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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Tasmania's environmental laws leave plenty of room for improvement**

A new EDO Tasmania report, *Lifting the Standards: Opportunities to Improve Tasmania's Environmental Laws*, finds that Tasmania's laws do not meet national best practice standards, but are strong in several areas.

Prepared with funding from the Law Foundation of Tasmania, the report reviews 11 assessment processes under Tasmanian laws against key national standards and concludes that State laws do not offer the same level of protection as the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

EDO Tasmania lawyer, Jess Feehely, said:

*"The Commonwealth government has maintained that its policy of delegating responsibility for the assessment of projects that would impact on matters of national environmental significance to Tasmanian government agencies would maintain national standards. This report questions whether that is the case, and whether the one-stop shop policy will compromise environmental protection.*

*Many Tasmanian laws are simply not designed to uphold international obligations in relation to heritage, threatened species or biodiversity. That is why approval of projects that impact of those matters should remain with the Commonwealth government."*

In particular, the report concludes that Tasmania's laws do not generally:

- Apply the precautionary principles
- Take account of impacts on all nationally listed species and protected places
- Provide easy access to information about development decisions
- Provide for effective monitoring and enforcement activities

Importantly, *Lifting the Standards* does not conclude that Tasmania's laws are inherently weak or problematic. Indeed, the report recognises that Tasmania's laws exceed national standards in a number of areas, including by providing broad rights of public involvement in decision making. However, there are clear areas where improvement is required.

The report sets out practical recommendations for amendments to lift the standards of Tasmania's laws to better reflect best practice. Ms Feehely hopes that these recommendations influence government law reform priorities and budget allocations:

*"Tasmania's environmental laws, and their on-ground implementation, are evolving. This report provides some guidance on how they can evolve in a way that delivers clearer approval requirements, more efficient assessments and more effective environmental outcomes."*

The full report is available at <http://www.edotas.org.au/lifting-the-standards>. A summary is attached.

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