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DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD

COUNCIL OF NATURE CONSERVATION MINISTERS

SEVENTH MEETING

DARWIN 10 AUGUST 1978

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MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS PRESENT

Northern Territory

Hon. P.A. Everingham,
Chief Minister and
Attorney-General.
(Chairman).

Mr W.T. Hare.
Mr M.A. Elliott.
Mr I.M. Barker.

Commonwealth

Hon. R.J. Groom,
Minister for Environment,
Housing and Community
Development.

Mr R.B. Lansdown.
Dr R.W. Boden.
Mr G.R. Mills.

Mr H.R. Webb, representing
Senator Hon. J.J. Webster,
Minister for Science.

Dr R.J. Millington.

Australian Capital Territory

Mr R.J. Corrigan, representing
Hon. R.J. Ellicott,
Minister for the Capital
Territory.

Dr B.H. Pratt.

Queensland

Dr G.W. Saunders, representing
Hon. T.G. Newbery,
Minister for Culture, National
Parks, and Recreation.

Mr K.W. Crooke.

New South Wales

Hon. W.F. Crabtree,
Minister for Lands.

Mr D.A. Johnstone.
Mr W.S. Steel.

Victoria

Hon. W.A. Borthwick,
Minister for Conservation.

Dr R.G. Downes.
Mr J.C. Wharton.
Mr D.S. Saunders.

Tasmania

Hon. G.D. Chisholm,
Minister for Housing and
Construction.

Mr P. Murrell.

South Australia

Hon. D.H. Banfield,
Minister for Health.

Mr P.C. Cornish.

Western Australia

Hon. G.C. MacKinnon,
Minister for Fisheries and
Wildlife, Tourism,
Conservation and the
Environment.

Mr H.B. Shugg.
Mr C.F. Jenkins.

New Zealand

Hon. V.S. Young,
Minister for Lands,
Forests and the
Environment.

Papua New Guinea

Mr B. Evara, representing
Hon. S. Tago,
Minister for Environment
and Conservation.

Secretariat

Mr R.E. Jordan,
Secretary to Council.

Mr D. McAllister.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies.
2. Adoption of agenda.
3. Summary record of sixth meeting of Council.
4. Role and operation of Council and Standing Committee.
5. Export of native fauna.
6. International matters.
7. World Wildlife Fund.
8. Role of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.
9. Co-ordination of research.
10. National wetlands survey.
11. Man and the Biosphere program.
12. Youth for conservation program.
13. Importation of aquarium fishes.
14. Reports from working groups.
15. Off-road vehicles.
16. Other business.
17. Next meeting of Council.
18. Press statement.

Agenda Item 1 - Welcome and apologies

The Chairman, Mr Everingham, opened the meeting at 9.00 am and welcomed all Ministers and their advisers, in particular Mr Young from New Zealand and Mr Evara from Papua New Guinea who were attending as observers.

The meeting was informed that apologies had been received from:

- Senator Hon. J.J. Webster, who was being represented by Mr Webb.
- Hon. R.J. Ellicott, who was being represented by Mr Corrigan.
- Hon. T.G. Newbery, who was being represented by Dr Saunders.
- Hon. S. Tago, who was being represented by Mr Evara.

Council noted that Mr Jordan was acting as Secretary in place of Mr V.J. Kane.

Agenda Item 2 - Adoption of agenda

Council adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting without alteration.

Agenda Item 3 - Summary record of sixth meeting of Council

Council accepted the summary record of its sixth meeting as an accurate account of the proceedings.

Council noted that in accordance with the agreed procedure the summary record, having been cleared by all Ministers who attended the meeting, had been tabled in both Houses of Federal Parliament.

Agenda Item 4 - Role and operation of Council and Standing Committee

Council considered in depth the paper prepared by Standing Committee on the objectives and future organisation and operation of Council and Standing Committee, and agreed that it was not acceptable in its present form. Ministers expressed concern over the phrasing of certain sections of the paper, pointing out that it appeared to limit the authority of Council and that insufficient emphasis had been given to the understanding that at all times Standing Committee should be the servant and adviser of Council. Accordingly, Council resolved to refer the paper back to Standing Committee for redrafting in the light of the comments made by Ministers.

