



MEDIA RELEASE

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Dam builders to be given free rein in major erosion of environmental protection laws

Tasmania's peak, representative conservation group has today attacked proposed amendments to a range of legislation that will basically give the Assessment Committee for Dam Construction total authority over dam permits. Under the proposed changes experts from other government agencies not be required to be consulted, and neither will additional permits be required. In particular, the Threatened Species Section and the Forest Practices Authority will be totally removed from the dam assessment and approval process. Appeal rights will also be gutted, removing the capacity of third parties to contest decisions made on dam applications

TCT Director Craig Woodfield describes these changes as the biggest erosion of environmental protection laws since the signing of the Regional Forest Agreement in 1997.

"These proposed changes are an absolute disgrace, and will result in major environmental impacts. Dam builders will be given free rein, with none of the checks and balances that are necessary to ensure sustainable development.

Mr. Woodfield pointed out that the statutory authority that will have these extraordinary powers, the Assessment Committee for Dam Construction (ACDC), is the most compromised and least accountable non-elected government committee in the State.

"Two of the six members of the ACDC are senior government bureaucrats. Two are current or past members of the TFGA. One is an ex-Hydro Tasmania senior manager. There is not one person on this committee with expertise in freshwater ecology, threatened species or native vegetation."

Mr. Woodfield said that the dam permitting process had improved substantially since the TCT successfully appealed a range of dam proposals in the early days of the Water Management Act, but this was a massive step backwards.

"If these changes go ahead, it will signal the start of a new era of conflict over dams. The TCT will not hesitate to use whatever means at our disposal to fight these changes, and any dams that gain approval through this highly compromised process."

Call Craig Woodfield on 6234 3552 or 0417 160 751 for additional comment