



tasmanian conservation trust inc

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

5 March 2014

Dear Committee members,

Inquiry into the natural world heritage values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area minor boundary extension and related matters

In relation to the inquiry terms of reference we will comment primarily on point:

(e) implications for the World Heritage status of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area of the Government's request to withdraw the 74,000 hectares for logging; and

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust is greatly concerned that the Abbott Coalition government has applied to the World Heritage Committee to revoke 74,000 hectares from the 170,000 ha which was added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) in June 2013. The TCT hopes that the Senate Standing Committee can pass our concerns onto the World Heritage Committee prior to it considering the matter at its 14 June 2014 meeting in Doha.

It seems to us that the Abbott government is seeking the revocation of part of TWWHA extension solely because of the link to the Tasmanian Forests Agreement (TFA), which it opposes, rather than any serious refutation of the merits of the nomination made by the former Australian government, the advice provided by the IUCN or the decision made by the World Heritage Committee. For the record, the TCT opposed the TFA, but we do support the retention of the entire TWWHA extension for good reasons.

The previous Labor government's nomination and the World Heritage Committee decision outline the very significant values which justify the TWWHA extension, as well as addressing some of the criticisms made of the nomination by the current Australian Government and by others.

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In short, the World Heritage Committee decision found that the TWWHA extension area made an additional contribution to the 'Outstanding Universal Values' (criteria vii, viii, ix and x) and delivers a more rational and contiguous boundary which will enable enhanced protection and management of universal values across the entire TWWHA. The TWWHA extension area greatly adds to the protection of tall eucalypt forests and associated rainforest and a range of landforms including karst and glacial features as well as alpine and sub-alpine environments.

It seems that the Australian Government is seeking the revocation of a large part of the TWWHA extension on the basis that it is degraded by the presence of logged areas and a small area of plantations. However, it seems excessive and unjustifiable that the government seeks to revoke 74,000 ha when the actual area affected by logging since 1960 (when industrial scale clearfell practices were introduced) is estimated by Dr Peter Hitchcock to be only 5-6% or about 10,000 ha of the entire extension area.

It is safe to assume that most logging in these areas has not been done recently but dates back many years or decades and has therefore been regenerated and has forest cover. The area of recently logged forests within the TWWHA which has not yet been regenerated and/or shows obvious signs of logging would therefore be a very small proportion of the entire extension area.

We urge the Senate Committee to obtain precise data on which areas within the TWWHA extension have been logged since 1960, how and when they were logged, the current state and extent of vegetation cover and plans for regenerating or rehabilitating areas recently logged.

If the recently logged areas remain within the TWWHA they cannot be logged again and can be regenerated or rehabilitated. Over time the 218 ha of plantations can also be removed and rehabilitated.

Recently logged areas can be rehabilitated just as the areas at Melaluca in the south-west of the TWWHA, which were affected by decades of mining, are currently being rehabilitated. Rehabilitating after mining is perhaps a much harder task than after logging.

Contrary to claims made by the Australian Government, the retention and rehabilitation of areas affected by logging will result in the best outcome for the values within those areas, areas immediately surrounding them and for the entire TWWHA.

If World Heritage areas had to be without flaws then there would hardly be a single historic site and very few natural sites that could justify being listed, as most have been damaged or altered by humans to some degree or impacted by natural processes of change.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McGlone
Director