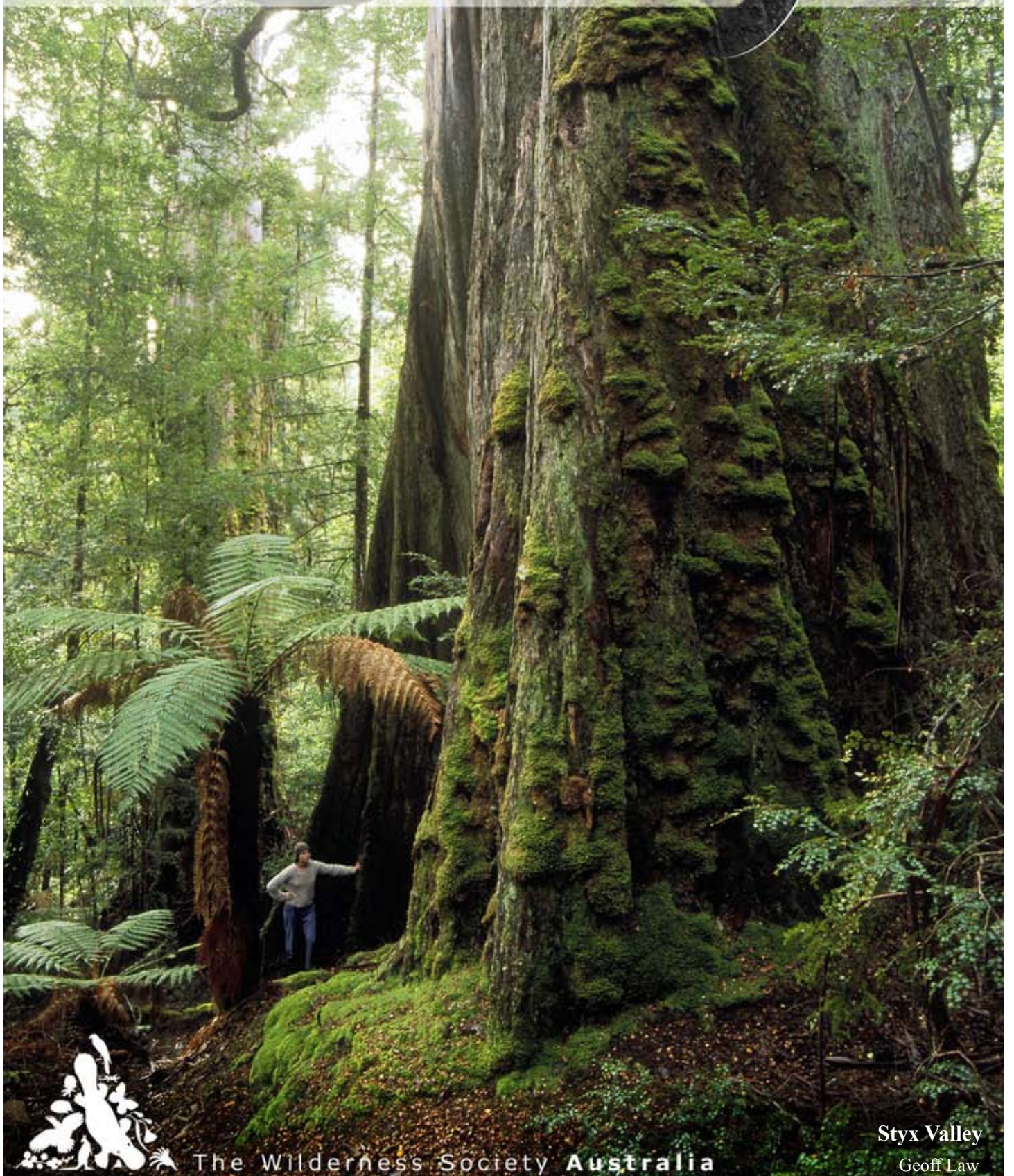


Delivering the Promises

An assessment of the final outcomes
for Tasmania's forests from the
Australian Federal Election campaign 2004



The Wilderness Society **Australia**

Styx Valley

Geoff Law

Background

The Wilderness Society and other national and local conservation groups have fought hard for the protection of Tasmania's old growth and high conservation values forests since the late 1970's, when the enormity of the impact of an export wood-chipping-focussed forest industry first became apparent.

