

Media Release

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More irrigation environmental disasters announced by Bartlett – paid by the taxpayer

The Premier David Bartlett yesterday announced plans for more irrigation projects including one in the Swan catchment the Tasmanian Conservation Trust claims will be the worst environment disaster yet dreamt-up by the Labor Government appointed Irrigation Development Board.

“The Premier’s current irrigation plans include disastrous projects such as the St Pauls River Dam, seven dams in the north-east and opening up the environmentally sensitive southern Midlands to irrigation, but developing the Swan catchment could cause even greater environmental destruction”, said TCT Director, Peter McGlone.

“The Swan River is the major source of water for the internationally important and Federally protected Moulting Lagoon Ramsar Site and the catchment is a hotspot of threatened species which makes the area most unsuitable for major irrigation development.

“Also the area only supports a few farmers so how can the government see this area as a priority for investment.

“Moulting Lagoon is Tasmania’s most important wetland and is perhaps the state’s most important reserve after the two world heritage areas. Maintaining the flow of fresh water down the Swan River is crucial for the future survival of this magnificent wetland.

“The Premier’s promises made at the launch of environmentally and socially sustainable irrigation development are cynically hollow given the Labor Government has systematically striped away environmental protection and rights of appeal to force its plans through.”

In a shameless effort to fast-track dam construction, since 2007 the Labor Government has:

- removed the public’s right to appeal against the issuing of dam construction permits;
- weakened forest practices and threatened species legislation and given authority to destroy threatened species and vegetation communities to the committee responsible for dam approvals;
- removed the public’s right to appeal over water management plans.

“Now the State Government plans do the same in relation to pipelines, through the soon to be finalised Planning Directive No.2, after breaking it's public commitment to ensure it would include environmental safeguards.”

The TCT also calls on the Liberal and Green parties to commit to putting a halt to environmentally damaging irrigation projects developed by the Labor Government and establish a more democratic and scientific process for planning irrigation projects.

Further information:

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