



tasmanian conservation trust inc

Letter to the editor
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Three Capes Track proposal

Just 7050 people paid to walk the internationally famous Overland Track during November 2006 to April 2007 (the latest figures available) even though up to 10,000 are permitted. Yet the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) claim that the Three Capes Track (3CT), proposed for the Tasman National Park, will attract 10,000 walkers paying a \$200 fee during the same time period. This is a wild exaggeration used to convince the government to stump up \$25 million of tax-payers money required to build the project.

Estimates of direct income and flow-on economic benefits are based on 10,000 walkers using the track and this number is not based on any actually analysis. It is just a very 'wishful' number that assumes the 3CT will be more desirable an attraction than the Overland Track.

Few people know that this project will involved the destruction of threatened plants and threatened vegetation communities, will inevitably spread the plant killing disease Phytophthora and will potentially disturb 17 nesting eagle pairs. There are in effect nine overnight nodes and each will also have a footprint equivalent to around 11 suburban house blocks. Furthermore, having people spending all their time on a single walk and staying in huts within the park will directly compete with the existing tourism operators in the Tasman community.

The PWS promise full cost recovery but we fear the 3CT will become another white elephant and a long-term drain on the state budget. If there are not enough walkers then maintenance will rely on scarce tax payer funds and the promised environmental monitoring will not get done.

The 3CT proposal is badly conceived and the large scale of the associated infrastructure is totally inappropriate for a National Park, the primary management objective of which is the conservation of natural and cultural values.

The Tasmanian Greens, who claim to oppose the 3CT in its current form, should

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demand that the government reject the present proposal and initiate a series of consultations with community stakeholders to develop a proposal that will offer both greater protection to the conservation values of the Tasman National Park and provide greater economic benefits to the Tasman Community.

An independent analysis needs to be done of the revamped project to see how many people would actually use it. Tasmanian tax-payers deserve to know what return they will get from spending \$25 million of 'their' money on the 3CT and whether this can compensate for the environmental damage the project will cause to 'their' national park.

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