

WHAT

Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA)

The Issue

The Australian Government's proposal to remove 74 000ha of world heritage listed forests from the TWWHA. These 74 000ha are largely intact and globally significant tall eucalyptus forests and karst region (underground cave formations).

Tasmania's globally significant World Heritage area is gravely threatened by the Australian Government's request to the World Heritage Committee to remove 74,000ha of forests from World Heritage listing.

Who is proposing to remove 74 000 ha from the TWWHA?

The Australian Government has made an application to the World Heritage Committee for a minor boundary adjustment to the TWWHA. They have requested a removal of 74 000 hectares, opening up the potential use for logging. A decision will be made at the upcoming meeting of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in Doha from 15 – 25 June.

What is the problem?

The outstanding universal values of the region were recognised in 2013 by UNESCO when a minor boundary addition was made to the Tasmanian World Heritage Area to include 172 050ha, 123 650ha of this addition were areas that were previously open to logging (the rest comprised existing public and privately owned reserves). It added areas of tall eucalyptus forest, giant trees, karst, other significant geomorphological features, and areas of significant Aboriginal heritage. A modification of the boundary to include the corridor of tall forests fringing the eastern boundary of the area had been sought by the World Heritage Committee for many years, in order to properly encompass the values and to ensure appropriate boundaries for future management of the values.

Removal of 74 000ha of World Heritage listed forests would allow for environmentally destructive practices such as logging. Making these forests available to log is a stated aim of the Australian government. It would also make for a difficult boundary for management, and excise other important natural features

The 74 000ha contains some of the world's most intact temperate forests, including some of the tallest hardwood forests on Earth.

The great majority of what is proposed to be removed has not been previously disturbed by commercial logging activity, despite the claim by government that it is degraded by industrial logging, conversion to plantation, and other exploitative activities. They have been unable to substantiate their claims.

The entire Australian Government campaign is deceitful, dishonest and based on ideology and political opportunity. The proposal to remove these 74 000ha will do great damage to Australia's reputation as an exemplar of World Heritage protection and management. This attack on the

Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area is designed to destroy forests of established World Heritage quality (Outstanding Universal Value).

Expert scientists have strongly criticised the government's intention to delist and the rationale that has been advanced, scuttling the key arguments put forward to justify the move.

While there is a small proportion, approximately 10%, of disturbed land inside the World Heritage area that was added in 2013, this was outlined and understood in that application for the World Heritage addition. There is an opportunity to improve the wilderness quality and connectivity of the natural ecosystems by including the new additions and restoring the disturbed land. These matters are all addressed in detail in expert submissions to the Senate Inquiry into the proposed excisions which is currently on foot.

"ALL of the proposed excisions contain attributes and values that contribute to the Integrity of the World Heritage Area and if excised, will have an impact on that integrity, seriously impairing the World Heritage Values of the Area. Many features that contribute significantly to the integrity of the WHA, especially the tall eucalypt forests, will be excised, resulting in substantial reduction to the integrity of the World Heritage Area. Attributes and values that are significantly impacted range from the iconic tall eucalypt forests through geological, glacial and karst values to threatened species and plant communities. At least 24 Aboriginal cultural sites are impacted by the proposed delisting, including a Pleistocene Cave archaeological site, one of only two on the eastern side of the World Heritage Area." **Peter Hitchcock AM**, *Submission to the Senate Inquiry 2014* Peter Hitchcock since 1997 has been a Cairns based International Consultant on Environment and Heritage, working on heritage protection projects in places as diverse as Lebanon, Malaysia, Japan and Indonesia.

"We drew attention to the need for and opportunities from restoration of the disturbed intrusions (i.e. logged and converted areas) into otherwise intact primary and globally important tall eucalypt forests recommended for inclusion in the TWWHA. Restoration of these areas would promote connectivity, enhance wilderness quality, and contribute to meeting Aichi Biodiversity Target 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic plan 2011-2020: "By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation...". **Prof Brendan Mackey**, *Submission to the Senate Inquiry 2014*. Brendan Mackey is Director of the Griffith Climate Change Response Program. He has a PhD in ecology from the Australian National University. He is a member of the International Council for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Why a Rally?