Over that period community-based campaigns have been unrelenting, achieving a series of incremental gains for forest and wilderness protection. However, in 1997 a major setback, the 'Regional Forest Agreement' between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments, gave most of the forests around the Tasmanian World Heritage Area and the Tarkine Wilderness to the woodchippers. This not only left many high conservation value areas unprotected, it sparked one of the biggest episodes of land clearing in Australian history.

The Wilderness Society and regional conservation groups responded to this onslaught on Tasmania's Forests with the Styx Campaign as the flagship for a comprehensive forest protection agenda. The campaign stepped up with the 'Global Rescue Station' tree sit in the Styx Valley and a number of large rallies in Tasmania and Melbourne. These and other activities all over the country led to high levels of community, media and political pressure, culminating in the future of Tasmania's Forests becoming **the** environmental issue of the 2004 Federal Election Campaign.

Meanwhile, The Wilderness Society with the Australian Conservation Foundation supported by Greenpeace and other conservation groups prepared a substantial policy document '*Protecting Forests Growing Jobs*' that set out a comprehensive reserve agenda for Tasmania and an industry transition strategy.

During the Election campaign, both the Labor and Liberal parties announced Tasmanian forest protection packages. The Liberal Party was swept back into office with an increased majority.

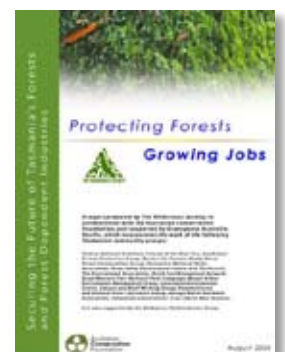
The Government has recently announced the delivery of their package, the main features of which are outlined below. Many elements of this policy were drawn directly from '*Protecting Forests Growing Jobs*'.

See: http://www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/forests/tasmania/protect_forest_make-jobs/



▲ Launch of the Environment Groups' election campaign.

Alec Marr of The Wilderness Society (centre), flanked by Don Henry of the Australian Conservation Foundation (left) and Danny Kennedy of Greenpeace



Styx Valley Geoff Law



Preserving Tasmania's old growth forests

The key elements of the Government's commitments were:

1. Conservation Commitments

- Immediate protection of an additional 76,100 hectares (188,000 acres) of rainforest in the Tarkine, Southern forests (including the Huon and Weld Valleys) and North East Tasmania;
- immediate protection of 18,700 hectares (46,200 acres) of old growth forest in the Styx and Florentine valleys, and along the Eastern Boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA);
- immediate protection of an additional 29,600 hectares (73,100 acres) of old growth forest on the Eastern Tiers, Tasman Peninsula and North East Highlands (including the Blue and Great Western Tiers) and Central Highlands;
- immediate protection of 1,300 hectares in the sub alpine areas;
- immediate reservation of an additional 43,200 hectares (106,700 acres) of private land to the reserve system through voluntary sale or covenanting;
- the addition of 2,400 hectares (5,900 acres) of forest at Mole Creek adjacent to the Mole Creek National Park;
- an investment of \$2 million in researching alternatives to clear felling to increase forest yield and provide sustainable forest jobs;
- an end to the use of 1080 poison baits (which kill native wildlife) on both public and private land as soon as possible and no later than December 2005;
- an investment of \$1 million on a study of the chemical residues from farming and forestry practices in Tasmanian river catchments; and,
- \$2 million over 2 years to help accelerate research efforts to find a cure for the facial tumour disease killing the Tasmanian Devil.



6,000 people march in the Styx Valley in a rally organised by The Wilderness Society
Ted Mead



Wilderness Society campaigners in the Styx

Tarkine rainforest Ted Mead



Preserving Tasmania's old growth forests

2. Industry Commitments

- \$5 million to assist with the project costs of the development of an environmental best practice pulp mill in Tasmania;
- \$10 million over two years to assist the softwood industry establish a plant for the environmentally friendly preservation of pine and phase out Copper Chrome Arsonate (CCA) within two years;
- \$20 million over four years to improve sawlog recovery rates (including upgrading mills to process different grades of saw logs) and to assist forestry businesses to adjust to any reduction in supplies;
- \$4 million over 4 years to facilitate the introduction of new technologies, new markets, new product lines and re-tooling options to assist country sawmills;
- \$1 million over 2 years to assist the development of the Tarkine Bush Walk.

Overall, the Election commitments were well short, in both conservation and \$ terms, of what was required to solve the forest problems in Tasmania.



