

AN OVERVIEW OF CROSS-TENURE MANAGEMENT OF KARST IN TASMANIA

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ABSTRACT

In the past few years conservation of natural and cultural heritage has progressed beyond traditional models of reservation of public land and management by Parks and Wildlife authorities.

Agencies traditionally focussed on resource use such as forestry and mining departments, local government and, perhaps most importantly, private landholders all now play an important role in the management of land for conservation purposes.

Tasmania's 300 or so karst areas are found within a wide range of land tenures, often with individual cave systems traversing multiple tenures.

It is unlikely that all of the significant elements of these karsts will ever be managed as formal conservation reserves.

This makes a diverse yet integrated multi-tenure approach to karst management mandatory if the full range of natural diversity in karst, along with a suite of special places is to be managed for conservation (together with other uses in many cases).

In the last four years various commonwealth and State initiatives to conserve important elements of Australia's heritage have been developed, including programs that have been utilised to conserve karst systems on many tenures. In Tasmania these programs include:

- The Regional Forest Agreement process
- The National Reserve System program run through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT).
- The NHT Mole Creek Karst Integrated Catchment Management Strategy (NHT Rivercare)
- The Priority 1 karst program co-ordinated by Tasmanian government agencies
- The Bushcare program run through the Natural Heritage Trust
- The Rivercare program run through the Natural Heritage Trust
- The Fencing Incentive Scheme run through Greening Australia

Conservation mechanisms have included:

- Formal reservation under most categories of the IUCN reserve classification
- Land acquisition and subsequent reservation
- Informal reservation under agency management systems

- Covenanting and reservation of private land
- Provision of management advice to landowners
- Provision of fencing and stock watering schemes
- Re-vegetation of streambanks and sinkholes
- Inter-agency collaboration and agreements (e.g. the PWS/FT Mill-Kansas joint management protocol)

Management plans, codes of practice and databases relating to karst have also been produced, including:

- The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan
- The Mole Creek Karst National Park Management Plan
- The Mt Field National Park Management Plan
- Various amendments to the Forest Practices Code
- The Forest Practices Sinkhole Manual
- The Mineral Exploration Code of Practice
- The Tasmanian Geoconservation Database
- Karst Atlas digital maps

Various plans, codes and investigations relevant to karst are currently in progress or planned:

- The Reserve Management Code of Practice
- The Hastings Caves State Reserve Management Plan
- The Riveaux karst study
- The Junee-Florentine Karst Strategy
- Tasmanian Cave Classification System

Many karst areas have been recently added to both the formal and informal conservation estate. Issues regarding the management and security of tenure of many of these areas, particularly informal reservation of State Forest land, will need to be addressed in the future.

Whilst conservation management of karst on individual tenures has progressed over the last few years, the next major challenge will be the integration of management in cross-tenure and inter-agency approaches.

This will be particularly challenging in the (all too common) cases where land formally reserved for conservation abuts land used essentially for primary production.