



Eric Hutchinson MP

Federal Member for Lyons

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S ADVICE ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

FEDERAL Lyons MP Eric Hutchinson has sought advice from the federal Auditor General regarding potential conflicts of interest by members of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement independent verification group.

Mr Hutchinson said today that he had written to the Auditor General Ian McPhee because of his concern about the independence of various members of the independent verification group.

The group's responsibilities included verifying the case put by the previous Federal Government and State Governments for the 2013 listing of another 170,000 hectares in Tasmania to be declared Wilderness World Heritage area.

Mr Hutchinson has asked Mr McPhee to clarify whether any member of the independent verification group declared an existing or potential conflict of interest when assessing the conservation values of nominated areas for World Heritage Listing of Tasmania's native forests.

"I'm wanting to know specifically, that if any member of the group declared an existing or potential conflict of interest, how those conflicts of interest were managed," Mr Hutchinson said.

Mr Hutchinson said that breaches of these protocols would have undermined proper public administration of the issue.

Mr Hutchinson has been outspoken in his criticism of the process that resulted in the declaration of the 170,000 hectare listing.

He also wrote to World Heritage Committee chair Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani in the lead up to the committee's decision late last month on the Federal Government's request for the committee to rescind 74,000 hectares of last year's 170,000 hectare listing.

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He wrote that, while achieving a political outcome for the previous Federal and State Governments, the listing seriously overlooked the level of consultation required for such a nomination.

“It is my contention that the World Heritage Committee members have been misled as to the quality of the recent Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage extension and, albeit unwittingly, departed from their own guidelines regarding consultation on these issues,” Mr Hutchinson said.

Mr Hutchinson said today that he had been disappointed by the World Heritage Committee’s rejection of the application to rescind part of the latest listing because of the effect it would have on people in Lyons.

“Communities in Lyons have been ignored – that has been my issue since day one,” he said.

More than 1000 landowners with property bordering the new Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area will be affected by the boundary changes and these people were never consulted, he said.

“This was a conflicted and flawed process because they were not consulted,” Mr Hutchinson said.

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