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Government Hypocrisy over Cynthia Bay Redevelopment

To the Editor,

On September 10 the Minister for Tourism, Parks and Heritage, Ken Bacon, released the first State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Report. The Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) agrees with the Minister that this report marks a significant step in making management of the WHA more open, informed and accountable, and for this achievement the TNPA congratulates both the Tasmanian Government and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

The TNPA notes with concern, however, the ongoing threats listed in the report to the TWWHA, though the opportunities identified in the report for enhancing management performance are welcomed. Indeed, the TNPA looks forward to appropriate actions and funding by both the Commonwealth and State governments in response to the report in order to meet their obligations under the World Heritage Convention.

Amongst the main threats to the TWWHA identified in the report is the “development of new facilities and other infrastructure, especially inappropriate sited facilities and infrastructure which can cause direct and/or indirect impacts.” Furthermore, the report states that “key stakeholders considered that political decisions were not always consistent with World Heritage Area management objectives and that this was a key factor limiting or threatening management performance for the TWWHA.”

Given these conclusions, the TNPA is alarmed and sees it as hypocritical that less than a week after embracing the above report the state government continues to ignore the management objectives of the TWWHA by giving “in principle” support to a massive redevelopment of tourist accommodation facilities at Cynthia Bay within the TWWHA.

The current TWWHA management plan provides very clear objectives and management prescriptions for accommodation and concessions within the WHA:

- To encourage the provision of accommodation in nearby townships and areas adjacent to the WHA (p132)
- If adequate facilities or services exist or can be developed outside the WHA that meet visitor needs, such facilities and services will not be provided as concessions within the WHA (p178).

These objectives are based on the premise that many of the experiences sought by visitors to the WHA and marketed by the tourism industry are based on the area's wilderness quality.

In locating major accommodation and facilities outside the WHA, or near its periphery, a number of locations have been considered as WHA gateway areas. These are well situated for general tourism development associated with but outside the WHA, and include Derwent Bridge. If one is to be faithful to the WHA management plan, and if the state government and the proponents are sincere about protecting the wilderness values of the area and educating visitors to appreciate these values, then the redevelopment at Cynthia Bay within the WHA must be rejected. If further accommodation is needed, then a site at Derwent Bridge, or a nearby locality outside the National Park and WHA, must be chosen.

At the northern end of the Cradle-Mountain- Lake St Clair national park accommodation developments have all been sited outside the park (and not around Dove Lake, for example). Why then allow the opposite to occur at the southern end of the park? If the reasons for conservation of the World Heritage

and natural values are valid at the northern end of the park then they should also hold at the southern end of the same park.

Tasmania's National Parks are world renowned for their unique and spectacular landscapes and wilderness qualities. Let us ensure that they remain that way.

Robert Campbell
President TNPA