World's tallest Christmas Tree, Styx Valley, set up by The Wilderness Society in December 1999

The Global Rescue Station, Styx Valley, set up by The Wilderness Society and Greenpeace, November 2003 to April 2004

May 2005 Tasmanian forest outcomes

The package released by the Federal Government in May exceeded expectations in some areas and fell well short in others.

Importantly, the Coalition has increased its funding commitment from \$52 million to \$250 million – an amount of money that could be applied to either increase the rate of old growth forest destruction or facilitate industry transition to enable greater forest protection.

Our challenge is to ensure the latter occurs. We have a political opportunity to achieve this in the lead up to the next Tasmanian State election (due between March – September next year).

At the time of publication of this report no digital data was available to verify the outcomes. The figures are as provided by Government.

Summary

On public land 141,000 additional hectares (348,000 acres) will be protected. 120,000 hectares (296,000 acres) is old growth forest.

In addition, a generous forest conservation fund will be established to protect a further 45,600 hectares (110,000 acres) of forest on private land.

On the crude numbers the Government has matched its commitment in area, and has significantly improved the level of rainforest protection. However, the tall, wet, highly productive mixed eucalypt rainforests are still significantly underprotected, with 60% or less of remaining old growth safe from logging.



Rainforest in the Tarkine Wilderness
Ted Mead

The Tarkine Wilderness

The outcome for the Tarkine wilderness rainforests was outstanding with the Australian Government probably exceeding its own policy target.

Area Protected	What was needed (as proposed in “Protecting Forests Growing Jobs”)
73,512 hectares (181,500 acres) (mostly rainforest)	85,000 hectares (210,000 acres) (rainforest, all in the Tarkine)

In addition, a number of large informal reserves have been created in the adjacent Leven Canyon Area.

This outstanding area now needs to be nominated for World Heritage Listing.

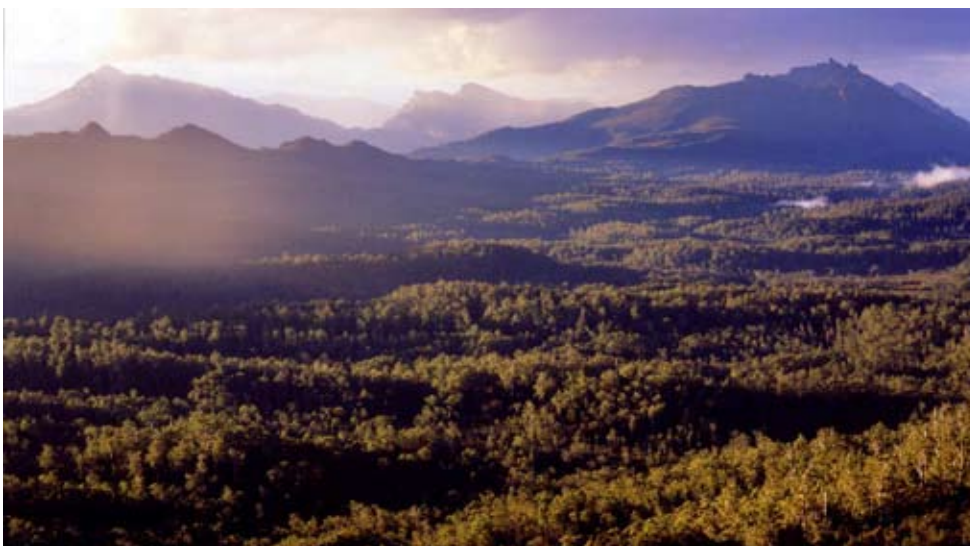


Rainforest in the Tarkine Wilderness
Ted Mead

**The Styx and Upper Florentine
(and proposed eastern boundary extensions to the Tasmanian WHA)**

The outcome for the Styx was average, but very poor for the Upper Florentine. The Government did not meet its policy target for the latter area. Only some small informal reserves were created in the Upper Florentine - a very, very poor outcome for forests of outstanding international value, which had been proposed by The Wilderness Society as additions to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Area Protected (only formal reserves have been identified by Government)	What was needed (as proposed in “ <i>Protecting Forests Growing Jobs</i> ”)
Styx and Upper Florentine valleys 4,546 ha (11,100 acres) of formal reserves + some large informal reserves in the Styx on the Jubille Range	Approximately 30,000 ha (74,000 acres) in the Styx and Upper Florentine. Approximately 50,000 ha (124,000 acres) of Eastern Tasmanian WHA extensions.



