



Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania

Submission –

**Reservation of Future Potential Production Forest Land in the
Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area**

Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania

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About the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania

The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) is the statutory body, established under Tasmania's *Aboriginal Lands Act (1995)*, to own and manage returned land on behalf of Tasmania's Aboriginal community.

ALCT is an immediate neighboring landowner to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA), owning 6878 ha of Country named trawtha makuminya. ALCT oversees its management for the preservation of Aboriginal cultural and natural values, under a formal management plan and the vision that 'trawtha makuminya is a place to create story, to develop understanding of its history, heritage values, use and environment, for traditional and new practices.' trawtha makuminya is managed in accordance with the 2015 Healthy Country Plan.¹

This submission

No land in lutruwita/Tasmania was ceded to the Crown and this fact underpins the ALCT submission that all Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) land subject to this process be returned to Aboriginal ownership. All land in lutruwita was, and always will be, Aboriginal land, and any change of legal tenure to Crown Land, should automatically prompt prioritisation of a return to Aboriginal ownership.

The *Reservation of Future Potential Production Forest Land* process presents such an opportunity and the ALCT submits that all lands subject to this process should be returned to Aboriginal ownership and management as a new Tasmanian National Park land tenure.

Land returns – Government commitments

The Tasmanian Government has made repeated statements pledging its commitment to progressing land return to the Aboriginal Community as part of the 'reset' of its relationship with Aboriginal people.

While much progress has been made by the private sector, with significant private landholdings being transferred to Aboriginal ownership, including trawtha makuminya, the return of public land has been blocked since 2005.

Virtually all of Tasmania's public land returns to Aboriginal ownership occurred between 1995 and 2005.

In his State of the State speech to Parliament on 16th March 2021, Premier Gutwein stated –

"Last week I committed to receive and consider proposals for further land return and I want to be clear this Government is committed to taking significant steps on our

path to reconciliation, and also importantly to taking significant steps to ensure we improve the lives and circumstances of our first people.”

Premier Gutwein should consider this submission a proposal for land return for his immediate consideration and, as such, ALCT has formally written to Premier Gutwein putting this proposal and providing this submission.

Prior to this, former Premier Will Hodgman has said he wanted to see more land returned to the Aboriginal community, stating *‘we want to be open to traditional forms of land handbacks and dual-land management opportunities.’*ⁱⁱ

On announcing an unnecessary review into the model for returning land to the Aboriginal Community, then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Jacquie Petrusma said *‘We want to see more land returned to Tasmanian Aboriginal people...’*

The legal change of tenure of ‘Unallocated Crown Land’, within the TWWHA presents Premier Gutwein his first, and the Tasmanian Government another, formal opportunity to deliver on stated commitments. Parliament will consider the transfer of this land to another legal tenure and return to Aboriginal ownership and management is entirely consistent with both Tasmanian Government policy and the powers of the Tasmanian Parliament.

The Process

The *Reservation of Future Potential production Zone Land* process subject to the current community consultation is deliberately and unacceptably narrow and cannot be considered a credible consultation.

This process is consulting the broader Tasmanian community over the protection, under Tasmania’s *Nature Conservation Act (2002)*, of only a subset of the FPPF land that is currently included in the boundary of the TWWHA, and seeks community consideration of only two, lesser classifications of reserved land (Regional Reserve and Conservation Area).

The process does not:

- countenance land returns to the Aboriginal community;
- present the option of a change of tenure to anything other than Regional Reserve or Conservation Area;
- countenance the reservation of significant areas of TWWHA-listed FPPF land in the vicinity of Mother Lords Plains and Tumbledown Creek, to the north east of yingina/Great Lake and Arthurs Lake (see figures 1 and 2)

