

Caring for Tasmania since 1968

THE TASMANIAN
CONSERVATIONIST

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It's time to stop starving the Parks and Wildlife Service



Bay of Fires

The Tasmanian Conservationist is the regular newsletter of the
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North-West Branch

Tasmanian Conservation Trust

Meetings of the North-West Branch of the TCT are held on the first Wednesday of each month.

The venue for the meeting is the
Penguin Railway Station at 5pm

All members of the North-West Branch are invited to attend to discuss conservation issues in the area.

Editing

Proofreading

Specialising in conservation issues.
 Reports, management plans,
 newsletters and books.

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CEO's Report

In 2008 the TCT increased its profile and impact on a range of issues. Meetings were held with most of the Tasmanian Cabinet, Labor backbenchers, the Tasmanian Greens and the Liberal Opposition, and we achieved a considerable boost to our media profile on marine protected areas, water, mining, reserve system management, planning, wildlife and threatened species issues.

However, in terms of our ambitious strategic plan, there are still issues that we clearly lack the resources to make a dent in, such as native vegetation management. The TCT needs to secure additional funding to make progress on these issues.

In the last few months we have corresponded with Premier David Bartlett, Kim Booth MHA, Tim Morris MHA, Rene Hidding MHA and Senator Penny Wong (on the *Drought-proofing Tasmania* program). The TCT also met with ministers David Llewellyn and Michelle O'Byrne regarding the State Budget, and Crown Land Assessment and Classification. We wrote to Alison Ritchie and David Llewellyn regarding the planning system review, to Premier David Bartlett about southwest mining, and to departments and agencies such as DPIW (cat management) and the Forest Practices Authority (about swift parrots). The employment of Peter McGlone as our Biodiversity Campaigner has been an extremely useful investment and has allowed us to make a real impact on many issues.

Peter and I attended the cabinet community consultative committee hearings on the Budget in Hobart. On the panel were ministers Michael Aird, Graham Sturges, Lisa Singh and Jim Cox. Peter gave a presentation on our submission which focused on improved funding for the Parks and Wildlife Service (see 'It's Time to Stop Starving the Parks and Wildlife Service' in this newsletter).

In December the TCT was successful in obtaining three Community Coastcare grants in conjunction with our partner organisations. Read about the projects in our article 'Coastwise Investment for Tasmania' (this newsletter). We are extremely grateful for this funding support from the Australian Government.

Unfortunately we have a new Planning Minister, the sixth since the last election. The last incumbent (Alison Ritchie) had been making positive statements defending the Tasmanian planning system against criticisms from developers. However, we are unsure of the attitude the new minister (David Llewellyn) has to this issue and we are seeking a meeting with him.

The TCT has been participating in meetings and workshops on the Alternatives to 1080 Program. The evidence firmly indicates that there are alternatives to the use of this poison in plantation forestry. We need to ratchet up the pressure on the private plantation industry to cease using it in 2009. We note that Forestry Tasmania has

discontinued its use on public land and we see no reason why private landholders should be exempted.

TCT Vice President Geoff King is now representing the TCT on the newly formed PWS Recreational Vehicle Advisory Group, which had its first meeting in December.

Throughout the year the TCT has actively contributed to working groups of the Derwent Estuary Program (DEP) and in December I participated in a workshop on introduced marine pests organised by the DEP. We have two active Envirofund projects: one on rehabilitation of wetlands on the Derwent and one on little penguin management (project officer: Helen Pryor). Both should be completed by April 2009. We will need to develop new projects with the DEP to submit as funding proposals this year.

In some really good news the Tasmanian Government announced that no mineral exploration licence would be issued at Coxes Bight; the TCT took the lead in opposing the granting of a licence. It is now likely that this component of the Southwest Conservation Area will be incorporated into the Southwest National Park and the World Heritage Area.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for their continuing support during 2008 and to wish you well for the coming year. Thank you to all who have donated your dollars and volunteered your time throughout the year; it is truly appreciated.

I wish you all peace and goodwill during this festive season.

Christian Bell

The Tasmanian Conservationist **via email**

The newsletter is now available in PDF format for members who would prefer an electronic version.

Please send us an email at tct.administration@gmail.com including your name and home address and the email address you would like to use, and we will send your newsletter via email.

It's time to stop starving the Parks and Wildlife Service

Presentation to the State Cabinet Sub-committee Regarding the Parks and Wildlife Service

Introduction

In the TCT's written budget submission we made recommendations in regard to the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), a division of the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, and the Department of Primary Industries and Water, but today we wish to focus on our presentation on the PWS to emphasise the dire state of its budget and resourcing levels.

The PWS is the TCT's number one budget priority for the 2009–2010 Budget and beyond.

In summary our recommendation regarding the 2009–10 Budget is to establish the PWS as an independent statutory authority with a mandate to maintain the Parks and Reserves System in Tasmania as a world-class natural, recreational and economic asset. This will require providing the PWS with an increased budget (from appropriation) of \$25.5 million in 2009–10 and \$21.5 million each year thereafter to meet reserve management, staff training and recruitment needs (as well as the provision of visitor services) and thus enable it to finally achieve its Tasmania Together targets.

The level of resources and administrative structures that currently exist within the Parks and Wildlife Service are insufficient to deliver on policy commitments, reserve management plans, Tasmania Together benchmarks, Regional Forest Agreement milestones (for a world-class Parks and Reserves System) and community and visitor expectations.

For many years the PWS has failed to meet any of its key Tasmania Together (TT) targets for protection of natural heritage:

- TT target 3.2: PWS, as with most other land management agencies, has failed to prevent establishment and spread of new pests species.
- TT target 4.1: The area of Tasmania in reserves has been increasing but far below the TT targets, and resources for management of reserves have not kept pace with this increase (note: no target for delivery of plans).

