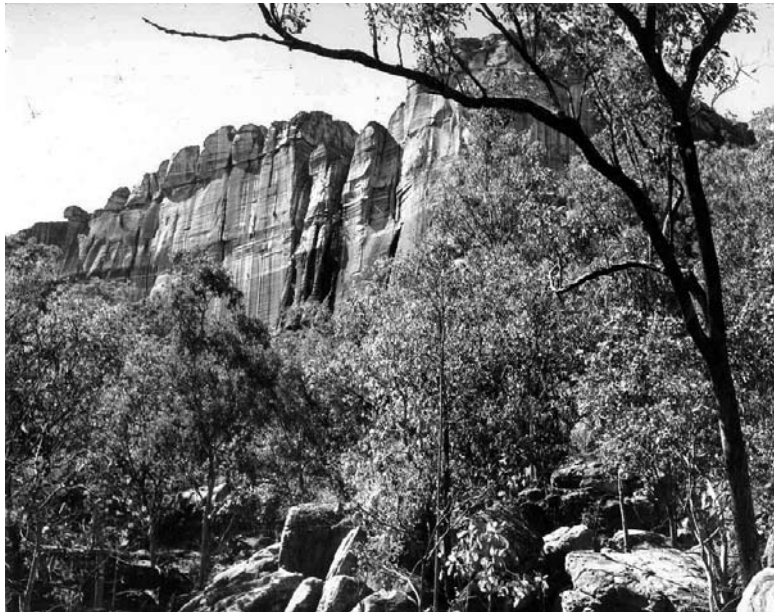


Fifth National Wilderness Conference

— Background Notes —

by Dr Geoff Mosley



Conference organised by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd
held at the University of Technology, Sydney, September, 2006

THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCES AND WILDERNESS PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA

ORIGINS

The national wilderness conference series had its genesis in the decision of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) to work for a nation-wide system of wilderness reserves. The ACF's involvement in this can be traced back to the ACF annual general meeting on October 11, 1969 when during a post mortem on the first Lake Pedder campaign Graham Ford stood up and stressed the importance of the wildlife and wilderness of the Tasmanian South West and said it was important to find a way whereby all of Australia could share the cost of preserving the region. At this stage it was thought that the authorisation for Stage 2 of the Gordon River Power Scheme would be sought as early as the following year. In response the ACF President, Sir Garfield Barwick, promised that the ACF would take another look at the problem. In April, 1970 a series of actions were suggested one of which was the production of a viewpoint publication on the South West. It was decided that the case would be much stronger if it also dealt with other Australian wilderness areas such as those in Central Australia. In July 1970 the ACF Executive adopted the main recommendations for the viewpoint which had been drafted by Geoff Mosley and this became the policy on wilderness of the ACF. It included the goal of setting aside systems of wilderness reserves in all states and territories and the creation of a national wilderness conservation system.

In October, 1975 ACF Council identified wilderness as one of its three priority campaign areas. In November, 1975 the viewpoint publication was published with the title *Wilderness Conservation Protecting an Essential Freedom*. This publication, which was widely distributed, discussed the definition of wilderness, the arguments for wilderness, and Australia's wilderness areas in what was described as a *Proposal for an Australian Wilderness Programme*. In June, 1976 a Wilderness Committee of ACF Council was established to prosecute the campaign.

In spite of growing community interest in wilderness protection, as shown by the submissions on wilderness to the 1973/74 Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate, by the second half of the 1970s the only formally protected wilderness areas in Australia were the wilderness zones in Kinchega and Kosciusko National Parks. To try to speed things up and work for its goal of an Australia-wide wilderness system ACF decided to launch a series of national wilderness conferences. It was impressed by the way the biennial US national wilderness conferences of the Sierra Club, begun in 1949, had helped to create a climate of public opinion which assisted the passage of the US Wilderness Act of 1964. The Conferences were seen as a chance for conservationists to get together to share information, discuss problems and coordinate future programmes and actions. ACF had been running a series of influential national conferences since the late 1960s and the concept was that in future every second conference would be on wilderness.

FIRST CONFERENCE 1977

The first conference in the series held at the Academy of Science in Canberra in October, 1977 concentrated on establishing the stage reached with wilderness protection and how the wilderness reserves could be expanded. In his opening remarks ACF President, Sir Mark Oliphant, paid tribute to the pioneer work of Myles Dunphy and read a paper by Friends of the Earth President David Brower who had been prevented from attending at the last moment due to illness. The workshops covered a wide range of subjects including short and long term strategies for securing the future of wilderness, legislation, various aspects of education and management, and areas of wilderness potential around Australia. The Conference called on all states to urgently identify areas of wilderness and defer development in them. Other resolutions recommended special policies for fire management in wilderness areas, various measures to increase public support and more wilderness identification and carrying capacity studies. One of the workshops proposed the formation of an Australian Wilderness Society to press for a national wilderness system. A motion in the plenary session that the ACF initiate such a move was defeated with opponents taking the view that this was unnecessary since ACF already had this responsibility. The Conference proceedings were published a year later as *Australia's Wilderness Conservation Progress and Plans*. It included a *Wilderness Visitors Code of Behaviour* (a revised version was published in 1982).

