

Part One

executive summary

"This report is thus a collective effort that combines the results of individual knowledge and expertise."

The Independent Scientific Committee (ISC) presents this report as a contribution to the 2002 review of the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management and to guide ongoing management of the park. The ISC was formed to report on the park's values, their significance and condition, how they should be monitored, the pressures on them and knowledge gaps.

This report states why the park is important. The values assessed were natural and cultural heritage, social, recreational, tourism and economic. The natural ecosystems and landscapes are fundamental to the park's values and, importantly, they provide the setting and the context for the cultural heritage values. The natural and cultural values are the core values on which the social, recreational, tourism and economic attributes depend.

This report includes chapters on the individual values and an integrated statement of its significance. It does not attempt to include all of the vast data set on the park, much of which is contained in other documents.

Many of the values identified by the ISC are of international or national significance. The Park has been recognised at international level by listing as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve, and by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre as one of the 167 world centres of biodiversity. Blue Lake is a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Natural Values

Cultural Values

Economic Values

Social Values

Recreational Values

The ISC found that very few large natural protected areas such as Kosciuszko National Park remain in temperate Australia, where the natural dynamics of ecological processes can still occur without significant human intervention. Kosciuszko National Park forms the central segment of the Australian bioregion that supports all the alpine ecosystems and endemic species found on the Australian mainland. The park forms about half of the area of the Australian Alpine National Parks system and its national significance is enhanced by its connection with other large natural areas in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

The park provides ecosystem services that are nationally valuable: its soils and catchment provide clean water to southeastern Australia, and its large tracts of forest contribute to reduced risk of climate change by sequestering carbon.

There have been significant changes since the 1982 Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management was developed. These include future climate change, the rate and spread of development within the park, the availability of new technology, socioeconomic changes and much greater recognition of cultural values. The ISC found that, while many values were in good and stable condition, various pressures could lead to degradation of significant values if not adequately managed. Such pressures include the expansion of development, imposition of inappropriate fire regimes, increase in summer visitation, possible climate change and introduced plants and animals.

As the ISC undertook its review, a parallel process was underway involving Aboriginal people with connections to the park, to identify the Aboriginal values of the Park and how they could be managed. Therefore, the ISC has not addressed these values in detail.

The ISC is aware that the Park holds much more information than is yet known. This is illustrated by continued recording of previously undocumented plants and animals, and new perspectives on cultural values and the recent International Year of the Mountains (IYM) conference. A process for continual updating of knowledge is needed to assist conservation management.

The importance of Kosciuszko National Park is the sum of all of the values identified in the ISC report, – plus others not explicitly discussed here. All of these values are worthy of being conserved.

