



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**  
Minister for the Environment, Heritage  
and the Arts

**Julie Collins MP**  
Member for Franklin

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### **GRASSROOTS SUPPORT PROTECTS TASSIE HABITAT**

An island refuge in Tasmania's Huon River will now be added to Australia's National Reserve System – our nation's most secure way of protecting native habitat.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Member for Franklin Julie Collins today launched the Tasmanian Land Conservancy's Egg Islands Reserve in Franklin, 45 kilometres south west of Hobart.

Mr Garrett said the Australian Government provided \$200,000 to help establish the reserve, with hundreds of donors from around Australia pitching in to donate the rest.

"The Egg Islands Reserve is testament to an incredible conservation partnership – 125 hectares of bushland protected forever through contributions from families, business donors and government," Mr Garrett said.

"The Rudd Labor Government has dedicated \$180 million through the *Caring for our Country* program for projects just like this right around the country, ensuring that some of our most environmentally important sites are conserved and protected.

"The reserve we are here to launch today protects vital habitat for the rare Australasian bittern, whose booming twilight call is thought by many to be the origin of the bunyip legend. The islands are a mosaic of wetland habitat and endangered black gum forest, criss-crossed by misty channels that visitors can explore in row boats."

Ms Collins said she applauded the efforts of the Tasmanian Land Council, the local community and donors from right around Australia for their efforts in the ongoing conservation of Egg Island.

"I am delighted that this special 125 hectares of Tasmanian countryside will now become part of Australia's National Reserve System which the Government plans to increase by 25 per cent to 125 million hectares by 2013."

Ms Collins and Mr Garrett encouraged the community to similarly support the Tasmanian Land Conservancy's next fundraising challenge – conserving the Vale of Belvoir.

"Today kick starts fundraising to protect the Vale of Belvoir – a 500 hectare grassy valley that is the last of its kind in the world," Mr Garrett said.

"The Vale is a huge priority for addition to the National Reserve System – the Australian Government has provided \$800,000 towards its purchase but a further \$600,000 is needed to protect and manage it into the future."

Lying in the shadow of Cradle Mountain, the Vale of Belvoir is a thriving mix of native grassland and old growth rainforest. It is home to the vulnerable Tasmanian devil and was the site of some of the last credible sightings of the now-extinct Tasmanian tiger.

Nathan Males from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy said the Government's \$800,000 is a huge step but they still need all the help their donors can offer.

"Protecting the Vale has been flagged as the Tasmanian conservation triumph of the 21st century – the chance to secure its future is enormously valuable," Mr Males said.

*For more information visit [www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs)*

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