SECOND CONFERENCE 1979

A resolution at the first conference had called for a second national wilderness conference to be held in 1979 and this duly took place at the Sydney University in November, 1979. The first conference had identified 'wilderness conservation priorities', 'wilderness evaluation' and 'publication education concerning the benefits of wilderness' as worthy topics for the second meeting. One of the workshops had recommended that the next conference be on the theme of 'the value of wilderness'. In the event, since it was the centenary year of Royal National Park (Australia and the world's first national park) ACF decided that the Conference should be on the subject of the values of national parks. Inclusion of this in the wilderness series was rationalised by the fact that the fate of many wilderness areas is bound up with the management of the national parks in which they are located. Some specific wilderness matters were discussed including coastal wilderness protection and the protection of wild rivers. The Conference Proceedings were published as the *Value of National Parks* in 1980.

Between the two ACF Conferences the Natural Resources Section of the Canberra College of Education had organised a national symposium on wilderness in July, 1978 which had covered a similar range of topics to those dealt with at the 1977 conference, including delineation and prospects with the emphasis being on providing an opportunity for the exchange of ideas between wilderness resource managers. The proceedings of the symposium were published in 1980 as *Wilderness Management in Australia*.

In June, 1980 a further conference on wilderness took place in Australia. This was the Second World Wilderness Congress which was held in Cairns in June, 1980. This

provided an additional opportunity to consider Australian wilderness conservation and topics dealt with included Cape York Peninsula, Tropical Rainforest areas, the Great Barrier Reef, Antarctica and South West Tasmania. The resolutions passed by the Conference included the following critical issues: 'A Plan for Cape York Peninsula'; aboriginal land claims (four resolutions); rain forest (two resolutions) and South West Tasmania. The papers from the conference were published in 1982 as *Wilderness* (ed Vance Martin).

THIRD CONFERENCE 1983

The third national wilderness conference was held at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains in September, 1983. The Conference was well attended by members of the Wilderness Society which had broadened its name following the success of the Gordon blockade. Amongst the speakers were Michael McClosky the Executive Director of the Sierra Club. The conference focussed on lessons to be learned from past wilderness battles and strategies and actions for winning future battles. The key conference resolution on a draft national wilderness strategy came from one of the workshop recommendations. The conference resolved:

That a national wilderness committee be established to ensure that a wilderness strategy is developed and implemented, that ACF convene such a committee as soon as possible and that representatives from each state and territory, from the ACF, TWS, Colong Committee and other wilderness related groups and from Aboriginal groups form the committee.

Other parts of the strategy resolution called for the appointment of a national wilderness political lobbyist, the development of a model wilderness plan and a wide range of educational initiatives.

Both the 1977 and 1983 conferences had paid attention to the evaluation of wilderness areas suitable for acceptance, the workshop on 'reversion of wilderness' in 1977 recommending that *disturbed lands be accepted into the wilderness system to the extent that they can be rehabilitated to an acceptable standard*. There was general support for the concept of wilderness reversion in areas where there was a core wilderness area that could be expanded, usually by means of road closures. A companion volume to the 1983 conference, containing the papers and resolutions, was published in 1984 as *Fighting for Wilderness*. It was in two parts: 'Battles Lost and Won' and 'Winning Future Battles'.

The National Wilderness Coordinating Committee

There was a six month delay in action on the main strategy resolution until ACF had voted funds for the project. Things began to move at an initial meeting in Sydney chaired by ACF President, Murray Wilcox. There it was decided that what was referred to as the National Wilderness Cooperative had the three main aims of: *a) identifying Australian wilderness areas; b) expanding and defending these areas; and c) devising appropriate legal and political means of achieving the objectives*. That coordination was necessary became apparent by the news that both ACF and TWS were separately seeking a total sum of about \$300,000 from Community Employment Fund Programme funds. This included an application for an ACF wilderness

campaign officer to be located in Sydney. The meeting decided to immediately establish a National Wilderness Coordinating Committee with a view to calling the first meeting of the National Wilderness Cooperative. The Coordinating Committee was to comprise representatives from ACF, TWS, the Colong Committee and the Australian National Parks Council (in the event this body declined formal membership).

Pat Thompson was appointed Secretary and the Colong Committee's offer of secretarial services was accepted. At subsequent meetings it was decided that the ACF would play the key role in developing information about the extent and status of wilderness in Australia, whereas TWS would concentrate on wilderness education.

One of the first actions of the Cooperative was the development of a wilderness area nomination form. The National Wilderness Coordinating Committee continued to exist until 1987 but became less effective after late 1986. The minutes of the July, 1986 meeting show it discussing a wide range of topics including: the ACF wilderness inventory, a wilderness pamphlet, a draft code of wilderness management, the Kakadu Plan of Management, and a Fifth National Wilderness Conference which ACF was planning to hold in 1987.

