



**AUSTRALIAN  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION**



5 June 2014

## **World Environment Day statement from Australian environment groups**

As environment groups representing around 1.5 million Australians, we are deeply concerned about the security of Australia's World Heritage areas on this World Environment Day 2014.

The United Nation's World Heritage register recognises the most awe-inspiring places on Earth – the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Wall of China, the Sydney Opera House, the Grand Canyon, the Eiffel Tower and Tasmania's magnificent forests – destinations that drive billion-dollar tourism industries.

We believe Australia has a legal and moral obligation to preserve its World Heritage sites for all humanity for all time.

We are not alone in this belief. A May 2014 poll conducted by Lonergan Research shows 97 per cent of Australians believe governments should do all they can to protect natural places on the World Heritage register.

But the jewels in Australia's World Heritage crown are at risk. The UN's World Heritage Committee has continued to express serious concern about Australia's management of the **Great Barrier Reef** since 2011. This year's decision to approve the dredging and dumping of 3 million cubic metres of sludge in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is a further blow to the reef and to everyone who loves this renowned natural wonder of the world. There is a strong and disturbing possibility that, within the next 12 months, the World Heritage Committee will decide to downgrade the Great Barrier Reef's status to 'in danger'.

**Tasmania's superb World Heritage forests** are under even more immediate threat, with the Federal Government attempting to have the UN World Heritage Committee de-list 74,000 hectares of forest, so the area can be opened to logging.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government is devolving the power to assess, approve and enforce projects impacting World Heritage areas to state and local governments. State and local governments should not be left in charge of our iconic World Heritage areas.

Countries campaign for years, sometimes decades, to make the World Heritage list. Not only would it bring shame to Australia if Tasmania's forests were removed from the World Heritage list and the Great Barrier Reef listed as 'in danger', but it would damage our international reputation, our economy and the environment we leave to our children.

Our World Heritage sites are part of what makes us Australian. We strongly urge the Federal Government to re-think its approach to Australia's World Heritage sites.

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### **Note to media**

World Environment Day is an important date on the annual 'green' calendar with environment and conservation organisations holding a wide range of events including festivals, information days and other awareness-raising gatherings in towns and cities around Australia.

This year, among other activities:

- ACF is delivering a tree to every federal MP and senator on World Environment Day, with the accompanying message [\*Tassie's forests mean the world to us\*](#).
- WWF-Australia is challenging Australians to head to work and go about their day dressed head-to-toe as an animal during [\*Wild Onesies Week\*](#), the week that includes World Environment Day.
- The [\*Impact Through Collective Action: 2014 National Environment Meeting\*](#) is being held in Sydney, coinciding with World Environment Day and running over two days. This year's meeting represents a collaborative effort by a number of the national environment groups.

#myworldheritage