For some years now the Tasmanian Government has sought a range of views from individuals and organisations to assist with the preparation of the State Budget. Treasurer Michael Aird wrote to the Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT) on 22 September 2008 inviting us to make a written submission detailing our ideas and priorities for the 2009–2010 State Budget (and projections for three years beyond that) and offering us an opportunity to make a presentation in person to the Budget Sub-committee of the State Cabinet that includes the Treasurer. This article is an edited version of the presentation given to the Budget Sub-committee by Peter McGlone on behalf of the TCT.

In our written submission we also made recommendations regarding certain elements of the Department of Primary Industries and Water budget; a summary of that component of the submission is included in a separate box (p.7).

- TT target 4.2: PWS has been a long way off its target for the percentage of protected land covered by approved management plans.
- Note: A target is yet to be set for TT standard 2.3, 'The proportion of area of reserves subject to a system of reserve management audit'.

While the Tasmanian Government has in recent years invested in additional PWS resources for visitor infrastructure, as a part of the government's investment in increased tourism infrastructure (particularly large information centres, road upgrades, sewage systems etc in national parks), many of the core areas of PWS responsibility – land management and enforcement – remain greatly under-resourced. Over the last 10–15 years State Governments have continued to add to the reserve estate and repeatedly failed to provide additional resources.

The longer some of these issues go unaddressed or under-resourced the greater the eventual costs will be. Conversely, quick and decisive action by the State Government will likely prevent more serious problems developing and save the state money.

The TCT does not yet have the resources to be able to document with precision the level of resources that are required for managing the Tasmanian reserve system. During the next 12 months we hope to obtain the funding to allow us to do this and therefore to justify our budget requests. Given more time for this presentation we would have no problem in identifying a litany of problems on the ground and gaps in plan delivery that require additional resources. With the limited time available we will focus on the big picture – the PWS budget, staff numbers and area of reserved land. Looking at this we believe it is impossible to conclude that the PWS is adequately resourced and performing well.

Before getting into the detail of how much extra funding is needed and for what, we want to emphasise that the PWS is responsible for a huge reserve estate, that this estate is likely to continue to grow, its current level of resourcing is insufficient to maintain a basic level of planning,

management and protection of the reserve system and a comparison with Parks Victoria may be prove embarrassing for the Tasmanian Government.

What the Parks and Wildlife Service Manages

The total area of Tasmania (land mass) is 6.8 million hectares (6,810,220). For this exercise we will exclude marine waters and marine reserves. The area of land reserved under the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) and managed by the PWS as at 2 May 2007 is 2.5 million hectares. The area of land reserved as Public Reserves under the Crown Lands Act and managed by the PWS as at 2 May 2007 is estimated at 200,000 hectares. The proportion of Tasmania that the PWS is responsible for is 39.83% – being 36.93% NCA or formal reserves and 2.9% Public Reserves or informal reserves. Close enough to 40% of the state of Tasmania is currently the management responsibility of the PWS.

Through the Crown Land Assessment and Classification process, the State Government has committed to reserve another 78,000 hectares under the NCA totalling 1.15% of the state. The unallocated Crown land component of these proposed new reserves will push us close to 41% in reserves some time in 2009.

The Tasmania Together process has set a target (Goal 11, Standard 4.1) of 46% reserved by 2010, 48% by 2015 and 50% by 2020 and some of this increase will result in formal reserves under the NCA, managed by the PWS, and some will be private reserves which will be co-managed with the PWS.

One key driver of this push for more reserves is the requirement under the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement to increase reservation of threatened forest communities and there have been and continue to be Australian Government-funded programs aimed at purchasing land or providing incentives for creating private reserves.

In the near future close to half of Tasmania will be reserved for conservation and managed by the PWS: half of the state of Tasmania, with a budget and the staff numbers of a medium-sized local council. The PWS is not even a department within the State Government but a mere division within the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts.

Approved Statutory Management Plans for Formal Reserves

As the area of reservation increases, the PWS struggles to get even a small proportion of reserves covered by adopted management plans, which can only make it more difficult to prioritise and budget for key management tasks.

Of the 423 NCA reserves managed by the PWS, 370 reserves comprising 850,000 hectares of land do not have management plans. And these are generally the smaller, recently proclaimed reserves that are vital for protecting our wildlife and threatened species.

To our knowledge there are no plans covering any public reserves.

Only 29 approved statutory reserve management plans exist for NCA reserves and these cover only 24 NCA

reserves. The percentage of reserved land covered by approved management plans is 66% but this is skewed greatly by there being plans for the large national parks that form the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Budget for the Parks and Wildlife Service

The total budget for the PWS in 2007–08 was \$37.8 million (\$37,869,000), with \$24.6 million sourced through appropriation (\$24,632,000). The 2008–09 State Budget Papers project an increase to \$46 million (\$46,084,000) but the amount sourced through appropriation remains similar at \$26.1 million. The budget papers state that the increase in 2008–09 reflects a carrying forward of funding as well as the result of the transfer of Tourism Output to the Department of Economic Development and therefore there is no significant increase of resources.

The PWS Annual Report for 2007–2008 states that Tasmania's national parks alone receive 1.2 million person-visits each year and the budget papers project an increase in visits to national parks of around 5% during 2008–09. While the increasing number of visitors has implications for management of reserve values as well as visitor facilities, this part of the budget does not grow.

Parks and Wildlife Service Staff

Based on our most recent records, the PWS employs a total of 325 people (this is a headcount, not numbers of positions, and includes full-time and part-time employees). But this only includes 45 rangers, 28 field officers and 9 parks and reserve managers with responsibility and skills for actual land management. Eighty-two people are responsible for managing the entire reserve system.

This means that on average each PWS ranger is responsible for more than 60,000 hectares (60,339) or 150,000 acres of land, which is 1% of the State of Tasmania for each ranger. Of course the PWS staff obtain assistance from community volunteers and contractors through grants but this is an impossibly large area for each field-staff member to be responsible for.

Comparison with Parks Victoria

The Parks Victoria total budgeted income for 2007–08 was \$166 million and this was an increase from \$158 million from the previous year. Its budget has been increasing consistently at between 5% and 10% per annum over the last five years. Parks Victoria manages 3.95 million hectares of reserved land; this is 17% of Victoria.

