



The Wilderness Society - MEDIA RELEASE - June 7, 2014

## **Abbott Government wastes World Heritage Committee's time - delist attempt of Tasmania's forests further discredited**

- **Internal government advice showed new World Heritage forests mostly untouched.**
- **Abbott Government must drop its reckless request before it further embarrasses Australia.**
- **Respect World Heritage rallies to be held next week in Hobart and Melbourne.**

Federal Environment Department advice, obtained by the Wilderness Society under FOI, shows that the Abbott Government deliberately misled the World Heritage Committee with its request to delist Tasmania's new World Heritage forests.

The Ministerial advice given to Government demonstrates that prior to its application to the World Heritage Committee, Government was advised logging disturbance in the excision area was low. Yet the official application to UNESCO and repeated Government claims represent the area as predominantly logged and disturbed.

The advice from January 2014 states : "The Department's assessment of visible from available satellite imagery (2009) shows that the overall disturbance in the areas that are proposed for removal ranges from significant to low, with the majority having low levels of disturbance."

An appendix to the advice also showed that of the 74,039 hectares the Government sought for delisting, only 6362 hectares showed disturbance (about 8.6 per cent).

"The Environment Department's advice shows that the Abbott Government knew its claims were false before it submitted its application to the World Heritage Committee. It has no respect for World Heritage and is wasting the World Heritage Committee's time and resources," said Wilderness Society Tasmanian Campaign Manager Vica Bayley, who will travel to Doha for the World Heritage Committee meeting.

"The advice of experts, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and even its own department is that disturbance is minimal. This application lacks credibility and Government should withdraw it to avoid further embarrassment.

"The Abbott Government wants to destroy iconic Tasmanian World Heritage forests, including the Weld, Great Western Tiers and Upper Florentine. Logging World Heritage forests is as reckless as destroying any other World Heritage site. No one would ever consider using the Grand Canyon as a rubbish dump or knocking down the Opera House to build a car park."

The World Heritage Committee meets on June 15. On the same weekend thousands are expected to attend a rally in Hobart to show their support for Tasmania's new World Heritage forests and urge the Committee to reject Australia's application. An event will be held at Federation Square in

Melbourne on Tuesday June 10. People unable to attend rallies can show their support online for the forests and the Wilderness Society's attendance at the World Heritage Committee meeting at the Wilderness Society website ([www.wilderness.org.au/myworldheritage](http://www.wilderness.org.au/myworldheritage)).

"The Coalition's reckless action threatens Australia's billion-dollar tourism industry that relies on our international reputation for amazing unspoilt landscapes, clear skies, fresh air and clean waters," Mr Bayley said. "If Tasmania's World Heritage forests aren't safe, neither are our other iconic World Heritage sites, such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree rainforest, Kakadu and the Blue Mountains."

"This is the first time a government has asked to delist a World Heritage property when its heritage values are well and truly still intact.

"The Abbott Government must drop its disingenuous request to axe the new Tasmanian World Heritage forests before it makes Australia an international laughing stock."

**Melbourne rally Tuesday June 10** Federation Square, 6pm

Speakers include: Wilderness Society National Campaign Director Lyndon Schneiders, Australian Conservation Foundation chief executive Kelly O'Shanassy, and foremost wilderness photographer Rob Blakers.

**Hobart rally Saturday June 14** Parliament Lawns, noon

Speakers include: 2012 Young Tasmanian of the Year and Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary owner Greg Irons, University of Tasmania Distinguished Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick, Southern Beekeepers Association president Peter Norris and Tasmanian Aboriginal Rodney Dillon.

**For further comment contact:**

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