Increasingly from 1986 the groups seem to have preferred to go their own way. They had each developed particular campaigns in 1984. The Wilderness Society had launched a National Campaign for Wilderness in early 1984 with a target date for the establishment of a national wilderness system of the bicentenary year of 1988. Its campaign was managed by a 'Long Term Wilderness Campaign Group'. Both TWS and the Colong Foundation had begun work on a National Wilderness Act. In March, 1985 Peter Prineas began work as an ACF wilderness consultant with the main task of developing a national wilderness inventory. This was published as *Australia's Wilderness Inventory* in 1986 (Prineas at this stage was playing a key role in the development of a NSW Wilderness Act which was seen as a valuable precedent for the development of legislation in the rest of Australia). The Colong Foundation meanwhile was busy with recording wilderness conservation progress and in 1991 published the first edition of its *Wilderness Red Index* (updated in 1993 and 1999).

FOURTH CONFERENCE 1993

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference was held at the Australian Museum in Sydney in October, 1993. Changes in personnel at ACF had been a factor in the ACF not organising the conference at an earlier date. The 1993 Conference was in the event organised by the Colong Foundation under the auspices of the ACF. It was opened by Neville Wran the former NSW Premier. Two main aims were set down for the conference: 1) to review the last 10 years; and 2) *to develop a plan of action to revitalise the wilderness conservation movement so that the goal of a national wilderness system can be achieved before the end of the century.*

The conference resolutions are given at the end this brief (Appendix 1). Topics covered included: work for a national wilderness protection system (including in the interim the implementation of the wilderness provisions of the National Forest Policy); the appointment of an NGO Task Group to prepare a report within six months on the steps which were necessary for securing a National Wilderness System; a wide

range of reconciliation measures including dialogue between conservation organisations and Aboriginal people and encouragement of IUCN to amend its 1990 definition of wilderness to reflect the role of indigenous people with a definition of wilderness as: *an area where little or no persistent evidence of modern technological society is permitted, so that natural processes will take place largely unaffected by modern technology*; completion of the National Wilderness Inventory; extension of the Wilderness Red Index to the whole of Australia and its regular updating; and revision of the World Heritage selection criteria to explicitly recognise wilderness.

The Task Group met on three occasions and submitted its report to the main wilderness conservation groups within the six month period. A copy of its recommendations – ‘Towards a National Wilderness Protection System for Australia: A Campaign Proposal’ are also included at the end of this paper since it is pertinent to the deliberations at the Fifth National Wilderness Conference (Appendix 2).

Developments Since 1993

Since the Task Group submitted its report to the groups there have been a number of developments at the NGO level. Disappointingly the request by the Task Group for a meeting with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to discuss the establishment of a national dialogue on wilderness had been fruitless. The Chairperson, Patrick Dodson, sent a message to say that wilderness conservationists should instead discuss their concerns with local Aboriginal groups throughout Australia.

In July, 1995 TWS organised the Wild Agendas Conference in Sydney. Its focus was equally divided between wilderness protection and wilderness identification. Workshop topics included the anti-wilderness movement; wild rivers and Aboriginal management of wilderness. Participants included members of the Cape York Land Council. At this stage TWS was running a national campaign on the development of a ‘Commonwealth Wilderness Protection Program’. A poster for the conference examined federal government inaction on wilderness and suggested that the core wilderness groups had been side tracked away from what should be the main debate - wilderness and its protection. The conference called for a renewed effort to achieve Commonwealth leadership in protecting wilderness, with strong legislation. The conference proceedings were produced as *Wild Agendas Protecting and Celebrating Wilderness*.

At the final plenary session of the 1993 conference ACF Executive Director Patricia Caswell announced that ACF would be willing to coordinate the next national wilderness conference and would be prepared to do it no later than 1996. However, ACF’s attention became increasingly taken up with the Aboriginal reconciliation aspect. In August, 1999 after a discussion extending over several meetings ACF Council approved a policy statement on ‘Wilderness and Indigenous cultural landscape in Australia’. The former wilderness position was not withdrawn. Responding to the Task Group recommendations and the policy position of nearly thirty years the new document urged the Commonwealth to: 1) establish for itself a leading role in wilderness conservation; 2) actively promote the establishment of a national wilderness protection system; and 3) maintain an inventory of areas with wilderness condition.

4th National Wilderness Conference 1993

Resolutions

Securing the Future of Wilderness: A Strategy for Action

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference, having deliberated for two and-a-half days, agrees to the following statement of intent with regard to a strategy necessary for securing the future of wilderness in Australia.

1 Governments, land management agencies and the conservation movement will need to devote the time and resources necessary to secure the future of wilderness in Australia on a scale commensurate with the importance of the objectives and the size of the task.

2 Wilderness will be most secure if its conservation is accepted by all Australian governments as a high priority and if there is a coordination of effort, not just in relation to the problem at State boundaries but also in establishing and managing wilderness reserves and presenting their values to the public, nation wide.