Therefore, Parks Victoria has a just under 1.5 times the area of land to manage compared to the Tasmanian PWS but has 4.5 times the budget (for the same year).

Parks Victoria's total staff in 2007–08 was 997 (head count including full-time equivalent and others) and the number of rangers in 2004 (most recent year for which we have information) was 415. This means that Parks Victoria has over three times the number of staff and an incredible 9.2 times the number of rangers than the Tasmanian PWS. Importantly, Parks Victoria has a much higher ratio of rangers to total staff – 40%, which is three times that of the Tasmanian PWS.

Specific Recommendations Regarding the PWS Budget for 2009–10 and Three Years Beyond

1. **Additional resources for land management** are needed in all parks and reserves, especially to deal with a serious backlog of work with regard to management of tracks, weeds, feral animals (especially on islands), fire management and visitor services, especially outside major national parks. (An additional \$12 million per year is required).
2. **An independent Parks and Reserves Authority** needs to be established, with a legislated long-term mandate to protect and promote conservation of natural values for which areas of public land were reserved and should not be subject to the vagaries of policy priorities of passing governments and vested interests. (\$2.5 million is need for establishment of the authority in year one and an additional \$0.5 million per year for three years).
3. **A major program of professional development and recruitment** needs to be put in place for the ranger service to:
 - massively expand on the existing number of rangers (with a heavy emphasis on increasing the total number of qualified rangers who are working in the field and who have the full range of requisite skills i.e. hands-on land management capabilities, technical knowledge and administrative and legal skills);
 - provide expanded training opportunities to improve the skills of all staff;
 - establish a graduate program to attract recently qualified people into the PWS to assist with the recruitment program and to help address the significant age and gender imbalance and low level of qualified rangers in the PWS; and
- provide competitive career opportunities befitting such an institution.
(An additional \$3 million per year is required for professional development and recruitment).
4. **Additional resources are required to allow the PWS to achieve the following:**
 - **develop the requisite internal scientific and planning expertise** to facilitate development and implementation of management plans in relation to existing reserves. The Tasmanian PWS is the only parks service in the country without its own scientific staff (\$1.5 million per year: an additional \$0.5 million plus \$1 million transferred from DPIW budget).
 - **manage new areas added to the reserve system** to meet TT targets (not including the proposed Crown Land Assessment and Classification [CLAC] reserves) (an additional \$0.5 million per year).
5. **Additional resources for management of new reserves proposed under the CLAC process** approved by State Cabinet in 2006, including for critical safety measures (an additional \$1.5 million per year).
6. **Expanded capacity to manage Tasmania's 14 new, two expanded and five existing marine reserves**, including specialist equipment and training relevant to marine reserve management (an additional \$2 million in year one, plus an additional \$1 million per year for three years).
7. **Additional resources to ensure PWS can contribute to the implementation of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy**, which requires a whole-of-government approach. Key actions in the initial years will be policy development, reserve biosecurity planning, establishing

Bartlett Government Stymies Marine Reserves

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT) was appalled at the outcome that was announced by David Llewellyn on 24 September 2008 in the Parliament in Burnie regarding the Resource Planning & Development Commission (RPDC) Bruny Marine Bioregion Inquiry.

The creation of the 14 new 'paper parks' where fish are not protected is a complete joke. No other government in Australia would have created such laughable reserves and presented them as a conservation initiative to the public.

The thoroughly well-researched, well-presented and well-conceived recommendations of the RPDC were torn up and replaced with a position completely conceived by the Fisheries Minister. The TCT notes that the Premier did not at any stage meet with conservation organisations to discuss the proposed reserves, despite repeated requests for him to do so. The TCT wrote to the Premier calling

upon him to defer any decision by Cabinet until we had the opportunity to meet and discuss the proposed reserves with him (something that could have easily been done).

Since David Bartlett became Premier, he has held no direct discussions with conservation organisations over any significant environmental issue that concerns the state. The so-called open and consultative Premier deals with us in pretty much the same way as his famously non-consultative predecessor.

The TCT understands that the vast number of representations that have gone to the Premier over this issue (since he was appointed) have supported the creation of 'no take' marine reserves within the Bruny marine bioregion. Not to have this position reflected in the outcome was an assault on democratic input.

Christian Bell

threat surveillance and monitoring programs and resourcing for quick response actions (an additional \$1 million in year one, plus an additional \$0.5 million per year for three years).

8. **Establish a new 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People' program in PWS, modelled on the Parks Victoria program** of the same name, to broaden the use and appreciation of parks and reserves to bring about social benefits in terms of the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals and the community (locals and visitors). Parks also bring measurable direct and flow-on economic benefits to local, regional, state and national economies. These economic benefits are a key enabler for communities to function and prosper, allowing them to build social cohesion, social capital and healthy communities (an additional \$1 million in year one, plus an additional \$0.5 million per year for three years).
9. **Expand the successful community partnerships program** to provide greater opportunities and support for community volunteer involvement in reserve management and an increased PWS capacity to lever corporate resources and financial input (an additional \$0.5 million per year for four years). ■

Summary of the TCT's Recommendations Regarding the 2009–10 Budget for Department of Primary Industries and Water

- *Implementation of Proposed Cat Management Strategy and Legislation*

In anticipation of the completion of the State Government's Cat Management in Tasmania Strategy and the passage of recommended cat control legislation by the middle of 2009, significant additional resources are required by both the DPIW and RSPCA to implement the groundbreaking and popular measures for control of cats (an additional \$2.3 million in year one, plus an additional \$1.1 million per year for three years).

- *Expansion of Biosecurity Programs*

Improve the Department of Primary Industries and Water's (DPIW) capacity to implement the existing weed, pest and disease plans and bolster the border security programs to prevent further introduction or establishment of damaging organisms into Tasmania (an additional \$2.5 million per year for four years).

