

Marine reserve proposed for Heard Island region

CONTINUED AND INCREASED PROTECTION OF THE environment and ecosystems in the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) region is the aim of a government proposal to declare a new protected area in that isolated area of the Southern Ocean.

In January 2001 the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator the Honorable Robert Hill, announced a proposal to establish a Commonwealth Reserve in the HIMI region, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The proposed reserve would comprise around 76,000 square kilometres and include the World Heritage listed islands and associated territorial sea, plus several distinctive marine areas, extending in parts to the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundary (see accompanying figure). A single management regime under the EPBC Act for the new reserve will replace the existing HIMI Wilderness Reserve management arrangements currently in place under the *Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands Environment Protection and Management Ordinance 1987*.

The purposes for declaring the reserve, which is proposed for designation as an IUCN Category Ia Strict Nature Reserve, are:

- to protect conservation values of the HIMI region, including the World Heritage and cultural values



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of the terrestrial areas, unique and representative features of the marine environment, and the main foraging areas of land-based marine predators;

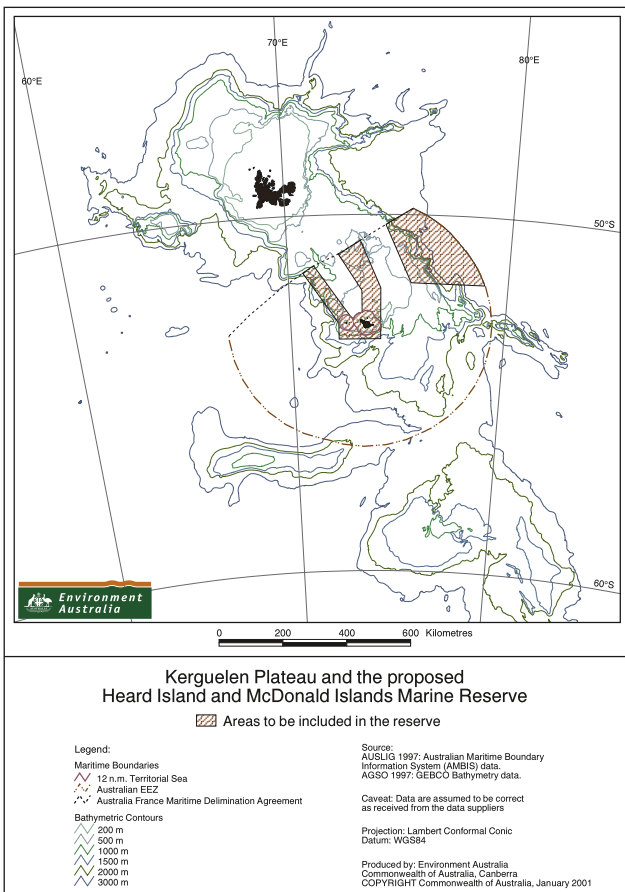
- to provide an effective conservation framework which will contribute to the integrated and ecologically sustainable management of the HIMI region as a whole;
- to provide a scientific reference area for the study of ecosystem function within the HIMI region; and
- to add representative examples of the HIMI EEZ to the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

Under the EPBC Act, a management plan must be prepared as soon as practicable after a Commonwealth Reserve is proclaimed. Until such times, all visitors to HIMI must continue to comply with the current *Heard Island Wilderness Reserve Management Plan*.

The Australian Antarctic Division will be responsible for preparing the management plan for the new Commonwealth Reserve, and for administering the reserve. The new plan will take into account further knowledge gained since the current plan was drafted, plus changes to reflect the subsequent World Heritage Listing and the subsequent Commonwealth environmental legislation (EPBC Act).

For further information regarding management of Heard Island and McDonald Islands, email <himi@aad.gov.au>.

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HTML and PDF versions of the current *Heard Island Wilderness Reserve Management Plan* are available at the AAD Environment web page: <<http://www.aad.gov.au/environment/areaprotection/worldheritage/default.asp>>.

The Notice of Intent showing the proposed HIMI Marine Reserve and supporting information can be viewed at the Environment Australia Marine Protected Areas web page: <<http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/mpa/heard/index.html>>.