

**New landslide photos
highlight rabbit damage on
World Heritage Macquarie Island**

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 5 December 2006

New photographs show devastating damage from recent landslides on World Heritage listed Macquarie Island, a result of rabbit-induced erosion. The photographs, released by the Tasmanian National Parks Association, include landslides into a penguin colony and one which has caused closure of key visitor infrastructure.

This September an unknown number of penguins were killed by a landslide into Macquarie Island's largest King penguin colony at Lusitania Bay. Long-term Macquarie Island researcher Dr Jenny Scott of the University of Tasmania said 'There is little doubt that rabbit damage to the slopes is increasing landslide frequency. These images provide a glimpse of the state of things to come unless rabbits are removed from the island.'

Photographs of the staircase and boardwalk at Sandy Bay show progressive rabbit grazing of vegetation causing a recent landslide beside the staircase. Due to safety concerns, the staircase which leads to a boardwalk and viewing platform beside a breeding colony of endemic Royal penguins is currently closed. 'The wildlife is what most people want to see, especially penguins on eggs and chicks. It's an appalling situation and a real embarrassment,' Dr Scott said.

On 28 November 2006, the Australian Government blocked a motion in the Senate to fund the implementation of a plan to eradicate rabbits and rats from Macquarie Island.

The Macquarie Island Rabbit and Rodent Eradication Plan, which has been awaiting approval by the Tasmanian Government since 2005, is estimated to cost \$15 million over a number of years.

Tasmanian National Parks Association President Chris Bell said 'Politicians are dodging the issue while landslides bury penguins. This is an international disgrace. Urgent action is required by both the Federal and State Governments.'

World Heritage Macquarie Island is a breeding ground for nearly four million seabirds, including two threatened albatross species – the wandering and grey-headed albatross.

Images and more information:

- See “Rabbit-induced landslides: two of many, Macquarie Island, 2006”, December 2006, PDF sent with this media release; and
- Macquarie Island Picture Gallery www.tnpa.asn.au/macquarie/index.html

Higher resolution images available on request.

Further comment:

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