- *Improve the state's capacity for preventative action in relation to weeds*

Improve the DPIW's capacity to support landowners, community groups and councils to manage weeds by expanding the Weed Management Branch's capacity to facilitate collaborative programs to prevent weed establishment and spread (an additional \$1.0 million in year one, plus an additional \$0.5 million per year for three years).

- *Threatened Species on Private Land*

Expand DPIW's capacity to support landowners and community groups to protect and manage threatened species on their land (an additional \$0.2 million per year for four years).

Derwent Estuary Little Penguin Project

Update

The 2007–08 survey of little penguin colonies in the Derwent Estuary has identified 12 sites and 192 breeding pairs, a 37% increase on the 2005–06 survey results.

This increase in both numbers of breeding pairs and numbers of sites can be attributed to the strategic active management being undertaken as part of this project, in collaboration with the Understorey Network, the Kingborough Council and Hobart City Council. This has resulted in the placement of 17 artificial nest boxes and revegetation works being undertaken in key sites. Most of the nests are already being used. The increased awareness of council staff and landholders of how to manage human interactions with little penguin colonies is also a factor contributing to the increase in the species' Derwent Estuary populations. A management guide is currently being prepared to provide council planners and natural resource

managers with more detailed information on the best ways to manage sites that are, or have once been, little penguin colonies.

A forum to disseminate this information to key stakeholders is being organised for March or April next year.

Helen Pryor
Project Officer
Derwent Estuary Little Penguin Project



Drought-proofing Tasmania

It is a critical time for water management in Tasmania with numerous important developments taking place concurrently. The State Government has been pressuring (unsuccessfully to date) the Australian Government to release more water from Lake Crescent, it is investigating removing uncapped irrigation water licences and has extended existing irrigation water licences from 10 to 40 years. The Australian Government is reviewing its approach to drought assistance, which will have significant implications, possibly good, for irrigation and water demand.

While we will keep a watching brief on all of these and other water issues as they arise, we have been largely focused on responding to the *Drought-proofing Tasmania* program and providing input to draft water management plans as they are released. The South Esk Water Management Plan is currently out for public comment and we will be preparing a submission on it and will report on this in a future newsletter.

The *Drought-proofing Tasmania* program is an initiative of the Tasmanian Government that proposes to develop 11 major irrigation projects, dams and water pipelines, in the north-east and Midlands over the next four to five years. The State Government has committed \$80 million and the Rudd Labour Government committed \$140 million at the 2007 federal election (although they did not commit to funding particular irrigation projects).

In September this year Premier David Bartlett launched the preliminary consultation process for the first of these projects, the Midlands Water Scheme, which involves construction of three very large water pipelines. The TCT has made a submission on this project.

The TCT has some serious concerns regarding the *Drought-proofing Tasmania* projects, particularly the Meadstone Dam on the St Paul's River and seven dams on rivers in the north-east that are treated as one project. The more obvious direct environmental impacts are the destruction of native vegetation and alteration of river flows resulting from dam and pipeline construction and inundation. Less obvious, but potentially just as serious, are the indirect impacts on native vegetation when an increase in water supply leads to a change in land use.

In the TCT's submissions on these proposals we will make some positive suggestions about how irrigation may be advanced while limiting environmental harm and perhaps achieving environmental gains. We will be recommending that water should be allocated not just on the basis of who can pay but on the basis of a farm's sustainability. The \$220 million being used to develop these projects is taxpayers' money and the general public has a right to see its money used to encourage sustainable practices as well as to assist farmers.

The TCT fears that the Tasmanian Government is currently intent on rushing the assessments of *Drought-*

proofing Tasmania projects so they can demonstrate action on this issue prior to the next state election, due in 2010. The government appears to be operating on a timeframe that may not allow it to take into account critical research being done by the CSIRO that is meant to guide the planning of irrigation projects. This could cause significant environmental harm, waste a large amount of funding (from both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments) and fail to deliver any significant benefit for the agricultural sector.

As the Australian Government has agreed to provide \$140 million for the *Drought-proofing Tasmania* program, we have raised our concerns with the Minister for Water and Climate Change, Penny Wong, and asked that she take action to ensure a better outcome for the environment, farmers and the Australian taxpayer. We understand that a funding agreement is yet to be finalised and that our best chance of influencing the *Drought-proofing Tasmania* program is to ensure strong conditions are included in this agreement.

Penny Wong's department has responded to our letter with a moderately positive response that states, in part, that:

- Funding for new irrigation developments will be subject to Tasmania agreeing to a range of conditions including accelerating implementation of the National Water Initiative commitments.
- The Tasmanian Government has committed to provide detailed project proposals including comprehensive business cases, costings and milestones and detailed technical, environmental and social assessments. This will allow the Australian Government to assess projects for potential funding in line with due diligence requirements.
- An important element of due diligence requirements will be the findings of the CSIRO Tasmanian Sustainable Water Yields Study, which is due for completion in December 2009.

We will reply to this letter seeking an assurance that the funding agreement with the Tasmanian Government will include a condition that no funds are allocated by the Australian Government until the Sustainable Water Yields Study is completed in December 2009 and that the findings will be factored into planning of irrigation proposals. We will also seek clarification regarding which elements of the National Water Initiative will be accelerated and whether due diligence requirements include sustainability criteria, and point out that the Tasmanian Government has largely removed the public's rights to appeal dam permits issued under the Water Management Act.

Peter McGlone
Biodiversity Campaigner
Tasmanian Conservation Trust

Tasmania's Roadkill Black Spots Claim 200,000 Lives

New research shows that wildlife deaths on Tasmania's roads occur mainly in 'roadkill black spots'. The research by CSIRO scientist Dr Alistair Hobday is featured in a film that premiered in Hobart at the State Theatre in November.

'Pretty much everything that lives in Tasmania, we've seen dead on the road,' stated Dr Hobday. 'We've estimated that around 294,000 animals are killed on Tasmania's roads every year. Of that number, 70% are hit in roadkill black spots, which only exist on small sections of the road.'

