From: alice hungerford
To: Committee, EC (SEN)
Subject: Urgent submission to The Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications References, Inquiry into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
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WOMEN'S FOREST TRUST
Alice Hungerford (Convenor)

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

Our group has campaigned strongly for over 30 years to protect areas of World Heritage significance including the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and remove them from logging production zones.

The World Heritage committee has requested for several years that the World Heritage boundary be extended and rectified in the TWWHA. Such requests were ignored by the Australian government until June last year, when the boundary was finally extended. Sadly it did not include the Tarkine wilderness area.

We strongly object to the Australian government proposal to now remove 74,000 ha of forests from the Tasmanian World Heritage listing. The area has been **falsely claimed** by the government to be substantially degraded. However the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have identified the need for these areas to be included in order to more fully cover the World Heritage values criteria for world heritage protection. Removing it from the World Heritage (WH) list will open it to logging and mining, ensuring that such degradation did eventually become the fate of these areas.

The areas that the Australian Government seeks to de-list contain some of the world's most pristine forests with outstanding universal values, including a corridor of some of the **tallest hardwood forests** on Earth. Tall wet eucalyptus forest was a poorly represented vegetation type prior to the June 2013 extension, and now intact forests that are globally unique and significant have been recognised for their World Heritage status.

The additions to the TWWHA last year include landscapes of exceptional natural beauty, a significant tract of tall eucalyptus forests and **unique karst systems**. Cultural features of the landscape have been identified by United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to contain archaeological and **Aboriginal cultural sites** of outstanding universal value. The areas that were added to the TWWHA met four criteria, for their tall eucalypt forests, glacial and karst features, additional primitive flora and fauna groups, increase the representation of endemic species within the TWWHA and add new species, and additional important habitat for threatened and rare species, including the Tasmanian devil, Spotted-tailed quoll and the Denison rain crayfish.

Peter Hitchcock, a prominent expert on World Heritage, states that the great

majority of what is proposed to be excised (from the TWWHA) – about 90%- has not been disturbed. Roughly about 5-6% of the areas proposed to be excised would have been logged since 1960.

The World Heritage committee were made aware of the presence of past logging disturbance in the nominated area. Approval of the minor boundary modification in 2013 was made with the understanding that existence of past disturbance does not mean that a site should not be listed, or that it no longer has conservation value. The values identified by the World Heritage committee stand: these small areas cleared within larger stands of unlogged forest are intended to be regenerated and rehabilitated as part of the World Heritage management plan.

We urge your committee to dismiss the proposal of the Australian government to de-list parts of TWWHA. Instead, we ask you to urgently make representations to the World Heritage committee continue to support the listing and ongoing protection of the whole TWWHA, including rehabilitation of the few small logged, mined and roaded areas within it.

We are happy to meet with your committee personally to expand on our representations, if you desire us to do so.

Sincerely

Alice Hungerford (convenor)

7th March 2014