(RESOLUTION 88)

Agenda Item 5 - Export of native fauna

Council considered the paper prepared in response to its request that, following re-examination of the recommendations contained in the report on trafficking in fauna in Australia by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation, Standing Committee provided advice in relation to:

- (i) Guidelines for the controlled export of native species.
- (ii) A list of species which might be exported under these guidelines.
- (iii) An estimate of the cost of administering a controlled export scheme.
- (iv) An assessment of the likely conservation effects of such a scheme.

Council noted advice that South Australia no longer wished to proceed with its proposal to export for avicultural purposes birds trapped as part of a program to control pest species.

Council therefore resolved to endorse the recommendation by Standing Committee that, at least for the present, no action be taken to relax the existing policy regarding export of native fauna, and that the Commonwealth be invited to take account of this recommendation when considering requests for approval to export native species.

(RESOLUTION 89)

Agenda Item 6 - International matters

Council noted advice that, following a request by Western Australia for inclusion of a federal clause in the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals to be negotiated in mid-1979, the Commonwealth was examining the question of federal clauses in international agreements.

Council also noted the report summarising the current status of each existing or proposed international agreement related to nature conservation.

Agenda Item 7 - World Wildlife Fund

Council considered the available information regarding the proposed operation of the World Wildlife Fund in Australia, and resolved to express its concern at the action taken by the Commonwealth Government in supporting the establishment of a branch of the Fund in Australia without prior consultation with State and Territory governments as to the effects of this action in those States and Territories where fund raising organisations already existed.

(RESOLUTION 90)

Council further resolved to seek discussions with the World Wildlife Fund concerning the manner in which the expertise of government nature conservation agencies might be used to assist in determining the significance and priority of projects submitted to the Fund for financial support.

(RESOLUTION 91)

Agenda Item 8 - Role of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service

Council considered in depth the role of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly in relation to its control over Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mt Olga) National Park and the proposed Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory, and resolved to endorse the recommendation that:

- (i) The ANPWS be required to conform to the role defined and agreed to by Council at its November 1975 meeting.
- (ii) The necessary amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act be encouraged.
- (iii) The ANPWS withdraw from all land holding activities and all parks at present under its control be returned to the appropriate State or Territory government control.
- (iv) The ANPWS refrain from negotiations with Aboriginal peoples without the full knowledge, consent and involvement of the relevant State or Territory governments.

(RESOLUTION 92)

Agenda Item 9 - Co-ordination of research

Council noted advice that, having reviewed all research projects of national significance being carried out or sponsored by member authorities, Standing Committee was satisfied that there was adequate consultation and information exchange between the relevant authorities in respect of such projects.

Council therefore resolved to endorse the recommendation by Standing Committee that no action be taken to establish a formal co-ordinating mechanism in relation to research and survey activities, but agreed that Standing Committee be requested to produce annually for the information of Ministers a statement describing in a standardised format all significant research projects being undertaken by member authorities.

(RESOLUTION 93)

Agenda Item 10 - National wetlands survey

Council noted the final reports by CSIRO on the feasibility study for a national wetlands survey, and accepted the view of Standing Committee that such a survey was an important conservation objective. Accordingly, Council resolved to:

- (i) Re-endorse the desirability of a national wetlands survey.
- (ii) Agree that the survey could appropriately be carried out by CSIRO, in close consultation with nature conservation agencies.
- (iii) Request the Commonwealth Government to examine ways of financing the survey.
- (iv) Agree that if only partial funding was possible, priority should be given to the monitoring of changes in wetlands and the study of areas identified as being threatened by man's activities.

(RESOLUTION 94)

Agenda Item 11 - Man and the Biosphere program

The Australian Ambassador to UNESCO and Chairman of the International Co-ordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere program, Professor R.O. Slatyer, addressed Council on the objectives of the program and the development of an international network of biosphere reserves. He explained that biosphere reserves were intended to provide:

- (i) Conservation of representative ecosystems with their full range of component species as a strategy for maintaining genetic diversity.
- (ii) Sites for long-term research into the structure and dynamics of ecosystems.
- (iii) Baseline areas for monitoring environmental change.
- (iv) Education and training opportunities.

