

Media release from the Wilderness Society Tasmania, Mole Creek Caving Club, Friends of Great Western Tiers, Tasmanian National Parks Association

(Updated from Sunday March 28) **Wednesday March 31 2021**

Conservation groups support Aboriginal Land Council Tasmania's call for first returned & managed National Park

**Groups put forward Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park proposal
- which could be lutruwita/Tasmania's first substantial new National Park in 30 years***

- State Government reservation process is an opportunity to create Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park
- Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park could be an opportunity for Aboriginal land returns and for lutruwita/Tasmania's first-ever Aboriginal-managed National Park
- New National Park is a perfect step to realise State Government's aim for Tasmania to be global eco-tourism destination of choice

The Wilderness Society Tasmania, Friends of Great Western Tiers/Kooparoona Niara, Tasmanian National Parks Association, Mole Creek Caving Club and Great Western Tiers National Park Campaign are calling for the creation of Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park in response to a [State Government process](#) concerning 16 areas of currently unallocated Crown Land (Future Potential Production Forest) in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA).

The State Government is proposing to make these 16 areas of High Conservation Value World Heritage grade land either Regional Reserve or Conservation Area tenure and has invited public submissions.

We welcome and support the submission made by the Aboriginal Land Council Tasmania calling for this land to be returned to and managed by its rightful owners, the palawa-pakana people.

“With tourism rebuilding and an ever-increasing need to properly protect declining ecosystems, now is a good time to create lutruwita/Tasmania's first substantial new National Park in 30 years*. There is also the prospect of this land being returned to its rightful owners, the palawa-pakana peoples, as well as this being the first National Park managed by the island's First Peoples,” said Tom Allen for the Wilderness Society Tasmania.

“In 2015, the State Liberal ([Matthew Groom](#)) and Commonwealth Coalition ([Greg Hunt](#)) governments told UNESCO they supported turning these reserves into National Parks. We are calling on Tasmania's Parks Minister Roger Jaensch to honour that pledge.

“But what Minister Jaensch is proposing would make logging and mining possible in these reserves. If the State Government is serious about the island becoming “[the eco-tourism capital of the world](#)” our new National Park proposal would help achieve this.

“But the weak protections proposed by Minister Jaensch go against these ambitious global eco-tourism

aspirations. In fact, not only would Minister Jaesch be breaking the State Government's word, but it also appears that his proposal is renegeing on a commitment to zone several of the new reserves predominantly as wilderness. If this is confirmed we will be writing to UNESCO and ICOMOS to advise them of this breach of trust.

"The social, environmental, economic and Aboriginal benefits of a new National Park far outweigh the unambitious proposal to turn these reserves into Regional Reserves and Conservation Areas that the Government is proposing and we urge Minister Jaensch to take our thorough, real-world community proposal for a new National Park seriously," said Tom Allen for the Wilderness Society.

This proposal would also see the consolidation of valuable karst areas in the Mole Creek area, currently under a complexity of tenures, with the existing Mole Creek Karst National Park. Additionally, it proposes adding reserves to the adjacent Walls of Jerusalem, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair and South-West national parks.

"The TNPA calls on the state government to think big; there is no place within the TWWHA for the limited protection provided by Regional Reserves and Conservation Areas. There needs to be a review of the tenure of all of the land within the TWWHA that is not already National Park, with the intention of reserving all appropriate areas as National Park. This should include a new Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park, and a contiguous Mole Creek Karst National Park. This would provide the best possible protection for the land and the best possible opportunities for presentation - i.e. raise its profile as a nature-based tourism destination. It would also fulfil commitments made to the 2015 UNESCO monitoring mission," said Nick Sawyer, president, Tasmanian National Parks Association.

Much of Kooparoona Niara's World Heritage forest to the west surrounds the Mole Creek Karst National Park (MCKNP). Therefore a consolidated MCKNP is proposed for the western extent of Kooparoona Niara," said Deb Hunter, from the Mole Creek Caving Club.

"Mole Creek Caving Club has been working to document the conservation values of the Mole Creek landscape since 1990. The existing National Park, which is supposed to protect the caves, is presently only a series of disconnected blocks scattered across the landscape. This proposal would finally bring real protection for the World Heritage values of this famous karst landscape," said Deb Hunter, spokesperson for Mole Creek Caving Club.

The tenures that the State Government is proposing - Regional Reserves and Conservation Areas - still allow logging and mining and are incompatible with protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the TWWHA. While the TWWHA Management Plan prohibits logging and mining activities and is backed up by the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, the State Government's proposed tenures allow resource extraction, so are unacceptable for World Heritage properties. These World Heritage-grade areas are worthy of National Park status. Many should become part of the proposed new Kooparoona Niara (Great Western Tiers) National Park, along with existing Conservation Areas and State Reserves in the Great Western Tiers area. The remaining reserves should be added to the existing National Parks which they adjoin.

* Last significant National Park creation was the expansion of Wild Rivers, Southwest & Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair national parks to their current boundaries (more or less) in 1988-89

[Kooparoona Niara \(Great Western Tiers\) National Park Proposal](#)

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