The Florentine Valley
Rob Blakers

Eastern Tiers, Tasman Peninsula and North East Highlands (including the Blue Tier and Great Western Tiers) and Central Highlands

The outcome for these areas was very patchy and it is only possible to look at the overall policy commitment, which was 29,600 ha (73,100 acres). Most of the protection occurred in the dry less productive forests on the Eastern Tiers. Most of the overall protection was informal and the outcome across the north of this region was very poor.

Area Protected (figures for formal reserves only)	What was needed (as proposed in " <i>Protecting Forests Growing Jobs</i> ")
Eastern Tiers (including Wielangta) 4,159 ha (10,300 ac) of formal reserves + some informal	Approximately 30,000 hectares. (75,000 acres)
Tasman Peninsula and Bruny Island Small area of informal reserves.	Approximately 9,000 hectares. (22,000 acres)
North East Highlands 1,731 ha (4,300 acres) of formal reserves + small area of informal reserves.	Approximately 51,000 hectares. (126,000 acres)
Ben Lomond Small areas of informal only	Approximately 16,000 hectares. (40,000 acres)
Great Western Tiers 365 ha (900 acres) of formal reserves + some informal and hydro land	Approximately 33,000 hectares. (82,000 acres)



Ben Lomond
Geoff Law

Outcomes (continued)

1080

1080 poisoning on public land will end by December 2005. However, the commitment to end all 1080 poisoning of native wildlife will not be met on private land, where about two thirds of the poisoning occurs.

Forest Management - Old-growth logging

Old growth logging will continue under changed silvicultural practices.

80% of unprotected old growth will be clearfelled in patches leaving 30% of the original forest cover in small clumps (aggregated retention logging).

20% of unprotected old growth will continue to be clearfell logged.



Other commitments

The Government met or exceeded its commitment on funding catchment studies and Tasmanian Devil facial tumour research.

Land Clearing

The conversion of native forests to plantations will cease – provided the process to implement this decision is properly applied.

Industry opposition to this important environmental outcome is mounting, and we regard the commitment as fragile.



Brushtail Possum, dying from 1080 poison used to stop it browsing on seedlings



Tasmanian Devil dying from Facial Tumor Disease, which may be linked to logging practices

◀ Aggregated retention logging



Eucalyptus plantation, established on cleared rainforest in the Tarkine area

Outcomes (continued)

Industry Package

The total funding to implement forestry changes in Tasmania is \$246.8 million (see the attached Government fact sheet).

The \$115 million earmarked for “intensive forest management” is both an area of opportunity and of deep concern. We will be striving to ensure that this funding is spent on opening up further transition possibilities out of unprotected old growth and other high conservation value forests. Misspent, this funding could be used to rapidly destroy remaining HCV forests.

Pressure to intensify native forest logging will dramatically increase if Gunns Limited is successful in its bid to develop a pulp mill in the NE of the Tasmania. The proposed mill would consume at least 3.2 million tonnes per year of native forests and plantation wood (up to 80% of supply would be from native forests).

The Wilderness Society is challenging the environmental assessment process being implemented by the Federal Government for the proposed pulp mill in the Federal Court of Australia.

Conclusion

While we have had a major breakthrough on one of the most intractable environmental problems in Australia, there is great urgency around the need to finish the job.

The best short-term political opportunity will be provided by the Tasmanian State election, where the threat of the Tasmanian Greens gaining the balance of power could provide a real incentive for both the Labor and Liberal parties to solve the Tasmanian forest problem.

Already the environmental threats associated with a chlorine, native forest-based pulp mill are galvanizing public opposition. Continuing the campaign to protect old growth and other high conservation value forests will help ensure that the funding put on the table through the recent package is used to help finally solve the problem.

In addition, both the Federal and Tasmanian Governments now need to move quickly to cement the positive aspects of this announcement and nominate the Tarkine – Australia's largest wilderness rainforest – for World Heritage Listing.

