

GUY BARNETT

Park proposal is destructive on many levels

THE Bob Brown Foundation's latest attempt to lock up another 440,000 hectares of Tasmania will cost thousands of jobs and overlooks our world-leading system of reserves.

Already, more than 50 per cent of Tasmania's landmass is protected through world heritage areas, national parks and other reserve status. This is one of the highest rates in the world.

The BBF's proposal for a new national park - backed by the Greens - would close an additional six per cent of the state to job-creating industries like forestry and mining.

Such a move would be destructive to the economic and social fabric of our state, and the North West and West Coast in particular.

It is estimated that 8400 direct and indirect jobs in the North West alone and over \$1.6 billion in direct gross value and \$650 million in direct value added to the North West economy by forestry and mining could be put at risk.

There is also a potential concern to companies like Nystar in Hobart which relies on zinc from the Rosebery Mine, Tasrail where about 25 per cent of business revolves around transporting timber and minerals and also hundreds of jobs in exploration and at ports like Burnie and Bell Bay.

These are real jobs, held by real Tasmanians and their families.

At a time when every jobs counts, the BBF's deliberately divisive campaign is simply destructive.

As they and their fellow travellers well know, forestry, mining, recreation and conservation activities have co-existed in the so-called Tarkine for generations.

And with our robust assessment and approvals processes in place, there is no reason why this cannot continue.

People are often surprised to hear, given the sustained and aggressive activism from the BBF spin unit, that the footprint of our productive industries in the Tarkine is small.

For example, only five per cent of the area is production forest land managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania and that just 0.9 per cent of the Tarkine area is covered by mining leases.

Or indeed that the major environmental values of the region are already protected by a mixture of national parks and other conservation areas.

Yet in the BBF's attempt to build its profile and leverage donations from mainland armchair activists, all of this is overlooked. The reality of the situation is that we have



IN THE ZONE: Minister for Resources, Guy Barnett and Member for Braddon Felix Ellis on site at the proposed new tailings dam, a site which was earmarked for this purpose in 2014 by the Labor/Green government. **Picture: Supplied**

been here before.

In 2013 a similar call was made for National Heritage listing, and ironically enough, not even the Federal Labor-Green Government approved it.

The BBF's relentless opposition to MMG Rosebery's proposed tailings storage dam simply underlines their opposition to Tasmanian jobs.

This proposal, while going through the appropriate assessment and approvals process, would help secure the future of the mine and around 500 direct jobs for an estimated 40 years.

Contrary to what proposal opponents would have people believe, the land under investigation is not 'pristine wilderness', world heritage area or national park.

It is, in fact, Permanent Timber Production Zone land, as agreed to under the Tasmanian Forest Agreement by the Tasmanian Greens and other environmental groups.

Furthermore;

■ Onsite harvesting operations have been

undertaken on at least two occasions in the last decade;

■ A high-voltage power transmission line and easement crosses the existing access track;

■ The area has been subject to mineral exploration for over 100 years with at least 10 specific on-site instances in the last 50 years; and

■ The site was burned in recent significant bushfires on the West Coast

And, to top things off, it is part of an existing mining lease granted in 2008 by the then Labor government and extended in 2014 under the Labor-Green government for the explicit purpose of constructing a tailings storage dam.

The disappointing fact is that extremist activism is extremely profitable and unfortunately for the workers of Tasmania, a growing industry.

We know the BBF will stop at nothing when at the same time they expect the mining companies to obey all the rules to

the letter. It was recently caught red-handed and admitted using road kill and bait to lure animals into this proposed tailings area to photograph them as part of building a case against the dam.

In a desperate bid to reignite the forest wars that nobody else wants, the BBF recently sought to question the legality of Tasmania's Regional Forestry Agreement (RFA).

The RFA underpins our sustainable forestry industry and the thousands of jobs it supports.

The whole ordeal, labelled the 'great forest case' by activists, was dismissed by both the Federal and High Courts in an embarrassing blow for BBF.

It is time for the attacks on Tasmanian workers and their families to stop.

Our productive industries are well-managed, world-leading and have co-existed with conservation and recreation activities for generations.

■ Guy Barnett, Minister for Resources