

# FACT SHEET

## Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill 2012

### BACKGROUND

The *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* promotes reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community by granting to Aboriginal people certain parcels of land of historic or cultural significance. This recognises the important association the Aboriginal Community has with land.

The Aboriginal Lands Act establishes the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) which has the statutory authority to manage returned land on behalf of the Aboriginal Community. Schedule 3 of the Act identifies land titles that have been returned to the Aboriginal Community after receiving Parliamentary approval.

Ten parcels of land were first returned in 1995. Since then Parliament approved further transfers of land in 1999 and 2005. ALCT currently holds land totalling 55 606 hectares.

The Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill 2012 amends Section 27 and Schedule 3 of the Aboriginal Lands Act to allow for the transfer of two further parcels of land, at *larapuna* and Rebecca Creek, to the Aboriginal Community and, more specifically, to the ALCT.

### *larapuna*

*larapuna* is located in North East Tasmania and is adjacent to the Mt William National Park. It is known as the Eddystone Point Lighthouse Historic Site to the wider community.

In 2006, the site was leased by the State Government to the ALCT to manage on behalf of the Aboriginal Community.

A recent survey was undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment to define the boundaries of the site. The general public will have pedestrian access the Lighthouse itself by the access road to the Lighthouse during daylight hours. This is a continuation of the access provisions in place under the 2006 lease. However, pedestrian access along the access road will not be permitted when a significant Aboriginal cultural event is being held on the land.

The boat ramp adjacent to *larapuna* is not part of the land return and will not be impacted by the vesting of the land to the ALCT. The general public will continue to have vehicular and pedestrian access to a small portion of land that impinges on the site boundaries, but is currently used by vehicles accessing the boat ramp.

As with existing arrangements under the current lease, access to areas of *larapuna* not identified for public access will require the authorisation of the ALCT.

### **Rebecca Creek**

Rebecca Creek is located near Heemskirk Road in the Arthur Pieman area, approximately 50 kilometres south west of Smithton.

The site is comprised of five separate property titles of approximately 148 hectares. Until it was acquired by the Government in 2009, this had been private property.

The property is a rich source of spongolite which Aborigines used for the production of stone tools and is the richest known Aboriginal stone working area in Tasmania.

Spongolite, when split, produces an extremely sharp edge that can cut modern glass. It was a very desirable resource sought by Aborigines and was traded further than any other known raw material in Tasmania.

Due to the sensitive nature of the Aboriginal heritage sites, the property will remain closed to the wider public. This involves no change to the situation that has existed to date, both when the land was private property and, more recently, when it has been unallocated Crown land.

This is also consistent with professional advice that limiting access is currently the best way to preserve Aboriginal heritage at Rebecca Creek.