3 Recognising that considerable progress towards the designation and legislative protection of wilderness has occurred in some States in the decade since the Third National Wilderness Conference, despite the fact that 'economic rationalism' has dominated State and Federal politics in recent years, this Conference resolves to press for urgent and considerable further action towards protecting Australia's remaining wilderness.

4 The best vehicle for a wilderness conservation campaign and also for the coordination of the reserve effort Australia wide is a National Wilderness Protection System, and the Conference calls in the interim for the implementation of the conservation provisions of the National Forest Policy for the protection of wilderness.

5 While a campaign for a National Wilderness System is necessary, the wilderness conservation movement also needs to guard the remaining wilderness areas and respond to threats. This requires a systematic approach.

6 A National Wilderness Protection System could be established by strong and effective legislation in the Commonwealth and State parliaments without changing the jurisdiction and administration. As already committed by the Federal government, the system should be established progressively between now and the year 2000.

7 An NGO Task Group is needed to develop a campaign proposal for submission to the major conservation groups by March 1994. Membership of the group, which should be small, should be on the basis of expertise (especially capacity for strategic thinking) rather than representation of different organisations (See 13 below). The group should report on the main elements of the campaign to be conducted and how it is to be carried out (including sources of funding). A special part of the Report should be related to the so establishment of the National Wilderness protection System in

relation to the Aboriginal interest in areas which are wilderness. The group would be required to consult with Aboriginal bodies to help with the Preparation of the Report and otherwise further the interest of wilderness conservation.

8 National Reconciliation

That the Conference:

- a) applaud the concept of native title as established by the High Court of Australia;
- b) write to the Prime Minister and Cabinet expressing its concern and outrage at the emerging Commonwealth Aboriginal title legislation if it has any of the following alleged unacceptable provisions, including:
 - suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act;
 - further extinguishment of Aboriginal title;
 - unjust validation of a variety of non-Aboriginal leasehold titles;
 - the abrogating of Commonwealth responsibilities in assessing Aboriginal title and related matters in favour of State governments;

and calls on the Prime Minister and Cabinet to withdraw this legislation and recommence extensive consultation and renegotiation with Aboriginal people around Australia in order to create a just piece of legislation.

- c) call upon the conservation organisations to engage in a coordinated, well planned and meaningful dialogue with Aboriginal people, to ensure a greater understanding of areas of mutual concern as they relate to the ongoing protection and management of wilderness areas. The dialogue should also explore common ground between the relationship of Aboriginal people with their land and a western concept of 'wilderness', to work towards a mutually complementary land conservation ethic.

It further calls upon the conservation movement to join with the traditional proprietors of land to help to secure further wilderness areas throughout Australia which embody traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage values.

- d) noting the failure of the Commonwealth Government to date to consult systematically with conservation groups while consulting with other major interests, call upon the Government to fully consult with representatives of the conservation movement regarding current suggestions that ownership of national parks and declared wilderness areas be transferred to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to facilitate agreement on Aboriginal title legislation and national reconciliation. It further calls for full involvement of the conservation movement in any representations on such proposals.

- e) recognising: the rights of indigenous people to land to which they have a pre-existing affinity; and the recent Fifth World Wilderness Congress considerations of the role of indigenous peoples in wilderness management; and further to resolution

C18 of that Congress, which encourages IUCN to review its approach to wilderness; this conference calls upon the World Conservation Union (IUCN) at its forthcoming General Assembly, to amend its 1990 definition of wilderness to reflect the role of indigenous people.

The definition should properly describe wilderness as '...an area where little or no persistent evidence of modern technological society is permitted, so that natural processes will take place largely unaffected by modern technology'.

9 A continuing process of survey and assessment of wilderness areas in Australia is supported. The Conference urges the completion of the National Wilderness Inventory as one of the tools for wilderness quality assessment, to be used:

- i) as an element in defining a national comprehensive system of protected areas;
- ii) as one of the information sources in establishing a National Wilderness Protection System;
- iii) in developing links between the maintenance of biological diversity and ecological integrity;
- iv) in identifying the impacts of alternative management options for proposed wilderness areas;
- v) to identify the opportunities for restoration and enhancement of wilderness.

The conservation movement wishes to have continuing consultation with the development and the application of the Inventory.

10 Over the next decade the future of most wilderness will remain tenuous, therefore its monitoring (the condition, the threats and progress in reservation, management and restoration) will be a high priority. The Wilderness Red Index will need to be developed, kept up to date and well supported. The Conference urges the extension of the Index to the whole of Australia and its use as a major tool in wilderness preservation campaigns.

11 The growing awareness of the importance of arid and semi-arid lands conservation in both Australia and internationally is noted by the Conference. In view of Australia's significance and responsibilities in this area it is desirable that an Arid Wilderness Symposium be held in 1994 to promote and wilderness and to identify issues and strategies for and wilderness protection and management.