The endangered Tasmanian devil is one of the top 10 animals most commonly killed on the road.

According to Dr Hobday, '3,392 Tasmanian devils are killed on the road each year based on our research. That's around 5% of the whole population, which is likely to be a significant impact given the pressure of the Devil Facial Tumour Disease'.

Roadkill black spots exist on only 20-30% of Tasmania's major roads. Focusing roadkill management on these areas could halve the number of wildlife deaths. 'Our results show that dropping your speed to 80 km/h on 10% of the road could reduce the amount of roadkill by up to 50%, and it would only increase your travel time between, say, Hobart and Launceston, by three minutes,' Dr Hobday said.

Locally made documentary *Tasmania: Your Roadkill State* looks at how our journeys can fatally interrupt the

nocturnal journeys of Tasmania's wildlife and features TCT Vice President Geoff King, who has been monitoring roadkill in the north-west of the state for 10 years. In it he

states, 'Devils are attracted to roads on their nightly journey through their home range. Roads are a sort of sink with a lot of feeding opportunities on them. I find roadkill on my local roads every morning. Slowing down at night could save the lives of a lot of Tasmanian devils and other wildlife'.

Dr Hobday's paper, 'Distribution and abundance of roadkill on Tasmanian highways: human management options', was recently published in the journal *Wildlife Research*.

The TCT received the proceeds from the film launch thanks to a generous donation by the film's producers, Chloe Lucas and Tim Prior. We will be using the funds for further projects that address the issue of roadkill in Tasmania. The film night was sold out and the issue made the front page of the *Mercury* on the

day of the launch. This reflects strong community interest in finding solutions that will cut this terrible toll on Tasmania's wildlife.

For further information email Christian Bell at tct6@bigpond.com



Film producer Chloe Lucas on location at one of the roadkill black spots



Caring for Tasmania
since 1968

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Tasmania's Planning System Review

This is an edited version of a letter sent to the new Minister for Planning David Llewellyn. We are yet to receive a reply or be granted a meeting.

The Honourable David Llewellyn MP
Minister for Planning
3 December 2008
Dear David,

The TCT has some serious concerns related to the review of Tasmania's planning system and seeks clarification of the review process – in particular, the timeframes. We hope to meet with you soon to discuss these issues.

In a media release dated 3 May 2008, the then Minister for Planning and Workplace Relations, the Premier David Bartlett, called for public submissions to the review of Tasmania's planning system after having announced the review on 3 March 2008. Submissions were due by 16 June 2008 and the TCT, along with some 60 other groups and individuals, lodged its submission by that due date.

We have read the review terms of reference, the review background paper and Mr Bartlett's media release of 3 May and there are no other timeframes mentioned. The TCT made its submission on the planning review by the 16 June deadline believing it was the only opportunity we, or any other member of the public, had to provide input. It now seems that a particular organisation has been given an additional opportunity for input that the TCT, and presumably other members of the public, have not been given.

We were concerned to read a media release on 10 September 2008 from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry titled 'Planning reform a chance to cut cost of living'. In this release, the TCCI says it has 'commissioned a major review into the State planning system to identify reform measures...' and that it will 'feed directly into the Government's current planning review'. Our concern was heightened when a TCCI representative informed us that the Tasmanian Government had indicated that it would welcome the findings of the TCCI research as a contribution to the planning system review. This was confirmed again recently by a TCCI representative at the Budget Community Consultative Roundtable held on 25 November.

We believe it is vital that the government clarify to the Tasmanian public what the planning review process is, and in particular what the timeframes are, and confirm that all individuals and groups have the same opportunities to participate in the review.

It seems particularly ironic and disturbing that we are raising concerns about the fairness and transparency of the review process when so many people are questioning the planning processes themselves. If we are to review and possibly change the processes and structures of our planning system then it must be done in a way that is beyond question so that we can all proceed with a planning system that is respected and trusted.

Can you please inform the TCT whether you have established a firm timeframe for the review of Tasmania's planning system and in particular whether it has an end

point? Also, will you welcome further input from the TCT and other community groups and, if so, can you outline how you or your department would prefer this input?

The recent heated media debate about the planning system adds to our concern about apparent lack of formality and transparency in this review process.

Several developers have been expressing views in the media about Tasmania's planning system that we believe are quite extreme and erroneous, but these comments are receiving credence with the government responding sympathetically to them and suggesting their concerns will be dealt with in the review process. We are particularly concerned about Premier Bartlett's reported responses to Dick Smith's statements about the Tasmanian planning system.

In the *Mercury* newspaper on 7 September Mr Bartlett (then the Minister for Planning) is reported as saying he was 'sympathetic to Mr Smith's situation' and that 'What I want to see is a planning system that is an enabler of good and appropriate development – not one that throws up unnecessary roadblocks to developers'. The ABC News website on 8 September attributed to Mr Bartlett the comment that 'a review of the state's planning laws should alleviate many of Mr Smith's concerns'.

The TCT believes that the appropriate way for Mr Smith to raise these concerns would have been through a written submission to the Department of Justice during the public comment period and that the appropriate response from the Premier would have been to inform Mr Smith that he had the opportunity to make a submission to that process. Mr Bartlett's comments may be seen by the general public to suggest that, nearly three months after the closure of the public comment period, Mr Smith was being given special treatment by having his views incorporated into those being assessed as part of the review of Tasmania's planning system. Given that we now know that the TCCI is providing alternative input to the review, it is not hard to imagine people reading the reports of Mr Bartlett's comments and coming to this conclusion. Furthermore, until the Department of Justice had assessed the public submissions and reported its findings to the Premier, it was perhaps inappropriate for the then responsible minister and premier to speculate on the likely outcome of the review.

We hope that you can avoid any potential confusion or misunderstanding of the government's handling of the review process by clarifying the process and timeframes.

We believe it would be more appropriate to meet with you to discuss our concerns regarding the planning review. A meeting would also provide an opportunity to outline the TCT's broader interests in the planning area.