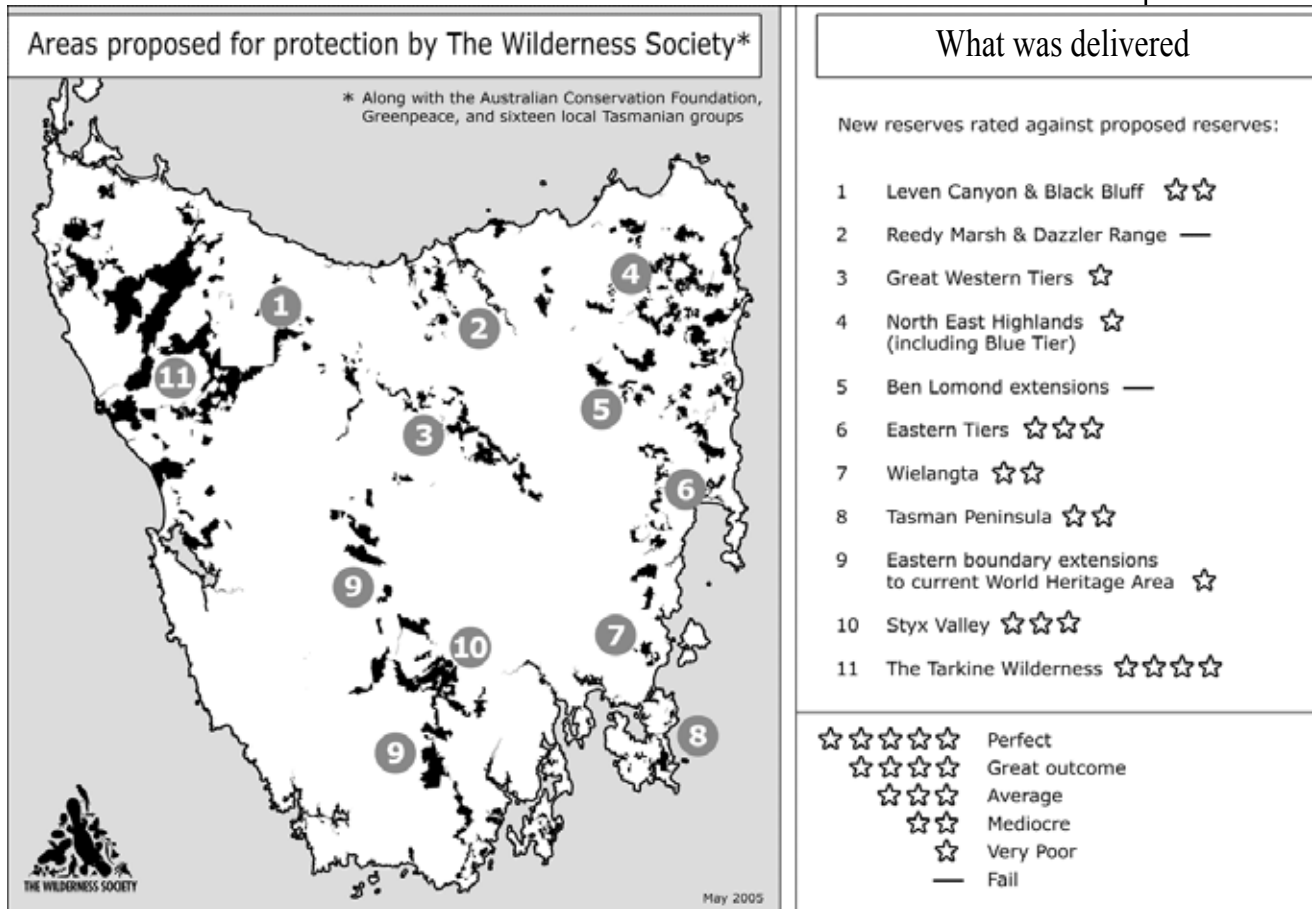


Post-logging burn



Actress Olivia Newton-John in the Styx. Many Australian celebrities have joined the Styx campaign

What was delivered at a glance...



- The Tarkine rainforest wilderness has received impressive protection, consistent with its world heritage values, and important areas in the Styx will be protected.
- However, high conservation value forests in the North East highlands, Blue Tier, Great Western Tiers and Ben Lomond remain open to logging.
- The Governments' package now matches the level of funding proposed in our \$250 million plan, Protecting Forests Growing Jobs. However, the package allows old growth forest logging to continue and will support plans for a native forest, chlorine-based, bleaching pulpmill in the Tamar Valley.
- It fails to address the need for a full restructuring of the industry to end old growth logging, or to properly support tourism jobs. The commitment to end the use of 1080 poison has been seriously weakened.
- Broadscale land clearing for plantation establishment, one of the most intractable problems in Tasmania, is being tackled. While this is a good start, it is crucial both governments ensure implementation. It is still a major concern that 70,000 ha (173,000 acres) of future clearing will be permitted by the policy.
- The Wilderness Society's overall rating would be "mediocre," 4 out of 10.

www.wilderness.org.au