12 That the Conference call upon the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO to review the arrangements for the assessment of wilderness as part of the natural world heritage properties. This should reflect the universal outstanding values of some wilderness areas and lead to a revision of the criteria for natural properties in the Operational Guidelines (with wilderness explicitly recognised as an attribute and not regarded only as a factor affecting integrity).

13 The following volunteers were endorsed as members of the NGO Task Force (see 7 above): Georgia Stewart; Ross Scott and Pat Thompson.

CAMPAIGN FOR A NATIONAL WILDERNESS PROTECTION SYSTEM Report of a Task Group to Groups Interested in Wilderness Conservation

1 Background

1.1 Establishment and terms of reference: The Task Group was established by the Fourth National Wilderness Conference (8 - 10 October, 1993) to develop a campaign proposal for submission to conservation groups by March 1994. We were asked to report on the main elements of the campaign, and how it is to be carried out (including sources of funding). A part of the report was to refer to the establishment of a National Wilderness Protection System in relation to the interest of Aboriginal people in areas which are wilderness.

1.2 The work of the Group: The Group met in Melbourne on three occasions and we now present this report for consideration by those bodies which we think are most likely to be interested in implementing the campaign. We found that with the limited time and resources available we could not undertake an effective consultation with Aboriginal people. Consequently, our recommendation on this crucial matter is limited to suggestions on future consultation.

2 Strategic Principles

2.1 Main objective of campaign is a National Wilderness Protection System (NWPS):

The objectives for the campaign and some of the major means for achieving them were agreed to at the Conference in a 'Strategy for Action' (see attached resolutions, Appendix 1). Most important was the agreement (Resolution 4) that the best vehicle for a wilderness conservation campaign, and also for the coordination of the reserve effort Australia wide, is a National Wilderness Protection System (NWPS). This could be established without any change of reserve jurisdiction and administration. Resolution 4 called for the implementation in the interim of the conservation provisions of the National Forest Policy. These provisions include the AHC regional assessment process which has created difficulties in WA, and Vic. The moratorium clause should be isolated when these provisions are supported in any way.

Groups which are national in scope are the most suitable bodies to lobby and promote the NWPS.

It was also recognised by the Conference that it will also be essential to protect the remaining wilderness areas (Resolution 5) and develop the State/Territory wilderness reserve systems. These systems are the building blocks of a National System and if they are not improved the latter will be an insubstantial affair. It is best if the bulk of this work is done (stepped up if possible) by the State/Territory conservation groups who are already experienced in this field. State-based natural environment groups not doing much on wilderness should be encouraged to make it a higher priority.

2.2 *Staged approach necessary:* While it would be magnificent if the federal government were to immediately accept the suggestion of the Conference to begin work on a National Wilderness Protection System this is not likely to happen without pressure from the groups. The NWPS is not likely to be achieved unless there is a strong and well-coordinated campaign, and even then progress is likely to be incremental. The Government has financed the National Wilderness Inventory (NWI) for seven years but the logical next step - the making of a commitment to the NWPS - is a big step, particularly in the present political climate. The most achievable first target would be an agreement to establish a unit in the federal bureaucracy concerned with wilderness and the development of the NWPS. It may be all we can achieve at the national level over the next year.

2.3 *Main components of the campaign:* The Group believes that, the campaign will need to have four main components:

- lobbying federal Government on the NWPS;
- lobbying State/Territory governments to persuade them to improve their wilderness reserve systems and cooperate with the Commonwealth on a NWPS;
- public education on wilderness values and the advantages of a NWPS, including ongoing Aboriginal liaison;
- monitoring progress with the protection of wilderness Australia wide.

Each component can be allocated as a task or area of responsibility to a conservation group or groups. It is obvious that success in one task will reinforce the likelihood of success in the others.

2.4 *Close cooperation essential:* There being so many interrelated tasks, a good level of cooperation (including high standards of communication and coordination of activities) will be necessary. This will require clear understanding of objectives and goals and of who is doing what. Bilateral contact between groups engaged in the same or closely related tasks is to be expected, but is this enough? The Task Group's job will be finished once it has distributed this report but it was convinced that there would be a need for some arrangement for disseminating information of interest to all groups.' and for reviewing the strategy and tactics and the results of the campaign as it proceeds.

3 Factors to be Considered in Planning the Campaign: Obstacles, Difficulties and Threats to Wilderness

3.1 *The need for awareness of the difficulties the opposing forces:* It is important for those who will be involved in the campaign to have a realistic appreciation of the obstacles they face and the full extent of the threats to wilderness. The threats come in many forms including:

- competition for land from resource exploiters (mining, logging, and pastoral interests and other incompatible activities such as inappropriate facility dependent tourism (sometimes using the term 'ecotourism');
- poor planning and management, and inadequate size and connectivity of reserves, causing overuse, inappropriate use, loss of wilderness qualities and biological integrity (e.g. illegal use of tracks by vehicles and horses, inappropriate fire control measures, spread of weeds and feral animals).