Yours sincerely,
Christian Bell

Tasmanian Conservation Trust

Weeds and Climate Change

Environmental consultant Tim Low gave the keynote presentation to the Second Tasmanian Weeds Conference held in Launceston on 15 October 2008. The following is an abstract for a similar keynote address to the New South Wales Weed Society, 2007.

A much weedier world can be anticipated under climate change. Environmental weeds should benefit from the following aspects of climate change.

1. More Extreme Events

Under a changing climate we can expect more floods, cyclones, fires and droughts (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007). Extreme events benefit weeds by stressing or destroying competing native vegetation, and often by providing a pulse of nutrients. Flammable pasture grasses will benefit especially from more fire, and weedy vines from more violent storms.

2. Changing Temperatures and Rainfall

Climate change will leave many plants unsuited to new climates. The hope is that native plants will track climate change by dispersing across, southwards or upslope. But weeds are often more effective than native plants at dispersal, in part because they are often transported unintentionally by people (Sutherst et al. 2007). Many of the woody weeds invading eucalypt forests have seeds dispersed by birds, and these species can disperse more rapidly than the eucalypts, sheoaks, pea bushes and most other native species occurring in eucalypt forests.

3. Nursery Trends

As the climate changes, nurseries will introduce new stock better adapted to the new conditions (CRC for Weed Management 2007), thereby enlarging the pool of potential weeds, and ensuring that garden plants are well matched to the prevailing climate.

4. Carbon Dioxide Fertilisation

Fast-growing plants tend to benefit more from carbon dioxide fertilisation than slow-growing plants (Poorter and Navas 2003). Weeds often grow faster than the native plants they replace.

5. Reduced Effectiveness of Biocontrol Agents

Plants fertilised by carbon dioxide usually produce tougher leaves, with more toxins and lignin and a lower nitrogen content, rendering them less palatable to herbivores (Bezemer and Jones 1998; Coviella & Trumble 1999; Johns et al. 2003). Some, but not all, biocontrol agents will become less effective.

6. Reduced Glyphosate Effectiveness

Glyphosate, the main chemical used to control weeds in Australia, will lose some effectiveness, judging by recent experiments (Ziska et al. 2004; Ziska & Goins 2006)

7. Experimentation with Biofuel Crops

Many of the plants attracting interest as biofuel crops are serious weeds, for example giant reed (*Arundo donax*), jatropha (*Jatropha curcas*), Chinese tallow tree (*Triadica sebifera*), castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Chinese apple (*Zizyphus mauritianus*). Trials on giant reed have recently been undertaken in South Australia.

When Australians ask, 'What can I do about climate change?' part of the answer should be: 'Remove weedy plants from your garden and local bushland'.

These conclusions are adapted from a report I wrote for the Australian Department of Environment and Water Resources, after running a workshop in November 2006 about climate change and invasive species, as a member of the Biological Diversity Advisory Committee (which advises the Minister for the Environment and Water about conservation policy).

Tim.Low@uq.net.au

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Feral Animals of Tasmania

Since the introduction of foxes and gambusia into Tasmania over the last 10 years, there has been growing concern about the impacts of feral animals and increased community interest and efforts to help control them. While there has been a plethora of books, brochures, posters and websites available to assist community members and professional land managers in controlling weeds, there was very limited information available on feral animals within Tasmania. Now that has changed.

Feral Animals of Tasmania is an innovative new publication designed to improve public knowledge and understanding of feral animals, and to encourage the community to become involved in reporting and managing them.

It is the first publication of its kind in Australia, designed to help people identify, report and take direct action in monitoring and managing feral animals. It is relevant to a broad range of community groups and individuals – from Landcare volunteers, farmers and landowners to recreational fishers and shooters, professional pest controllers, field naturalists, bird watchers and bushwalkers, through to environmental consultants, botanists, forestry workers guides and park rangers.

Greater community awareness and reporting will ultimately result in improved management decisions and better outcomes for Tasmania's native fauna and flora, as well as for agriculture and other industries.

Feral Animals of Tasmania is modelled on the popular *Weedeck* and comprises a pack of cards bound loosely with a metal karabiner. It is pocket-sized and water resistant, making it easy to carry and use in the field. The karabiner binding allows pages to be added or removed as information changes or new species profiles are produced.

The front of each card or species profile includes full-colour pictures and a description to help identify the species. The back of the card provides more detailed information covering the history and current distribution of the species, its known impacts, current management and sources of further information. A grey coloured section advises what action you can take, including phone numbers for reporting sightings, as well as relevant legal information.

Through consultation with many of Tasmania's experts in feral animal management the authors have created a priority list of 27 terrestrial and freshwater feral animal species, which have all been included in *Feral Animals of Tasmania*.

A critical element of this publication is that the species included in it have been assigned to one of three priority

categories, with each category having a very different management response. The three categories are colour-coded in order of priority.

- Highest priority (red): unwanted in the wild and to be eradicated from Tasmania, e.g. fox, gambusia, Indian myna.
- Second priority (orange): unwanted in the wild but can only be feasibly/efficiently eradicated or controlled from specific areas around special values, e.g. cat, rabbit.
- Third priority (yellow): wanted in the wild but within defined managed areas, e.g. deer, trout.

Animals that are currently not found in Tasmania, but which have the potential to cause significant ecological damage if they become established, have been included in *Feral Animals of Tasmania*. One such example is the Indian myna (populations introduced in the past have successfully been eradicated), oriental weatherloach and redclaw crayfish. Because eradication is achievable while populations are small and when they are discovered early, the help of a vigilant community in early detection is invaluable.

With regard to game species – deer and trout – the guide conforms with current State Government guidelines and legislation.

As the most cost-effective method of feral animal management is prevention and early intervention, the network of spotters created through use of the guide will be an important front line in keeping unwanted animals out of Tasmania.

The new publication has been produced by the Fox Eradication Branch of the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW), World Wide Fund for Nature Australia and NRM South, with expert assistance from DPIW, Inland Fisheries Service and Parks and Wildlife Service, as well as independent scientists, photographers and community members.

