

UNESCO to decide on wilderness listing

MICHAEL LOWE | June 17, 2013 midnight

SECRECY claims have been rejected as a bid to extend Tasmania's World Heritage area is scrutinised by an international body.

UNESCO's World Heritage committee is due to begin a meeting in Cambodia this week to decide whether to add 170,000 hectares to its Tasmanian wilderness listing.

This includes the long disputed forests of the Weld, Styx, Upper Florentine, and the Great Western Tiers.

Forestry Tasmania has stopped logging in the area.

Lyons Liberal candidate Guy Barnett said yesterday the federal government had breached its commitments.

He said the government had breached the World Heritage Convention and the world heritage operational guidelines and should withdraw its extension nomination.

He said the convention and guidelines required consultation and this had not happened.

Environment Minister Tony Burke rejected the claims.

"There has never been a process on Tasmanian forests which was more highly consultative than this one," Mr Burke said.

"Mr Barnett would do well to look at the three-year process of negotiation among peak bodies that took place this time and compare it with the decisions on the run that were made by both sides of politics, including John Howard in 2004."

Greens leader Nick McKim said in Hobart yesterday he was pleased the "chainsaws had fallen silent" in the World Heritage-nominated area.

He said he was confident it would be approved at the meeting in Cambodia.

A public meeting was held in Deloraine this month with farmers and others concerned the extension would limit access to land in the Great Western Tiers.