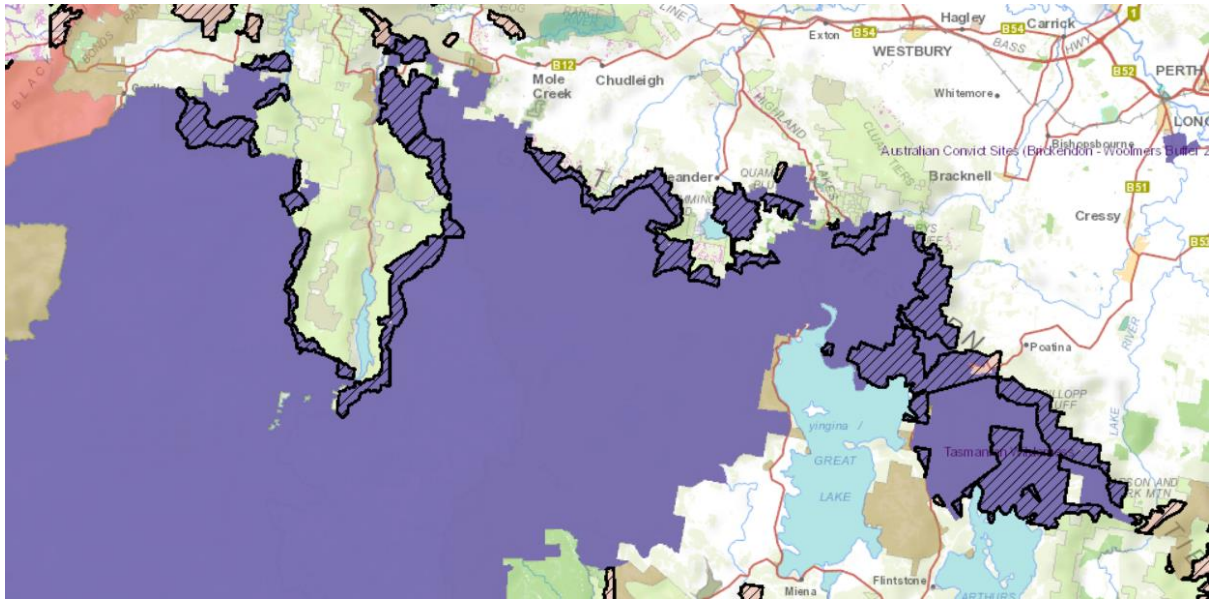


Figure 1. FPPF Land (black hatched) within the TWWHA (purple). Source: LISTmap

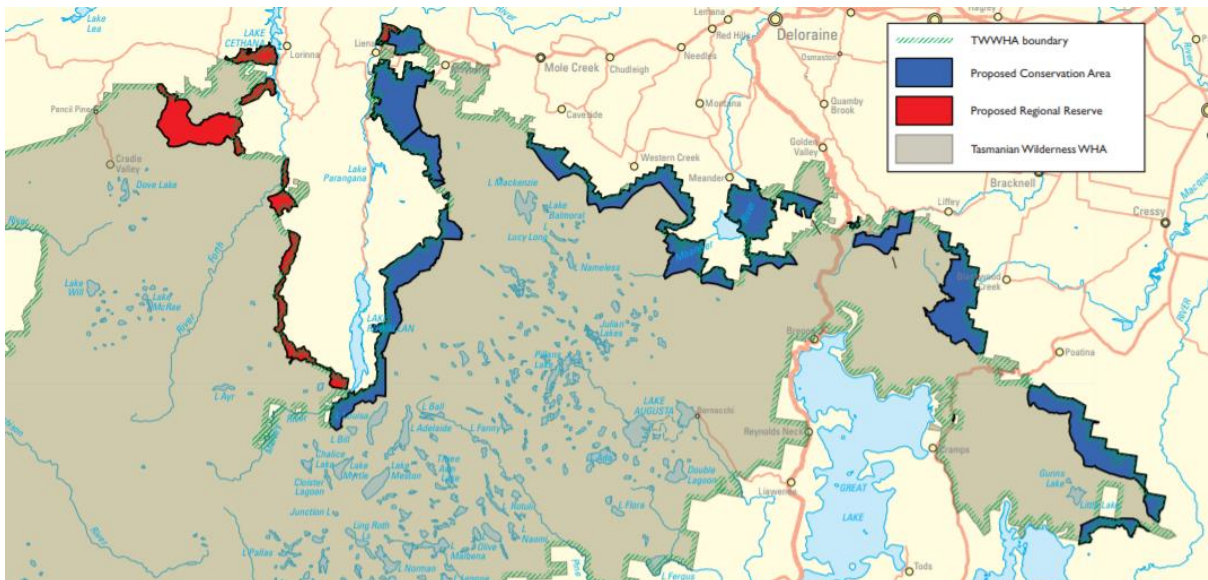


Figure 2. FPPF land subject to this process and proposed reserve status.

Source: <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Map%20Location%20Stage%201.pdf>

The land and its values

The land is predominantly located at kooparooka niara otherwise known as the Great Western Tiers, essentially the northern foothills of lutruwita's great Central Plateau region. Smaller blocks are located adjacent to Lake Gordon in the southwest.

Being part of the TWWHA, the land is listed because of its outstanding Aboriginal cultural heritage and natural values.

The TWWHA meets three of six criteria pertaining to cultural heritage and all four criteria pertaining to natural values. Of all the properties on UNESCO's World Heritage List, the TWWHA meets the most criterion (seven), sharing this recognition with just one other property, a temple in China.

Contemporary approaches (and the TWWHA Management Plan) acknowledge Aboriginal heritage values extend beyond the narrow, restrictive view based on archaeological proof of occupation or other sites of material evidence.