This publication was initiated and overall production coordinated by Peter McGlone, formally of the Threatened Species Network, WWF-Australia. The lead author and editor was Stephanie Pfennigwerth, Melampus Media. The introduction was written by Peter McGlone. Design was by Kelly Eijdenberg, In *Graphic Detail*. A special thanks to Rudie Kuitert who supplied most of the images of freshwater species.

Paper and electronic copies of the publication are available from NRM South: phone 03 6221 6111 or email admin@nrmsouth.org.au



Cat control legislation

a step closer

In early December the State Cabinet endorsed Minister for Primary Industries and Water David Llewellyn's recommendation to commence drafting cat control legislation for Tasmania.

To our knowledge, no other Tasmanian Government has made a public commitment to introduce cat control legislation and Minister Llewellyn and the Bartlett Government must be congratulated for proposing an approach that has the potential to improve the welfare of our pet cats and help protect wildlife and agricultural producers.

In September this year the State Government released for public comment the *Cat Management In Tasmania Taking the Initiative* discussion paper. The TCT, along with approximately 150 other groups and individuals, made a submission. We have received feedback from the Department of Primary Industries and Water that 90 % of submissions were generally positive. Eighty percent of submissions supported the government's recommendation for compulsory de-sexing and micro-chipping phased in over four years after passage of the legislation. This is an excellent response to an issue that has the potential to be controversial and divisive.

We understand the government expects to take legislation to parliament in autumn or winter 2009 with the aim of having legislation in place ready for the new budget period in July.

In addition to supporting legislation, the TCT recommended in its submission that the government needs to fund an incentive program to provide cut priced de-sexing and micro-chipping during the four-year phase-in period. We have taken this issue up directly with Minister Llewellyn and will continue to pressure him on this until the completion of the budget process. Providing some financial assistance will be vital for people on low income and will help build public support for compulsory measures.

The TCT also recommended that it is important to have a strategy in place prior to the anticipated introduction of legislation to deal with the likely flood of surrendered or dumped cats.

Once the cat control legislation is introduced to parliament the TCT will be very active lobbying members of both houses to ensure its smooth passage as well as lobbying the government if we think there are details that need refining.

Peter McGlone

Swift Parrot DVD now available

In October this year the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, in collaboration with Birds Tasmania, the Department of Primary Industries and Water and the Threatened Species Network, released a magnificent DVD titled *Swift Parrots in Tasmania: Identification and Nesting Behaviour*.

The DVD provides all the necessary information for anyone who wants to identify swift parrots or their habitat. It is 16 minutes long and covers the swift parrot's basic biology, habitat, threats, visual identification, calls and, most importantly, the behaviour associated with nesting and how to identify nests. The DVD also comes with a colour brochure that includes this crucial information in a summarised written form plus a colour sticker with the slogan, 'Tree Hollows for Swift Parrots: protecting breeding habitat for this endangered species'.

Much of the nesting behaviour and some calls presented on the DVD have never previously been recorded. This comprehensive documentation will greatly assist amateurs and professionals alike in identifying and protecting swift parrot habitat.



We wish to take this opportunity to thank Janneke Webb in particular for her dedication, professionalism and enthusiasm and congratulate her on this magnificent DVD.

The DVD was produced by Shane Pinner; film footage and technical advice by Matt Webb, Janneke Webb and Shane Pinner; still photographs by Bill Brown, Aleks Terauds, Chris Tzaros, Matt Webb, Janneke Webb and Shane Pinner; narration by Rachael Alderman. Additional input: the National Swift Parrot Recovery Team, Phil Bell, Peter Brown, Mark Holdsworth and Akke Tillmann.

Overall coordination of the DVD, DVD cover and sticker was by Janneke Webb.

The DVD was funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature's Threatened Species Network Community Grants.

Copies of the DVD are available free of charge from the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, 191 Liverpool St, Hobart, phone 6234 3552 or email tct6@bigpond.com.

Coastwise Investment *for* Tasmania

The TCT has secured vital project support from the Caring for Our Country Community Coastcare (an initiative of the Australian Government). We were fortunate enough to obtain funding for three coastal and marine projects in December 2008. The TCT is actively working with partner organisations in all our funded Coastcare projects.

Project 1

African Boxthorn Control in the Furneaux Group

Our project *Furneaux Boxthorn Control & Maintenance on Twelve Islands* targets a remote set of islands in Bass Strait. The Furneaux Group was the earliest place that Europeans settled after the founding of Sydney. Modification of island landscapes has been significant over the last 200 years through land clearing for grazing; and the introduction of invasive species of plants and animals has had a major impact on island ecology. The islands are very significant sites for seabird breeding but the introduced boxthorn threatens breeding success. Native plants are also threatened and displaced by boxthorn. Control of boxthorn will allow reinvigoration of the native vegetation, which provides habitat for the large numbers of breeding seabirds.

The Natural Heritage Trust and Envirofund have previously funded African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) removal from Cat, Storehouse, Chalky, Little Chalky, Mile, South Pascoe, North Pascoe, Isabella, Sentinel, Rabbit, Wybalena and Goose Islands in the Furneaux group. Much good work in the Furneaux Group has been done by Friends of the Bass Strait Islands to control the spread of boxthorn and roll back the infestation on the treated islands. The last treatment of the boxthorn on these islands occurred in 2005 as part of previous Envirofund project. Friends of the Bass Strait Islands applied to continue this work but were unsuccessful in obtaining funding. These islands are very remote and expensive places to visit; it is impossible for community groups to undertake this work without financial assistance.

