

SECOND READING SPEECH

Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill 2012

Cassy O'Connor MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

I move – That the Bill now be read for the second time.

Mr Speaker, the primary purpose of this Bill is to amend Section 27 and Schedule 3 of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* to enable the transfer of land at Rebecca Creek and Eddystone Point, for which the Aboriginal name is *Iarapuna*, to the Aboriginal Community.

The Act promotes reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community by granting to Aboriginal people parcels of land of historic or cultural significance.

The Act also established the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania as the body responsible for managing land returned to the Aboriginal Community.

In 2006, the Government signed a 40 year lease with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania to manage the land at *Irapuna*. Since then significant work has been undertaken to upgrade the site and its facilities.

Since 2006 the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania has worked with the local community and the broader Aboriginal Community in a manner respectful of both the Aboriginal and European Heritage of the site. This gives me great confidence that, by formally giving ownership and land title to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, this work will continue successfully.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the House that there will continue to be a public access to the Lighthouse. The new Central Plan Register plan, referenced in the Bill, reflects a recent survey undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and clearly identifies the "Access road to Lighthouse".

Access to the Lighthouse essentially continues the arrangement under the current lease, and mirrors that applying to Risdon Cove. That is, there is pedestrian access during daylight hours. As at Risdon Cove, the only exception is that there will not be access by the general public to the Lighthouse if there is a significant Aboriginal cultural event being held on the land.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to address any concerns that might arise regarding the boat ramp

adjacent to the *larapuna* site. I can assure the House that this area is not part of the land return and there will be no change to current use by the general public.

Indeed, consistently with the recent survey, special provision is made to ensure that the public continues to have vehicular and pedestrian access to a small part of the transferred land which is used by vehicles accessing the boat ramp. This area is separately delineated on the new Central Plan Register plan.

The *larapuna* site will also retain its historic site status under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* and will continue to be included in the Tasmanian Heritage Register under the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to talk about the significance of Rebecca Creek to the Aboriginal

Community. The site is actually comprised of five separate titles of approximately 148 hectares.

These sites contain sources of spongolite from which Aborigines in the past extracted material for the production of stone tools.

Rebecca Creek is the richest known stone working area in Tasmania. The return of this land will enable the Aboriginal Community to undertake long term planning for the site to ensure its cultural and historical preservation.

Due to the sensitivity of the heritage sites, the property will remain closed to the wider public. It was private property until acquired by the Government in 2009, and has since been unallocated Crown land. There has thus never been any right of public access to this land.

The lack of access is also consistent with professional advice that limiting access is currently

the best way to preserve Aboriginal heritage at Rebecca Creek.

I am pleased to be able to introduce this Bill to the House. It continues the Government's commitment to the process of reconciliation with the Aboriginal Community through land return and the recognition of the importance of the continued preservation of Aboriginal culture.

I commend the Bill to the House.