Driving all of these forces is the philosophy of economic rationalism which promotes economic growth, privatisation of resources and reliance on market forces and the profit incentive for the allocation of resources and the determination of land use. Government mentality is fixed on false concepts of balance and conflict resolution, as opposed to genuine nature conservation objectives.

The protection of wilderness is in many ways at the opposite end of the philosophic spectrum to economic rationalism. It is concerned with maintaining a community asset and with long term considerations. The starting point is an idea of environmental quality, not a mechanism for increasing the throughput of resource use for consumption, which stresses quantity.

As a result not only is each piece of surviving wilderness (protected or not) threatened, but these forces have a vested interest-in the seeking to destroy existing reserve systems and prevent their extension.

This means that considerable resistance to the campaign must be anticipated and countered. As a result of the operation of these forces in the past the bureaucratic base for wilderness conservation in the public service is also very weak.

3.2 *Weaknesses in the conservation movement:* Another major obstacle for the environment movement is the unresolved debate about the best way of seeking its objectives. This includes uncertainty about where wilderness conservation fits into its work. Is the role of the environment movement to attempt to mitigate and cushion the adverse effects of economic rationalism working within a system which is inherently destructive, or is its destiny to lead society in developing a new human/environment relationship? Should it look to government for leadership, or should it be the aim to help the community develop a new vision and demand change? Is wilderness a leftover objective from the past of marginal importance, persisting through the inertia of the conservation movement, or is it potentially a core concept for a new paradigm?

The lack of discussion and resolution of these issues, coupled with the frustration felt from working within the processes of an economic rationalist dominated regime (and thereby helping to prop it up) is inhibiting the effectiveness of the movement. Reliance on government grants has diverted effort into government-approved projects with consequent distortion of the movement's agenda.

Another feature of the contemporary conservation movement is its difficulty in developing an effective dialogue with Aboriginal people who own or claim wilderness areas. Without adequate dialogue the two cultures will most likely miss out on an opportunity to develop mutually advantageous management arrangements.

Still another problem is the different use and definition of the wilderness concept by different parts of the conservation movement with regard to minimum size, etc. The spectrum approach used by the National Wilderness Inventory in defining the distribution of wilderness quality can increase the scope for confusion.

With the concept being attacked by some academics and scientists (e.g. claims regarding subjectivity, invalidity due to past human impact, and not given a high priority compared to habitat for endangered species, representative areas and areas of high biodiversity) this lack of full agreement will make it more difficult to promote the NWPS.

There is also a lack of agreement in the movement on the relative amounts of time and resources to be devoted to the different aspects of wilderness conservation, which include lobbying for reserves, management monitoring and education.

3.3. *Weakness in the existing State/Territory systems:* Progress in the establishment of the wilderness reserve systems is uneven and specific management is poorly developed. Better resolution of fire protection in relation to wilderness conservation goals is one such need.

Over most of the continent there are no wilderness reserves. Many wilderness reserves have no management plans.

3.4 *Weaknesses in the Commonwealth approach:* Although the Commonwealth released a Discussion Paper (the Robertson Report) in January 1992 which outlines the options for implementing a NWPS it has not responded to the Paper and the over 90 submissions received. Nor has it indicated when it will respond. There are indications that both ANCA and the Department of Sport, Environment and Territories are not overly sympathetic to wilderness conservation.

4 Factors to be Considered in Planning the Campaign: Those Which May Assist (Opportunities)

4.1 *Wilderness survives and its protection is accepted:* In spite of the past and present difficulties there are still a considerable number of areas in which wilderness still exists. These are being assessed through the NWI. There have also been some positive achievements which can be used to advantage in working for an NWPS. Wilderness conservation is accepted as a legitimate aim by all the governments of Australia and is strongly backed by the community when threats arise. All States and Territories have either reserved areas specifically as wilderness, or intend to do so in the near future. Three States (NSW, South Australia, and Victoria) have enacted special wilderness legislation (although in Victoria this is included in the National Parks Act rather than as a separate piece of legislation).

Wilderness conservation has also won statutory recognition in many western - countries and IUCN has elevated it. in, status to a sub category of one of five categories of protected area. The contribution of wilderness to the preservation of biodiversity, and the habitat of endangered species is widely acknowledged.

Although there is no international convention specifically relating to wilderness, neither is there for national parks or other categories of reserve.

