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Press Statement

Land Returns and Heritage Protection not hollow words Aboriginal Community says.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre CEO, Heather Sculthorpe, said this morning that, "The Hodgman government's introduction into Parliament yesterday of a useless 'Recognition' Bill and the Federal Court's ruling in the takayna west coast tracks decision both show just how out of touch this government is with the wishes of the Aboriginal community in Tasmania."

Ms Sculthorpe said, "We told the Government last year that this 'Recognition' proposal had no support in the Aboriginal community, delivered nothing of substance and was a waste of time. In fact the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Aboriginal Provisional Government both made written and oral presentations to the Guy Barnett led Committee and asked for a continuation of meaningful recognition through land returns and heritage protection. We pointed out that Tasmania has taken small but significant steps beginning with land rights in 1995-2003 and remains the only State to have compensated the victims of the stolen generations (in 2006). Our views were completely ignored."

"The Bill 'acknowledges the Aboriginal people as Tasmania's First People and the traditional and original owners of Tasmanian lands and waters' yet we cannot get any land back. The Bill 'recognises the enduring spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance of traditional lands and waters to Tasmanian Aboriginal people' while the Hodgman government wants to let 4 wheel drivers trash Aboriginal cultural heritage."

Ms Sculthorpe said the Hodgman government has a last chance to redeem itself from "an enduring legacy of hypocrisy" by finding other areas for off-road vehicles to use now that the Full Court of the Federal Court has again rejected the State's bid to open the tracks in takayna on the west coast. "The State must now stop wasting even more taxpayers' money and let go of its illegitimate proposal to open the tracks without regard to Aboriginal heritage or federal legislation. It should also immediately now open discussions about the return of land including Mount William National Park and other areas of particular significance to the Aboriginal community".

Heather Sculthorpe
CEO
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre