

FRIENDS OF CRADLE VALLEY BULLETIN 3/10/09

Would you believe that we've had 53 consecutive days of rain here this winter?
How those poor drought-stricken mainlanders must envy all the good folk living around Cradle Valley!
However, spring is in the air now. So there's lots of see and do.

1. FRIENDS GATHERING:

You are invited to a FoCV Weekend at **Cradle 17-18 October 2009**.

Please put the date in your diary now. And bring your families and friends. Thanks to Helen for booking the Blandfordia Alpine Club Hut for us.

Sleep-over if you like on Saturday night. BYO sleeping bag, toothbrush, all food & drinks.

Saturday ... no set programme, enjoy the ambience, overnight if you want

Sunday ... 11 am FoCV meeting

Agenda: Meeting open

Confirmation of Minutes of 2008 AGM

Correspondence

2009 Reports

Election of Office Bearers for 2010

Any other business

Close of meeting

2. CRADLE VALLEY ISSUES:

1. Funding cuts to Parks & Wildlife Service:

* Despite previous denials to the contrary, a report leaked to the *Mercury* on September 21 shows that PWS is "... aiming to have 30 permanent positions in the PWS removed over the next 18 months to meet the budget target." These cuts will occur at the same time as Park entry fees will rise, and many visitor facilities around Tasmania's many Parks and Reserve may have to close.

* The Tasmanian Government is reducing its spending on parks and reserves management from \$46M this year to \$44M next year, then down to \$37M by 2011-12. Spending on heritage and Aboriginal heritage will also fall. Nonetheless, the State Government still plans to waste \$23M+ on pushing a controversial new forestry road through the Tarkine rainforests that's supposedly for the benefit of tourists. Don't be fooled by the Government's spin on this vote-buying nonsense in the lead-up to the March 2010 election.

* FoCV members were invited to meet with Keith Vanderstaay from P&WS in August to discuss plan for the new demountable reception area at the Transit Centre. Please note that while FoCV does support a rationalization of visitor services, we do not endorse the concept of paying for these new facilities by way of staff cuts. As I wrote to Keith afterwards, "... on a personal level, Peter and I do appreciate the opportunity that you gave to us to view the new plans, and we feel that the new arrangements at the Transit Terminal are likely to be a distinct improvement on last summer's visitor-confusion. Of Course, we do continue to have great concern about the diminishing future funding from the Tasmanian State Government for our PWS, and we would not like to see any more staff cuts at Cradle. It's a worry that the proposed extensions have to be funded by staff cuts at the Pencil Pine Visitors' Centre, especially as there's no real guarantee, going on past experiences, that these savings will remain in the area."

2. Threats to Cradle Valley facilities:

* No sign of any funding yet for the much-needed repairs to the historic Waldheim Chalet. However, we couldn't help noticing that the Circular Head Tourism Association (based at Stanley) who complained very LOUDLY about the lack of funding to repair its walking tracks and lookouts on the Nut were rewarded with a \$285,000 grant from the State Government early last month. Perhaps there's a lesson there for us?

* We welcome the new owners of Cradle Mountain Lodge, Michael McFie, who purchased the Lodge from the GPT Group in May for \$21M. The new General manager Leigh Reid has provided the funds for the Hanson's Peak safety chain to be replaced because "... we thought it was a shame the rangers had to resort to a raffle to raise funds. Parks and Wildlife is such a huge part of the Tasmanian tourism industry. If it wasn't for the park, we probably wouldn't be here". Thankyou, Leigh.

3. Impacts on National Parks & Threatened Species:

Budgetary cuts will impact on Parks maintenance and visitor experiences. Many of our State's Listed Threatened Species are already showing signs of distress (most notably by way of population decline and disease). Conservation must remain a core concern for our National Parks.

4. Forestry & Mining issues in the Cradle Precinct:

* Following the Cradle Stakeholders' meeting in June, where the proposal by Forestry Tasmania to log native forests adjacent to the Cradle Tourism Highway near Blackjack Straight was raised, I wrote to Kentish Council regarding the concerns of Cradle Valley business and local residents (Copy of letter 1/7/09 attached). Mayor Don Thwaites wrote back that "*Under Section 56 1.2 of the Kentish Planning Scheme, forestry operations within the boundaries of a State Forest are exempt from planning approval and would not normally require any consideration by Council. However, when we have concerns that forest operations may impact on significant views from nominated tourist roads, we will approach Forestry Tasmania with a request that the visual impact be considered. Cradle Mountain road is such a road.*"

* There are also plans by Forest Enterprises Australia to establish new plantations (*E. nitens*) on two coupes of native forest on Middlesex Station at Daisy Dell. One coupe of 270ha is right next door to a gazetted Private Nature Reserve and in the Lemonthyme Lodge water catchment. The other borders a State Forest Reserve. Both natural and Aboriginal heritage issues have been raised with the proponents and, as Nationally Listed Threatened Species are present in this area, Canberra authorities have also been alerted. Work was supposed to have commenced by the end August 2009.

5. SUPPORT FOR GOOD WORKS:

We're delighted to learn that the Sheffield-based family company Treloar Transport which is installing the \$12M+ Integrated Sewerage Treatment Works at Cradle Mountain Village has been awarded the Tasmanian based Earth Award by the Civil Contractors Federation, and is now in the running for the national Earth Award. Congratulations!

Check out our Website: www.friendsofcradlevalley.org

I do hope we see you at Blandfordia on the Weekend.

Cheers for now,
John Wilson
Hon.Sec.