4.2 Australian Government initiatives relevant to wilderness conservation:

These include the following:

a) The Federal government accepts that wilderness conservation is a 'legitimate land use' (Bob Hawke, *Statement on the Environment*, July 1989) and wilderness has been a constant item in all the Government's environment statements over the last five years.

b) A National Wilderness Inventor' of Australia was initiated in 1986 and will be completed in 1994. It is to be maintained.

c) The Government is committed to the establishment, 'progressively', by the year 2000 of a national comprehensive system of conservation reserves. It is also committed to providing incentives for State/Territory cooperation in developing the system of protected areas and developing nationally consistent principles for management of reserves. The NWI is to be used as 'one of several key indicators in the development of the reserve system'. In December 1992 the Government announced its commitment to spend \$16.85 million to, amongst other things, promote and encourage State and Territories to the commitment to avoid activities that may significantly affect areas of wilderness likely to be of high conservation value (Paul Keating, Adelaide 21.12.92). \$13.9 million of the commitment is for the protected area system and the NWI.

d) From 1989 to 1991 the Australian Government campaigned internationally for the defeat of the proposed mineral regime in Antarctica and for the establishment of an Antarctic Wilderness Park.

e) The Government signed the Biological Diversity Convention in 1992 and this came into force in 1993. It is close to finalising a 'Biological Diversity Strategy' and ma introduce a Biological Diversity Bill. Wilderness y

conservation can make a major contribution to biological diversity.

f) The Government has passed an Endangered Species Act (1992) and a 'Strategy for the Conservation of Species and Communities Threatened with Extinction' is being prepared. Wilderness conservation can make a major contribution to conservation of the habitat of endangered species.

g) The Government has produced a 'National ESD Strategy' (1992). Wilderness conservation can make a major contribution to ESD.

h) Wilderness is one of the criteria for placing areas on the Register of the National Estate, and National Estate nominations have often both relied heavily on wilderness for their successful listing and been useful in protecting wilderness (e.g., SW Tasmania, and the native forest debate generally in eastern Australia).

i) Australia ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1974 (it came into force in 1975) and has enacted legislation for the protection of world heritage properties.

Wilderness is both a world heritage attribute and a condition contributing to the ecological integrity of World heritage.

j) The National Forest Policy Statement (December 1992), signed by all States and Territories except Tasmania, states that 'it is important that all Australia has a comprehensive, adequate and representative network of dedicated and set aside nature conservation reserves for forests and reserves for protecting wilderness'. The Government has agreed to review the appropriateness of the existing reserve system to determine any further action that may be required to complete its development as a matter of policy. A working group is making recommendations to the Government on the broad categories on which to base the reserve system and is looking, in particular, at how the principles of comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness relate to reserves to protect wilderness. Elements of the Forest Policy strategy are aimed at providing interim protection of wilderness values until assessments are completed, protection of wilderness by means of reserves by 1995 and the development of management plans to protect wilderness values.

k) The Government in January 1992 released for public submissions a Discussion Paper, *Wilderness in Australia: Issues and Options* which identified different ways of implementing a NWPS including a National Wilderness Management and Commonwealth legislation for wilderness.

5 Recommendations: A Proposed Campaign Plan for Further Action in 1994 - 1996

5.1 *A framework for action:* Campaign plans will need to be developed in detail by the participating organisations. Therefore what follows is a basic outline or framework for the overall campaign. The suggestions about which organisations should undertake which tasks are based on knowledge of their objectives, geographic scope and experience. The campaign needs to exploit the strengths of the present situation and attend to the weaknesses. Some more detailed ideas of how these might be addressed are given in 6. The major long term objective is a NWPS providing appropriate security and management for all surviving wilderness areas (incorporating restored areas), well presented and well understood by the public and all branches of government. It is recommended that there be parallel work on (a) the development of the State/Territory system and (b) the development of an overarching National Wilderness Protection System. The first step of the latter should be to move towards a Register and Commonwealth legislation by lobbying for the establishment of a specific wilderness unit or agency to ensure that wilderness continues to be regarded as a type of reserve requiring a special category and specialised management within the national system of conservation reserves. The Register will help to do this in the sense that reserves which are on it can be described collectively as a National Wilderness System. Without a special unit there is a danger that the distinctive protection needs of wilderness will be lost (wilderness being viewed only as a 'factor to be considered in the establishment of a system of ecological reserves). As far as funding is concerned it is assumed that if a group takes on a commitment to participate in the campaign it will adjust its priorities and provide funding at an appropriate level. This does not mean of course that special funding should not also be sought.

5.2 *Allocating responsibilities:*

5.2.1 State and Territory Conservation Councils/ Tasmanian Conservation Trust, National Parks Associations, TWS (and any other relevant State level body):

- continue to press for the development of their respective wilderness reserve systems (introducing and improving legislation, and improving management);
- education locally concerning the value of wilderness and the advantages of them being linked through the NWPS; and
- lobbying their overnments to agree to cooperate with the NWPS.

5.2.2 The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society:

- A joint cam aign to lobby the Federal Goveernent on:
 - the acceptance of the goal of a NWPS
 - the setting up of a special unit for wilderness (preferably in the AHC)
- carrying out a public education programme on the distinctive benefits of, wilderness conservation and the NWPS.

5.2.3 All groups: Carry out initiatives locally to establish ongoing liaison with appropriate Aboriginal community representatives in order to find common ground with Aboriginal people in the area of wilderness protection.