Professor Slatyer answered Minister's questions concerning operation of the MAB program in Australia, and at the conclusion of the meeting presented to the relevant Ministers certificates designating the Australian biosphere reserves which had been approved by the Co-ordinating Council.

Agenda Item 12 - Youth for conservation program

Council discussed the proposal that State and Territory parks services could assist in the area of youth unemployment by the introduction of a program whereby young persons were engaged for work on specific projects to which the services were already committed, and on which job skills of value to future employers and an understanding of nature conservation

could be developed. Council agreed that the concept of a youth for conservation program was worthy of further examination, and therefore resolved to establish an ad hoc working group to prepare, following consultation with the relevant State and Commonwealth agencies, a detailed program for consideration by Council at its next meeting.

(RESOLUTION 95)

Agenda Item 13 - Importation of aquarium fishes

Council noted advice from Standing Committee regarding the risk of introducing exotic plants and animals, diseases and parasites with imported aquarium fishes, and resolved to again inform the Commonwealth Department of Health, the Bureau of Customs and the Australian Fisheries Council of its concern at the environmental risks associated with the relatively unrestricted importation of large numbers of live fishes.

(RESOLUTION 96)

Agenda Item 14 - Reports from working groups

Council noted advice of the matters on which the Standing Working Group on Birds had still to report to Standing Committee, and resolved that the Working Group be terminated as soon as it had completed its task.

(RESOLUTION 97)

Council accepted the advice of Standing Committee that adequate co-ordination already existed between the relevant agencies in relation to kangaroo conservation and management, and therefore resolved that the Standing Working Group on Kangaroo Conservation and Management be terminated.

(RESOLUTION 98)

Council discussed the desirability of all States involved having uniform tag fees or royalty payments for commercially harvested kangaroos, and resolved to establish an ad hoc working group to examine the question, with representatives from Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

(RESOLUTION 99)

Council noted the report of the Standing Working Group on Law Enforcement, and resolved that the Working Group be permitted to continue in order to review current procedures relating to the movement of fauna and flora between States.

(RESOLUTION 100)

Council considered the final report of the ad hoc Working Group on the Effect of the Woodchip Industry on Fauna and Flora, and agreed that State and Territory member authorities would examine the applicability of the recommendations contained in the report and the extent to which these should be pursued in their own States and Territories.

Council acknowledged the national significance of forested land as wildlife habitat, and therefore resolved to seek representation on the appropriate technical working group of the Australian Forestry Council, with a view to making that Council aware of the implications for wildlife of forestry operations in general and initiating action to minimise habitat loss or degradation.

(RESOLUTION 101)

Council noted the report on the activities of the ad hoc Working Group on Sub-professional Training.

Council noted the report on the activities of the ad hoc Working Group on Endangered Fauna, and resolved that the Working Group be given approval to continue its task of preparing an official list of Australian fauna and periodically reviewing the contents of the list.

(RESOLUTION 102)

Council noted the report on the activities of the ad hoc Working Group on Endangered Flora, and resolved that the Working Group be given approval to continue its task of identifying a number of short-term projects considered to be of significance in promoting the conservation of Australian flora and developing guidelines and time schedules for carrying out these projects.

(RESOLUTION 103)

Council considered the proposal by the Australian Committee for Earth Resources Technology Satellites that, as member authorities were likely to become major users of satellite-derived data, a remote sensing committee be set up within the structure of Council to improve communication between all users of such data. Council resolved to endorse the recommendation by Standing Committee that an ad hoc Working Group on Remote Sensing be established, with terms of reference:

- (i) To investigate the potential of remote sensing in the field of conservation and management of wildlife and other relevant natural resources.
- (ii) To advise Council and through Council the Department of Science on the use of remote sensing in this field and on any special equipment or data processing which might be required to fully utilise the available data.
- (iii) To complete these tasks within twelve months.

