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To the Editor,

The privatisation of part of Tasmania's South West National Park to a commercial developer for a resort is not a good look. The disturbance in the midst of one of our great natural landscapes, as heavy machinery push aside the forest and landscape of the heritage fabric of this area, is unfortunate.

But the real tragedy was the failure of the state government to the stop the Cockle Creek resort several years ago when the idea was first mooted. At the time, the proposal by the developer was contrary to both the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan, and the widely held consensus and legislative underpinning that National Parks should protect our valuable heritage from commercial development.

The Tasmanian government could have easily said no. It did not. On the contrary, it altered legislation and funded infrastructure in order to facilitate the resort. The root of this failure lays in not recognising and adequately investing in the enormous contribution made by the State's national parks and reserves to our economy, our health and wellbeing, and social and cultural life.

This is reflected in the chronic underfunding of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service who manage some of the State's most important public assets.

The true value of our national parks must be recognised and proudly invested in with realistic levels of ongoing funding. Until then, ministers and bureaucrats will continue to come under pressure to privatise our parks and treat them as revenue-raising real estate - rather than the great public good they are.

Russell Warman
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