5.2.4 Colong Foundation for Wilderness: Further develop the National Red Index for Wilderness as a means of listing potential wilderness reserves and providing a monitoring/watchdog mechanism. A mechanism needs to be developed for the Index to be reviewed by other NGOs concerned with wilderness assessments.

6 Some Action Proposals Relevant to the Implementation of the Campaign Plan

The list is not meant to be comprehensive; many good ideas for specific action can be found in the Proceedings of the Fourth National Wilderness Conference, *Wilderness: The Future*.

A State and Territory Reserve Systems (mainly State/Territory bodies).

- 1 Push for special wilderness legislation in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Queensland using elements of the legislation in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia as a model (see also John Whitehouse's paper in *Wilderness: The Future* on model legislation and methods for evaluating effectiveness).
- 2 Identify and campaign for the protection of wilderness restoration zones in areas that are identified as capable of being restored to wilderness through an appropriate management regime.

- 3 Push for the development of plans of management r all wilderness areas.
- 4 Develop a 'Wilderness Watch' in each State/Territory to provide surveillance and monitoring of areas likely to be threatened.
- 5 Counteract proposals for inappropriate development in potential and existing wilderness reserves (e.g. roadworks, building and infrastructure developments, huts).
- 6 Develop improved contact with State/Territory agencies, especially at the regional level, both to ensure understanding and to maintain communication for @early warning' purposes.

B The National Wilderness Protection System: Public Awareness and Education
(a national campaign (ACF and TWS) supported locally by other groups.

- 1 Provide an updated statement on wilderness values and definitions dealing with all challenges of subjectivity, invalidity, etc.
- 2 Relate the advantages of wilderness conservation to biodiversity ESD, endangered species, land protection and world heritage.
- 3 Expose and counter the use of the term eco-tourism for inappropriate developments. Do this in the context of an. explanation about appropriate forms of recreational use in wilderness areas. Define what is and is not acceptable in ecosystem terms.
- 4 Utilise, existing wilderness education materials, particularly the @S wilderness education unit.

C Wilderness and the NWPS: The. Political Parties (all groups).

- 1 Make input into the process leading up to the ALP National Conference (at which policies are determined)
- 2 Make input into the Federal Coalition processes.
- 3 Make similar input into the State/Territory political party processes to ensure that policies for improved wilderness protection are developed.
- 4 Focus development of grassroots support in both State and Commonwealth marginal electorates.

D The National Wilderness Protection System - The Commonwealth (ACF and TWS)

- 1 Obtain a response from the Commonwealth to the Robertson Report with meaningful commitment to action.
- 2 Get the Commonwealth to develop a special wilderness unit in the Australian Heritage Commission which will do the g-round work for the introduction of the

NWPS (the Register, legislation, code of management) and run a wilderness public education programme.

- 3 Persuade the Commonwealth to thoroughly apply throughout Australia the interim protection/moratorium mechanism included in the *National Forest Policy Statement* (to be used to hold off development in sensitive areas until full assessment has been made).
- 4 Get the AHC to re-prioritise its work programme with the aim of getting all areas the movement would like to see protected as wilderness on the Register of the National Estate,(or at least the interim list) by the end of 1995. This would be consistent with commitments in the National Forest Policy.

E The Conservation Movement and the NWPS (all groups)

- 1 The National Red Index to be developed and linked with the work of the Environmental Resources Information Network (ERIN), SERIS, the Threatened Species Network and the WWF (Protected Areas Strategy).
- 2 Improved communication, both informal and by increased coverage of wilderness issues in newsletters. There is a need for increased frequency of newsletters (e.g. *Connex*) that include requests to members for action, even if this is at the expense of reduced quality of presentation/production.
- 3 Restructuring of finances to ensure an increase in the percentage of funds used in campaigns and increased efficiency of financial management.
- 4 Further refining of counter tactics and greater use of research on opponents to wilderness, followed by public exposure,, e.g. use of FOI etc. to establish such things as detrimental financial deals, cross subsidies, conflicts -of interest.
- 5 Renewal of the concept (see also B1 above) through international contacts. .Keep the concept up to date taking on new and energising international perspectives and developments, e.g. climate change, indigenous peoples' interest in wilderness, etc. Wilderness needs to be properly positioned in the overall environmental debate.
- 6 Plug the wilderness protection issue into all appropriate fora, e.g. debate on republic/constitutional reform.
- 7 Encourage involvement with Aboriginal people at the local level. The Conference made an offer to consult with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation nationally that was not accepted by the Council but the Conference Resolutions were passed to the Council's Rural Co mmittee. Encourage ATSIC to establish a Standing Committee on the Environment. Try to develop a working relationship. Learn from past successes and failures of cooperative approaches to wilderness protection and management with traditional owners. An open and dynamic approach is essential.

- 8 For the ACF to take a higher profile in the wilderness campaign.
- 9 Increase the effective involvement of user groups that may not primarily regard themselves as conservation groups in a campaign sense; e.g., many bushwalking, canoeing and cross-country skiing organisations.