(RESOLUTION 104)

Council considered the proposal that it might sponsor a program of technical conferences, and the consequent requirement for a working group charged with collating and critically examining proposals for such conferences and making recommendations in relation to them. Council resolved to endorse the recommendation by Standing Committee that an ad hoc Working Group on the CONCOM Technical Conference Program be established, with terms of reference:

- (i) To collate and critically examine proposals for technical meetings to be sponsored by Council.
- (ii) To recommend to Standing Committee what technical meetings, if any, should be sponsored by Council in 1979/80 and/or 1980/81.

(RESOLUTION 105)

Agenda Item 15 - Off-road vehicles

Council noted the draft code of ethics for users of off-road vehicles which had been prepared by the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development in response to a recommendation contained in the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation on the impact of off-road vehicles on the Australian environment.

Agenda Item 16 - Other business

Council considered the respective roles of the Commonwealth and the States in relation to marine parks and reserves, noting that:

- (i) The Prime Minister, following the discussion on seas and submerged lands at the June 1978 Premiers' Conference, requested that by the time of the next annual Premiers' Conference all necessary legislation be drafted and agreements advanced to a point where any outstanding matters might be settled at that Conference.
- (ii) The Standing Committee of Attorneys General, following discussion of some of the outstanding seas and submerged lands matters at its July 1978 meeting, resolved that the question of marine parks and reserves should be referred to an appropriate Commonwealth/State ministerial council for consideration and advice.

Council therefore resolved to:

- (i) Request Standing Committee to meet to determine a work program for consideration of policy issues related to marine parks and reserves other than in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region.

- (ii) Agree to the establishment of ad hoc working groups as required to advise Standing Committee.
- (iii) Request that preparation of a detailed position paper by the Commonwealth be completed in time to allow it to be circulated to the States and Territories prior to being considered by Standing Committee and/or a working group.
- (iv) Agree that a special meeting of Council be held to consider the report by Standing Committee and make recommendations for submission to the Standing Committee of Attorneys General and the Premiers' Conference.
- (v) Note that matters affecting the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park would be taken up bilaterally between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

(RESOLUTION 106)

Agenda Item 17 - Next meeting of Council

Council resolved to accept the invitation by Mr Crabtree to hold its next meeting in New South Wales on Monday, 23 April 1979, in conjunction with the South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Reserves and celebrations for the centenary of Royal National Park.

(RESOLUTION 107)

Agenda Item 18 - Press statement

Council agreed upon the attached press statement covering the major decisions of the meeting.

Mr Crabtree expressed the thanks of all members to the Chairman and his staff for their hospitality and efforts to ensure an effective meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.00 pm and thanked all participants for their co-operation.

PRESS RELEASE

COUNCIL OF NATURE CONSERVATION MINISTERS

The Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM) has recommended that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service withdraw from all land holding activities and return the control and management of national parks under its administration to the appropriate State or Territory.

The Council, meeting in Darwin, expressed concern at Commonwealth involvement in the management of Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mt Olga) National Park and the proposed Kakadu National Park, and Ministers agreed that the control of these areas should be vested in the Northern Territory Government.

The Commonwealth Minister, Mr Ray Groom, stressed the Commonwealth's view that it should continue to be responsible for the two parks in close association with the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission.

The Council, which comprises Ministers responsible for nature conservation, agreed that the involvement of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in the area of national park management constituted an unnecessary duplication of existing services.

New Zealand and Papua New Guinea were represented at the meeting.

The Council agreed that there should be no relaxation of the present regulations controlling the export of Australian native fauna.

The Ministers also decided that discussions should be opened with the World Wildlife Fund with a view to using the expertise in government agencies to assist in determining the priorities of projects put forward for funding. The World Wildlife Fund was established in Switzerland in 1961 to raise money to help preserve the world's natural heritage, particularly threatened habitat and wildlife species.

The Council expressed concern that the Federal Government had disadvantaged existing Australian conservation funds by refusing to extend to them the taxation concessions recently approved for the World Wildlife Fund.

The Council also agreed:

- To endorse the desirability of a national wetlands survey.

13.

- That an information paper be produced annually on research projects.
- To set up a working party to examine a youth conservation program which would involve young people in conservation work.

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