



## **WILDLIFE TOURISM AUSTRALIA Inc.**

C/o Sustainable Tourism CRC  
Business Building 2, Griffith University, Parklands Drive  
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9 June 2006

Mr. David Llewellyn MHR  
1st Floor, Franklin Square Offices,  
Hobart 7000.

Dear Mr. Llewellyn,

Wildlife Tourism Australia (WTA) is a non-profit organization established to promote the sustainable development of a diverse Australian wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation. In May 2005 a Tasmanian branch of this organization was formed to promote and address issues relevant to Tasmania. Members include Tourism operators, researchers, and government agencies from around the state.

At a recent meeting of members, great concern was voiced at the fox situation in Tasmania, and it was unanimously agreed that our organization should become more involved in this issue. We believe that the introduction of Red foxes into the state of Tasmania is the greatest threat to our island's biodiversity since the arrival of early Europeans, and it should be of great concern to everyone that foxes could well become established in Tasmania in the near future.

Many of our iconic species such as the Eastern barred bandicoot, Tasmanian bettong, Tasmanian pademelon & Eastern quoll are now very rare or extinct on the Australian mainland due to predation and competition by the Red fox, so Tasmania has effectively become a Noah's Ark for some of Australia's most unique marsupials. Furthermore, one of our endemic flightless birds, the Tasmanian native hen, also faces a bleak future should foxes become established in Tasmania, and the Tasmanian devil is also under threat from competition with this species. With this in mind it is imperative that we show no restraint when eradicating foxes from the Tasmanian landscape, as we do not wish to witness a similar fate for our native wildlife to that which has already occurred on the mainland.

The Wildlife Tourism industry in Tasmania is in a strong growth phase, with increased interest from interstate and international visitors primarily because of our unique fauna that can no longer be found anywhere else in the world. The Tasmanian branch of WTA has recently formed a partnership with Tourism Tasmania and Parks Tasmania to promote and support this world class industry, all of which will be in great jeopardy should this fox situation worsen.

Hard evidence of foxes continues to come in as a steady trickle and includes the recent discovery of a fox cub at Lillico (evidence that foxes have bred in Tasmania) and an increase in reported sightings both in the northwest and northeast of the state by reliable and credible sources. This has raised fears that foxes may have already become established in Tasmania. Despite these grim statistics, we have been advised that the Fox Taskforce will now be decreased to just 3 field staff, with no plans for further work beyond a minimal presence in this area.

The fox issue in Tasmania is potentially the single most important conservation issue we have faced in modern Tasmanian history. As stakeholders in the Wildlife Tourism industry, we also believe that it is

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[www.wildlifetourism.org.au](http://www.wildlifetourism.org.au)



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also the greatest threat to our businesses and livelihoods that we have yet faced. We believe that it is imperative that the fox eradication issue remain a top priority for the Tasmanian government, and that continued funding for the Fox Taskforce is vitally important, as dollars spent today will be saved many-fold in future if foxes become established. Our industry is not the only one to be seriously affected. Foxes will also cause heavy economic impacts to our farming industry in Tasmania, and estimated losses of 10 million dollars have been placed on lamb losses alone. Therefore a viable breeding population of foxes in Tasmania will cost the whole Tasmanian community millions of dollars annually. We strongly support continued community education and awareness programs and similar action by the Tasmanian government to the initiatives being taken by the Western Australian government to the threat of cane toads and starlings in that state.

If foxes establish in Tasmania our native wildlife will be devastated and Tasmania's natural assets will be lost forever. NOW is the time to act. By the time we regularly see foxes here, it will be far too late. We therefore strongly urge you to continue funding this important campaign at least to the level that it has previously been supported by you.

We hope that you will reconsider your funding strategy for this vitally important issue, and will look forward to supporting the issue in whatever we can as fellow stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Tonia Cochran  
CHAIR, Wildlife Tourism Australia (Tasmanian and National branches)