Undertake the development and production of a comments/observation book for Namadgi National Park, Victoria and Walhalla. Develop walkers certificate to acknowledge completion of AAWT. Uploading of information onto Alps website.</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practice Workshop: Walking Track Maintenance and Management.</td>
<td>Conduct and host a workshop in Victoria’s Alpine National Park, primarily targeted at agency staff on best practice, contemporary walking track construction, maintenance and management techniques. Parks Victoria to assist in coordinating and showcasing recent ‘on-ground’ works.</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
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Recreation and Tourism Working Group, cont'

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<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the AAnp for Tour Guides</td>
<td>Host a workshop on &quot;Interpretation of the Australian Alps national parks for Tour Guides&quot; using the AAnp recently developed training module for tour guides. High profile workshop that would not only raise awareness of the AAnp program but also introduce the need for tour guides to up-grade their interpretation and presentation skills.</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Model Strategy</td>
<td>The overall strategy will assist managers to make logical and defendable decisions in relation to visitor use of parks by clearly identifying the characteristics of each setting and factors that may influence change and recreational opportunities offered. The proposed project follows on from previous work undertaken in the Pilot Wilderness and the ROS mapping project completed 1998/99. The project proposes to implement the model in one location only, that is the Tumut / Namadgi region, following strong support from field staff in this area.</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Waste Management Workshop: an audit of existing facilities in the Australian Alps national parks</td>
<td>Following on from the Best Practice Human Waste Management workshop held in Canberra and Jindabyne in March 2000, the proposed project will carry out an audit of existing facilities, investigating constraints and opportunities with the various types of technologies currently in place throughout the AAnp.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>$80,500</td>
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### Community Relations Working Group

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<tr>
<td><strong>Forward Communication Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Workshop to develop a communication strategy for the Community Relations Working Group. The aim of the workshop is to develop a three-year work plan encompassing goals, direction and strategies for the group. The strategy will ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place to take full advantage of promotion opportunities during the <em>Year of Mountains</em> in 2002.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media and Community Projects Officer</strong></td>
<td>Employ a part-time Media and Community Projects Officer to promote general community awareness programs, media liaison and undertake identified project work. Develop appropriate links with the community at all levels to encourage understanding of the values and management approach of the AALC and the Australian Alps cooperative management program</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Alps national parks Traveling Displays Stage 2 completion</strong></td>
<td>The Benchmark Awareness Survey (1999) identified the need to address and cater for local community interests and information needs. This project will produce an additional two portable displays systems to complement those designed and produced in 1999/00 as well as increasing the local relevance of the four Display Systems by the addition of “local site specific” panels.</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Alps Website Development and Maintenance</strong></td>
<td>Continuing maintenance, development and promotion of the Australian Alps website. The AAnp website is the primary method of communication to a wide audience of the tangible benefits of the Alps cooperative management program. The Benchmark Awareness Survey (1999) highlighted the Internet as a growing source for information.</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation of Benchmark Awareness Survey program: Part B: Local Newspaper Insert</strong></td>
<td>Part B: Develop and produce material on the Australian Alps national parks and the cooperative management program pertaining to the values of the Alps which would be suitable for inserting into ‘local newspapers’ in regional centers, as a one off edition. The material produced would also serve as a medium of communication to park visitors</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Tourism Award Submission</strong></td>
<td>Prepare a detailed submission to the Australian Tourism Award highlighting recent Alps tourism products produced by the AALC, namely Alps video, Touring Guide and Map, WildGuide. These products represent a suite of high quality eco-tourism products promoting the Australian Alps national parks as a premier regional tourism destination.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$74,000</td>
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<td>Communicating Across Cultures Workshop</td>
<td>Building on the success of the Currango <em>Communicating Across Cultures Workshop</em>, conduct an Aboriginal issues awareness workshop that highlights the contemporary needs, aspirations and rights of Aboriginal peoples, including the spiritual significance of the land and the valuable role that Aboriginal people often play in natural and cultural resource management.</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Heritage Significance of Scientific Sites in the Alps</td>
<td>Record and place appropriate markers at relevant scientific sites identified by Griffiths and Robin (1994). These sites represent outstanding cultural significance in the Australian Alps national parks. Prepare a long-term strategy for the management of these places. Identify site management strategies, including consideration of interpretative signage along scientific themes to raise awareness of the value of such sites in establishing national parks and protected areas.</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Alps Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Workshop</td>
<td>The proposed workshop course would provide participants the necessary skills to identify and record Aboriginal sites which would increase the identification of Aboriginal cultural heritage values within the AAmp landscapes, information which is currently insufficient and lacking in the overall context of the AAmp.</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining Sites Management Strategy</td>
<td>The project involves the development of a strategy for consolidating all research information about mining in the AAmp and identifying places which should be protected and those that should be presented to the public to demonstrate the history and significance of mining throughout the Alps. The strategy would recommend a staged process for conserving and developing historic mining sites for visitor use. The project would provide direction for the development of Alpine historic mining sites, which would complement the promotion, and development of sites being promoted to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Gold Rushes in 2001.</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
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OVERALL PROGRAM TOTAL BUDGET: $410,800