Part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) allows the return of ownership of certain land reserved under the NPW Act to Aboriginal people. The land is then leased back to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment and managed by a Board of Management. A majority of the Board members are the Aboriginal owners of these lands.

Recent changes to the NPW Act include a range of proposals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Part 4A Boards of Management and their management of Part 4A lands. These changes include:

- introducing new financial management reporting requirements for Part 4A Boards to be consistent with standard reporting requirements for public entities not listed in Schedule 2 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983
- increasing the period for a Part 4A Board to prepare or review an existing plan of management from two years to five years
- enabling a single plan of management to apply to any combination of Part 4, Part 4A lands and Part 11 lands within a park (s.72A NPW Act)
- clarifying that Aboriginal owners who are members of Part 4A Boards must agree to any variation of a Part 4A lease (consistent with current provisions for reviews of leases)
- clarifying that the status of Part 4A land as a reserve is not changed if a Part 4A lease expires (the land remains reserved)
- clarifying that Part 4A lands are subject to the same financial exemptions as ‘ordinary’ national parks and Crown land for contributions to the cost of dividing fences and local government rates
- providing a statutory indemnity to Board members when they are acting in good faith
- enabling delegation of functions of the Board to members of the Board, staff of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) or any authorised person.
Other amendments relating to procedural processes have been included in a schedule to the NPW Act, including:

- clarifying when the office of a Board member becomes vacant
- enabling meetings to be held by telephone or video conference
- introducing requirements relating to disclosure of pecuniary interests
- specifying that a meeting quorum is formed when a majority of Aboriginal owners is present at the meeting
- enabling Board members to have a deputy to represent them in their absence.

Further information

Further information on joint management of national parks can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/ajmn/index.htm, or contact DECCW’s Environment Line on 131555 or by email at info@environment.nsw.gov.au.