



# edotasmantia

using the law to protect the natural and built environment

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Nikolic claims unfounded and offensive

EDO Tasmania's principal lawyer, Jess Feehely, has strongly refuted comments made by Federal member for Bass, Andrew Nikolic, that Environmental Defenders Offices are amongst groups that "attract concessions and donations, then engage in illegal activities". Ms Feehely said:

*"EDO Tasmania is a community legal service providing advice regarding compliance with environmental and planning laws and assisting people to participate, lawfully and effectively, in decisions that affect them. Our lawyers are professional, dedicated and well-respected. The suggestion that we engage in illegal activities, or assist others to do so, is both false and offensive."*

Each year, EDO Tasmania provides advice to hundreds of individuals, community organisations, farmers, Landcare and Coastcare groups and environmental NGOs, produces practical education resources and contributes to government consultations in relation to environmental and planning laws.

The Federal Liberal government recently terminated funding to all Environmental Defenders Offices across Australia. The decision came after 18 years of funding under Commonwealth Access to Justice programmes which recognised the value of public access to affordable legal advice regarding environmental and planning issues.

Ms Feehely says that the funding cuts will significantly restrict EDO Tasmania's capacity to deliver an important community service, and will increase reliance on public donations.

*"Removing the benefit of tax-deductibility for the many people in Tasmania who understand and value the work of the EDO, and who seek to ensure that it can continue, is completely unwarranted. It is deeply concerning that such a proposal would get unanimous support within the Federal Liberal Party."*

**Media comments:** Jess Feehely, 6223 2770

For more information about the work of EDO Tasmania, go to [www.edotas.org.au/about-edo/what-do-we-do/](http://www.edotas.org.au/about-edo/what-do-we-do/)