The TCT will revisit the islands listed above to undertake vital maintenance work and deal with regrowth. If the follow-up work was not undertaken then the very large investment in volunteer hours involved in the previous projects would be lost. In the previous project it was discovered that the infestation on Goose Island was much larger than anticipated and it will require a greater proportion of allocated hours in this project application to deal with the outliers and bring it under control. Encroachment by boxthorn is threatening the European cultural heritage remains of the old Goose Island Lightstation. The tower and a small adjacent area is on the Commonwealth Heritage List. The rest of the lightstation and its ruined buildings are on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

The methods being used are cut and paint (using Roundup®), secateurs and loppers (for smaller plants), and handsaws and chainsaws (for the larger trees). African

boxthorn has extremely long thorns so gloves and special eye protection has to be worn when dealing with it.

It is proposed that the field visits take place in April/May 2009 as at this time of the year fewest seabirds are present.

Many volunteers have been involved with previous projects on remote Tasmanian islands. Further volunteer support is needed to achieve control and eradication of boxthorn in the Furneaux Group, some of whom will need to come from the Tasmanian and Australian mainland to assist local volunteers.

Project 2

Ocean Planet Project in Conjunction with the TCT, Promoting Tasmania's Existing Marine Reserves

Ocean Planet and the TCT have joined together to coordinate a unique project to increase awareness of and active support for marine biodiversity protection in marine protected areas (marine national parks) in Tasmania.

Internationally and locally, marine national parks are accepted as a central tool in protecting marine and coastal biodiversity, increasing resilience of marine ecosystems to withstand pressures from climate change and introduced pests, and providing crucial scientific reference areas for fishing and other activities.

The project will build skills and knowledge in the community by providing information on the value of the marine environment, threats to marine health, the need for marine national parks, and government commitments to establishing marine protected areas. We will do this by developing a website dedicated to marine national parks in Tasmania and conducting a state-wide community engagement tour to promote the issue. The website will host a suite of interactive tools, images and news from the community engagement tour, from relevant community and coastcare group projects, scientific research studies, school projects etc. This will include elements such as personal stories on the need for marine protection, in written and video form, gathered during the tour and posted to the website.

The website and the unique educational resource it includes will be promoted to schools, community groups, scientists, students and governments as an ongoing source of the best information and opportunity for interaction on marine biodiversity protection in Tasmania.

Through the community engagement tour we will build knowledge by providing an introduction to the website and

access to resources. We will build skills through providing workshops on how people can better help protect their marine environment, giving them the skills to participate in government planning processes, to organise local events, highlight marine icons and actively participate in marine protected area management and enforcement. There will be an ongoing contact person available to deal with further enquiries about how people can stay engaged and continue to develop relevant knowledge and skills.

This project brings together a group of organisations including Ocean Planet, the TCT, Environment Tasmania, The Wilderness Society Tasmania and the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

Thanks to our partner organisations and the Tasman Peninsular Environment Group, Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania, North-East Biosphere Network, Marine Education Society of Australia, Australian Association for Environmental Education, and the Woodbridge Marine Discovery Centre for your support already. We look forward to working with you on this exciting project!

For more information, contact Becc Hubbard on ocean.planet.tas@gmail.com or on 6224 6319.

Project 3 Port Davey Community Coastcare Project

In conjunction with the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service, the project *Port Davey Marine Reserve-Prevention of Marine Pests/Preservation of Values* aims to protect the special values of the marine reserve, which are under threat from increasing visitation. The 17,000 hectare marine reserve lies in the remote southwest corner of Tasmania, within the Southwest National Park and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

The reserve is widely known as Australia's most pristine estuarine system, which contains a truly unique and fragile marine environment, including a marine invertebrate assemblage usually associated with deep ocean waters, and threatened species, including the EPBC listed Maugean skate. These discoveries have all been made within the last two decades. Media promotion is sparking an unexpected and rapid increase in visits from commercial tours and recreational divers and boaters.

Threats associated with increasing visitation include introduction of marine pests (arriving aboard boats), increasing nutrient levels (through discharge of sillage etc), disturbance of the uniquely stratified waters of Bathurst Harbour (from large vessels) and damage to the delicate marine invertebrates (from careless diving and boat propellers).

At present, there is very little information circulating in the wider community on the reserve's values and threats. This project will inform the variety of increasing visitors to Port Davey Marine Reserve of the area's special values and describe the range of threats posed to the reserve as a result of a variety of human impacts. It will inform visitors how to operate responsibly to reduce their impact.

It is anticipated that the key outcome of the project will be the production of a variety of materials to reach the

wide visitor audience to ensure the area's values are interpreted and its threats clearly described. It is anticipated that, as a result, visitors will be well informed and behave safely and responsibly with minimal impact on this fragile environment.

At present there is little information available to marine users of Port Davey as to the existence of the marine nature reserve there. Recreational and commercial boat users commit offences in the reserve largely through ignorance rather than deliberate intent. No interpretation or signage has been installed at Port Davey since 2004 when the marine reserve was created. Even those who have some knowledge of the reserve may be unclear about its zoning plan.

The level of interpretation is poor in relation to both the terrestrial and marine environment at Port Davey (even though it is part of a World Heritage Area). Critical biosecurity issues need to be addressed. The risk of spread of introduced marine pests into the most pristine estuary in southern Australia is high unless the main users of the area are educated about appropriate quarantine practices.

For further information contact Christian Bell at the TCT via email tct6@bigpond.com.

Help the TCT

Members of the TCT can help us in a variety of ways. Here are just a few:

- **Help us expand our membership**
Recommend the TCT to a friend, family member or colleague, give a gift subscription to somebody or distribute some membership forms for us.
- **Provide us with some recycled paper**
We are always looking for good-quality paper used on one side, to use in our printers. Help save us money and reduce our paper consumption.
- **Write a letter**
Contact us for suggestions or simply use any of the information in this newsletter as the basis of an inquiry to a politician, business or government agency. We'd love to see any replies that you receive.
- **Pass on a rumour**
We're always interested in hearing interesting rumours and stories about environmental issues, or just observations of what might be going on in your local area.

If you think you can help in any of these ways, please write to us (email is best) at tct6@bigpond.com or snail mail at 2nd Floor, 191-193 Liverpool Street, Hobart 7000, or phone 6234 3552.

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