Acknowledgement of land as a Cultural Landscape more accurately reflects the values held in an area and its significance to Aboriginal people.

Given the above recognition as a Cultural Landscape, with recorded sites of heritage significance and listed as meeting the requirements of World Heritage status, it is beyond dispute that the entirety of this land is of significance to the Aboriginal community and our ongoing connection to Country.

UNESCO recommendations and Government commitments

In 2015 a UNESCO World Heritage Committee-aided 'mission' visited Tasmania to investigate management of the TWWHA following its recent extension, attempted delisting and serious questions pertaining to a draft management plan and its proposed management arrangements.

Concerns included the presence of Unallocated Crown Land (the FPPF land) within the property and the historical deprioritisation or outright omission of Aboriginal cultural heritage values from nomination and management documentation.

The UNESCO Reactive Monitoring Mission (RMM) explicitly considered the issue of Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) Land within the TWWHA, and the fact it was legally excluded from coverage of the TWWHA Management Plan.

The RMM issued a suite of recommendations, including recommendation 11 that:

*'Future Potential Production Forest Land (FPPFL) within the property should not be convertible to Permanent Timber Production Zone Land (PTPZL) and **should be granted status as national park.**'* (page 3 emphasis added).

This was unconditionally accepted by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments, both in public reaction to the release of the RMM report and in formal reporting mechanisms to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

On 20 March 2026, then Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt and then Tasmanian Environment Minister Matthew Groom issued a joint statement in response to the RMM's recommendations. They stated that:

'...the report provides 20 clear recommendations that will help our governments improve the way the TWWHA is managed and we accept these recommendations.' ⁱⁱⁱ

In both 2016 and 2018, in formal correspondence to the World Heritage Committee, as part of the annual reporting on the 'State of Conservation' of the TWWHA, the Federal Government (as State Party and signatory to the World Heritage Convention) again accepted the recommendation of the RMM and made clear commitments regarding implementation.

In the 2016 State of Conservation report it wrote:

'The Australian and Tasmanian governments support all 20 recommendations set out in the mission report. The recommendations will be given effect through the new management plan for the property and through other statutory measures.'

(emphasis as per original)^{iv}

In the 2017 State of Conservation Report it wrote:

'The Australian and Tasmanian governments are fully committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. All of the recommendations of the 2015 Reactive Monitoring Mission and the 2016 requests of the World Heritage Committee are being implemented through a new management plan for the property and other statutory measures.' (emphasis as per original)^v

An Aboriginal-owned and managed National Park

This situation presents a unique opportunity for Tasmania to break new ground, honour its commitment to the international World Heritage community and deliver on promised moves to return land to the Aboriginal community as a step towards land justice and reconciliation.

An Aboriginal-owned and managed National Park is a new tenure for Tasmania that would be underpinned by two things:

- land rights and self determination; and
- management in line with the protection of cultural and natural heritage values expected as World Heritage-listed land.

Most parcels of Aboriginal land held by ALCT on behalf of the Aboriginal Community are currently managed under a formal management plan that ensures the protection of cultural and natural values and builds understanding and connection within the Aboriginal Community.

Indeed, some Aboriginal land is managed under formal Conservation Covenant agreements with Governments that equate to or surpass the level of protection afforded by a National Park.

Aboriginal-owned National Parks exist under State and Federal legislation in several other jurisdictions. This includes the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park and Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park. In NSW, the Jervis Bay National Park was returned to Traditional

Owners and subsequently renamed Booderee National Park, maintaining protections for cultural and natural values.

The ALCT and the Aboriginal Community has demonstrated a willingness and capacity to manage returned land in a way that protects cultural and natural values as well as, or better than state-owned parks managers. Aboriginal management of an Aboriginal-owned national park would ensure adequate protection, facilitate land-management pathways for Aboriginal people and maximise cultural connection with Country.

The incorporation of excluded FPPF land and neighbouring Conservation Areas and Regional Reserves (such as the Great Western Tiers Conservation Area, Liffey Conservation Area and Meander Conservation Area) into a broader Aboriginal-owned kooparooka niara National Park should also be progressed as part of this process. This would consolidate boundaries from an ecosystem and management perspective, draw in other known sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance and create a contiguous and iconic, new, Aboriginal-owned reserve for the northern boundary of the TWWHA.

ⁱ http://tacinc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/20150529_trawtha-makuminya-hcp_Final.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/5917642/aboriginal-land-returned-on-east-coast/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.greghunt.com.au/monitoring-mission-report-on-the-tasmanian-wilderness-world-heritage-area-endorses-australias-management-efforts/>

^{iv} <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/181/>

^v <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/181/>