

Over-loved and Underresourced: Protecting Parks and Reserves

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The Greens will protect the values of Tasmania's wild places, and defend them from commercial exploitation.

Tasmania has some of the most stunning, protected wild places on the planet. We've got it all - ancient forests and heritage, wild rivers, dramatic natural coastlines and rich species diversity. Our Parks are the gem in Tasmania's crown.

Tasmania's world class protected areas and natural environment are our shared heritage. They underpin our social and economic wellbeing, yet they are over-loved and chronically underfunded.

With Liberal funding cuts, private developers lining up to build inside protected areas along with sharply increasing visitation, Tasmania's protected areas are at risk.

The Liberals' policy of encouraging private developments in public Parks and reserves allows developers to capitalise on our wilderness to provide exclusive experiences – while simultaneously degrading it. Short-term economic thinking and profit is being prioritised over the protection of wilderness and sustainability.

The Greens recognise that Tasmania's protected areas urgently require attention and resourcing.

THE GREENS WILL

- ▲ Strengthen the protection of Tasmania's natural environment and Parks through a \$40 million funding boost to increase rangers, scientific staff and on ground maintenance
- ▲ Invest in Parks visitor infrastructure
- ▲ Streamline and strengthen the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment (DPIPWE) to create a new Department of Environment and Parks
- ▲ Restore the integrity of the TWWHA Management Plan undermined by the Liberals' private development in protected areas
- ▲ Put an immediate stop to the EOI process
- ▲ Prohibit private accommodation and infrastructure inside protected areas
- ▲ End the developer free-for-all through the introduction of strict laws controlling any development on public reserved land
- ▲ Ensure tracks closed to protect Aboriginal heritage and coastal landscapes in the takayna/Tarkine remain closed and review existing tracks
- ▲ Ban cruise ships in protected areas

BACKGROUND

Under the Liberals, Tasmania's protected areas have come under unprecedented assault.

On coming to government, the Hodgman Liberals joined the Abbott Government's push to revoke 74 000 hectares of high conservation value forest and wild lands added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area under the Labor Green government. They failed.

The August 2014 Budget slashed funding to the Parks and Wildlife Service. Rangers were made redundant along with unfunded management plans, and the Threatened Species Unit - so critical to ensure the protection of habitat - has been gutted.

The current Liberal EOI process allows projects to be approved behind closed doors, with no formal statutory assessment process and without proper scrutiny and debate. It's a secretive process that sells out our Parks and wholly lacks public accountability.

The Liberals also rewrote the TWWHA Management Plan and other National Park management plans to enable increased commercial development, shifting the focus sharply away from conservation to private profit.

The Liberals are allowing an increasing number of cruise ships to park in protected waters such as Port Davey and Wineglass Bay, degrading wilderness values and the visitor experience.

They also want to open up Conservation Areas and Regional Reserves to rainforest logging, further undermining natural values and the integrity of the State's reserve system.

THE GREENS' VISION

Tasmania's wild places - our State's greatest natural asset – are being used for quick private profits during a tourism boom, without any vision or plan for the long-term.

As many wild places around the world are developed and lost, Tasmania is standing out as a place to live - and the place to go.

Along with the increase in the number of visitors who come to experience our Parks and reserves, comes a corresponding need for a strategy that protects and manages these areas sustainably.

This strategy must provide a framework that principally protects what makes Tasmania unique, protects our comparative advantages, and ensures that wild places remain just that.

Our Wilderness World Heritage areas and our National Parks have given people the opportunity to experience these places, but we need to strengthen our protection for the environments within them.

DEVELOPMENT IN PARKS

Tasmania's wild places are the key reason why so many people visit Tasmania. They also make Tasmania such a special place to live. These public wild lands should not be exploited by developers for private profits and exclusive use.

We will seek to immediately end the EOI process currently being driven through the Office of the Coordinator General that encourages development in Parks and other protected areas.

We will introduce a statutory process and strict planning laws to control development on public reserved land, which will guarantee conservation is prioritised along with transparency and public accountability.

We need to provide structures, and significantly increase funding to ensure our Parks and public reserved lands are protected and enjoyed – long into the future.

FUNDING PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Under the Liberals, the PWS is chronically underfunded and being starved of resources while visitor numbers exponentially increase year on year.

This is impacting on natural and cultural values and threatened species protection. The Parks and Wildlife Service is struggling to cope.

We will provide a \$40M boost to PWS funding. This will include an increase in the number of Park Rangers, scientific and threatened species specialists, Field Officers engaged in asset maintenance duties, and a \$1M per year top up to the Parks Development and Maintenance Fund for visitor infrastructure to take pressure off natural and cultural values.

We will also properly resource and restore the Threatened Species Unit, which has seen staff levels decrease to untenable levels under the Liberals.

A DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

We will move to ensure the protection of Tasmania's natural environment and Parks is a priority of government through the establishment of a new Environment and Parks agency.

INITIATIVE COST

Initiative Investment (\$m)	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Park Rangers/Field Officers	2.96	3.02	3.07	3.13
Parks Development and Maintenance Fund	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Threatened Species Unit	1.05	1.08	1.10	1.12
DEP Restructure	0.24	0.15		
Recurrent Parks funding	5.00	5.10	5.20	5.31
Total	10.25	10.35	10.37	10.55



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