We know the majority of Australians don't want the 74 000ha of forests that have been world heritage listed removed from the TWWHA. An opinion poll conducted by Galaxy research across Australia in March this year found that the majority of Australians oppose the government plan to remove these forests from the World Heritage Area. Overall, 71% want the 74,000 hectares protected from logging, compared to just 10% that support logging in the area. This opposition to logging was observed across all demographic groups and all states of Australia¹.

Rallying people together in the World Heritage listed forests that are threatened by this proposed removal will demonstrate to the World Heritage Committee and the Australian Government that there is large public support for keeping these forests protected and listed as World Heritage.

A rally is an effective way of empowering a diverse group of people to engage with the ancient tall eucalyptus forests of the Upper Florentine and call for action on an issue that they're passionate about.

This will be the first community rally in the forests of Tasmania for some years, enabling re-engagement of ordinary people in the face of the anti-conservation stance of the Australian and Tasmanian governments. We are getting a very strong response from people that the threat of ancient intact forests with outstanding universal values having their world heritage status stripped is a mobilising force for taking action.

Who is organising the rally?

This rally has been organised by the Bob Brown Foundation.

Why the Upper Florentine?

The Upper Florentine is magnificent, with the entire region of 6815 ha proposed for excision from the World Heritage Area. It is comparatively easily accessible from Hobart and on a sealed road.

The intact tall eucalyptus forest is an illustration of the Liberal Government's dishonest claims that these 74,000 ha are logged or degraded.

The Upper Florentine boasts a strong case of Outstanding Universal Values, including tall eucalypts and ancient forests, karst formations, areas of buttongrass moorland, ancient Aboriginal heritage, including Nanwoon cave – the only known cave in Tasmania to contain human remains. There are extensive tracts of old growth forest, most of the remaining region are tracts of buttongrass proposed to be excised.

A small encroachment on to the valley by Forestry Tasmania involved the logging of less than 100 ha. These small patches of logged areas need restoration. The proposed excision will eliminate 35 times more old growth forest than logged areas.

The logging road that the rally will be held on was planned to extend 10.8km in to the valley. Due to the efforts of the Still Wild Still Threatened blockade from, the road only pushed in approximately 1km. 1% of the forests that were slated for logging were logged, the remaining 99% of forest remains intact largely due to the non-violent direct action campaign by Still Wild Still Threatened.

Guided Walks

A guided walk will be offered after the rally in the Upper Florentine. This walk will offer people an opportunity to experience the intact rainforests and be guided by campaigners, ecologists and photographers who have intimate knowledge of the forests and their outstanding values. The public will be guided through a magnificent area of forest the Australian and Tasmanian Governments are seeking to re-open for logging.

Twisted Sister, Lungs of the Land Track –

This track begins on the logging road just near the rally site, look for the "Twisted Sister" sign. We follow Twisted Sister track through open rainforest to visit the iconic giant Eucalypt Twisted Sister' whose trunk has grown in a twisted formation that gives rise to an enormous canopy. From Twisted Sister it is a 5 minute walk to Timbs track and then on to Lungs of Land track, a track made by the blockaders that winds through the open rainforest of coupe FO44A with giant emergent Eucalypts and groves of massive tree ferns that can live for up to 1000 years. The track passes a few stumps of

trees that were occupied by activists for several years during the blockade. It passes behind a tree, named Lungs of the Land, this tree was cut down during the logging occupied this tree for several weeks while the road was constructed around her. We finish back on the logging road behind the rally site.

ⁱ Galaxy Research, Australian Forest Study. March 2014. Conducted for the Bob Brown Foundation