

# Media Release

15 November 2009

## **Tasmanian devil doomed to extinction unless Government acts to establish an insurance population**

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust is warning that the Tasmanian Devil is doomed to extinction if the Tasmanian Government does not change its current strategy and re-focus on delivering an insurance population.

According to TCT Director, Peter McGlone it is more than four years since the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program started collecting disease-free devils for an insurance population yet the Program's web site reveals that currently only 170 or just over 10% of the target number of 1500 animals have been secured

“The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program has told us there is no limit to the number of healthy devils they could trap but they have ‘no where to put them’ as the zoos do not have space,” Mr McGlone said. “The Program informs us they stopped trapping for the Insurance Population in 2008,” he added.

Mr McGlone's concerns were endorsed by Geoff King, wildlife tour operator and TCT representative on the Devil Program Stakeholder Reference Group.

“With the devil facial tumour disease spreading across the State and no cure on the horizon, an insurance population of disease free devils is essential to safeguard the species against extinction,” he said

“At the rate the Program is progressing the insurance population, it looks certain they will fail to reach their target before the disease spreads over the entire state,” Mr King warned.

The TCT claims that in recent months a number of current and former employees of the Devil Program have expressed similar concerns regarding lack of progress with an insurance population while complaining other more high risk strategies are supported. One current long-term employee has told the TCT they believe the ‘Tasmanian devil is doomed to extinction’ if the program does not change direction and focus on delivering an insurance population.

“The TCT urges the Tasmanian Government to put all the Program's resources into establishing an insurance population on a series of Tasmanian islands and commit to achieving this by December 2010,” said Mr McGlone. “What we are asking for is not radical, we just want the Devil Program to implement it's own Insurance Population Strategy,” he added.

“Having an insurance population should be the Program’s number one priority and it is the one thing we can do which is certain to succeed. If the zoos and wildlife parks do not have enough space, the Program’s own Insurance Population Strategy recommends putting devils on islands. We cannot understand their inaction.”

“There are many suitable islands, including some occupied islands, large enough to take thousands of devils, keeping them disease-free and allowing them to express their natural behaviour in a natural environment”, he said

“If the Tasmanian Government doesn’t act urgently then the Australian Government, which provides the majority of the funds for the program, should make on-going funding conditional on delivering an insurance population by December 2010.”

The TCT is also urging the Tasmanian and Australian Governments to consider contracting New Zealand organizations, which have a long history of succeeding with similar species rescue operations, to provide advice on establishing an insurance population for the Tasmanian devil on Tasmanian islands.

“The TCT feels like it has no option but to go public with its concerns regarding the Devil Program as it has tried every other option to get answers, without success,” Mr. McGlone concluded

**Further comment:**

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