

MEDIA RELEASE



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Cox Bight - Melaleuca corridor should be included in World Heritage Area rather than opened up to mining prospectors

The Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) has called for an anomalous corridor of land in South West Tasmania to be included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) following the Tasmanian Government's announcement of its intention to grant a mineral exploration license to a NSW company, Planet Minerals, to search for tin deposits.

TNPA Vice President, Dr. Robert Campbell said, "This is a narrow corridor of land bounded on all sides by the World Heritage Area. In recognition of the Cox Bight – Melaleuca corridor's values, both the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Parks and Wildlife Service recommended its inclusion into the TWWHA in the early 1990s.

"The area has a long and intriguing history, it is traversed by the iconic South West track and is a key habitat of the critically endangered Orange-Bellied Parrot, this area has natural and cultural heritage of its own. It deserves the protection afforded by being part of the TWWHA.

"The TWWHA management plan calls for mining leases in this area to be cancelled as mining ceases. To open this area up to potential mining demonstrates, yet again, the Lennon Government's failure to honour its international responsibility to preserve Tasmania's wild places for future generations."

If the exploration licence is granted, this land would still be subject to the World Heritage Area Management Plan which requires that "...*adjoining lands be managed in ways that are sympathetic to the objectives of management for the WHA*", i.e. in ways that preserve the wilderness and remoteness of the area. The management plan also requires that natural "view points" be retained and it specifically encourages rehabilitation of exposed gravel areas resulting from past mining activity in this corridor of land. Melaleuca is also on the flight path of the critically endangered Orange Bellied Parrot. Increased human activity and mining machinery would further threaten a species already on the brink of extinction.

Dr Campbell said the TNPA also takes exception to the process the government has adopted. "The public notice was placed in the newspaper on the Saturday before Christmas inviting objections from interested parties – at a cost of \$25. This is both undemocratic and a contemptuous manipulation of the process.

"The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is listed because of its outstanding beauty. It is an international treasure and people from around the world travel to experience its wildness. Tasmanians must recognise this jewel we have in our care. To even contemplate allowing mining in this area is short-sighted and cynical."

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