

4 March 2014

**Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and
Communications References Inquiry into the Tasmanian Wilderness World
Heritage Area**

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

In 1978-83, I was the director of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society's campaign to save Tasmania's wild Franklin River from the proposed Gordon-below-Franklin Dam. In the end, that campaign depended for its success on the World Heritage Committee's acceptance of the Australian Government's nomination of 769,355 hectares of the Tasmanian Wilderness, including the Franklin River, in December 1982.

I was the leader of the Tasmanian Green Independents who, in the balance-of-power in 1989 gained, through a second Australian Government nomination, protection of further components of the Tasmanian wilderness so that the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was enlarged to 1,384,000 hectares. Significant enhancing components, not least the tallest flowering forests on Earth, remained outside that area and unprotected.

In 1989-91, I instigated moves by governments to have Macquarie Island and its adjacent marine ecosystem, part of Tasmania in Australia, nominated for the World Heritage status with which it is now favoured.

However the ongoing refusal of the Australian authorities to nominate the Tasmanian tall forests, together with their Aboriginal sites and habitats of rare and threatened wildlife, left those assets to be progressively damaged by logging for woodchip exports. This has been in breach of the spirit if not the letter of the World Heritage Convention.

In March 2010, as Senator for Tasmania and Leader of the Australian Greens, I presented the World Heritage Committee with a report compiled by Geoff Law

on the "Threats from logging to the universal values of the Tasmanian Wilderness".

Following the collapse of industrial logging in Tasmania three years ago - all export woodchip mills were closed by their commercial operators - the logging corporations sought negotiations with environment groups. As a result the Tasmanian Forest Agreement was signed in 2013 and the industry was injected with government funding of some hundreds of millions of dollars: in return, it agreed to the protection of 490,000 hectares of state forests, including World Heritage nomination for 123,600 hectares of the tallest and wildest forests adjoining the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This 123,600 hectares was less than one tenth of the area of state forests in Tasmania.

Besides extensive privately-owned native forests and plantations in Tasmania, this left more than 800,000 hectares of public forest lands and 45,000 hectares of plantations available for the refurbished industry. Much of these private and public forests available for future logging are scenic areas and contain habitat of endangered species like the Tasmanian devil, the Tasmanian wedgetailed eagle and the world's largest freshwater crayfish *Astacopsis gouldi*.

Together with long-protected areas such as Tasmania's oldest national park (1916) at Mt Field, the agreed 123,600 hectares of tall forests made up the nomination of 172,500 hectares, which was forwarded in January 2013. In June 2013, this area was duly inscribed on the list of World Heritage properties to bring the total area of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area to 1,584,233 hectares. (Other areas warranting inclusion in the TWWHA, including the 430,000 Tarkine wilderness which contains the largest temperate rainforest in Australia and a rich repository of coastal and inland Aboriginal heritage, were not nominated by Australia in 2013.)

As the Leader of the Australian Greens, now holding the balance of power in the Australian national parliament, I worked early with colleagues to have the government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard promulgate the 2013 forest lands nomination.

The Abbott government is now requesting UNESCO to rescind the World Heritage status of 74,000 hectares (60 percent) of the World Heritage forests in Tasmania. This request contains no line of argument which could not be applied to other regions of the rest of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area including its forest components or, indeed, to many other natural World Heritage properties on Earth.

As an Australian, I am ashamed of the nature of this request. Rather than having ethic or merit or pride in country, it is fuelled by a powerful element of the logging industry. Having got a windfall of public money through the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, that element, which has the new government's ear, now wants both the agreement (and its protection of a further 300-400,000 hectares of forests) and consequent World Heritage nomination and listing discarded.

The integrity of both the World Heritage Convention and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is at stake.

I have forwarded a similar letter on this issue to the World Heritage Committee and IUCN.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Brown