

I would like to thank the Legislative Council for the opportunity to speak and to congratulate the councillors for not being bullied into a decision earlier before due diligence could be done.

With your permission, I would like to give you all a couple of photos and a copy of my talk if that's ok.

I didn't come here today to debate over trees and the timber industry; there are more qualified people than I to do that. Instead, I am going to talk today about one family and one farm that is directly affected by the decisions that have been made over the last 40 years and the decisions you will make regarding this bill. That family is mine.

As you can see in the first photo which was taken on our farm in 1913, there are 3 generations of my family and in the second there are 4 generations. So that is 7 generations of which I am the 5th, that have lived and worked on this farm.

The 1st photo looks up across our farm to the Great Western Tiers and the 2nd looks down from our mountain track to our farm and the township of Meander.

The track was used, not only for income, it was also for enjoyment. The generations in that 1st photo regularly walked to the top of the mountain for picnics etc and we to this day take family members, sometimes as many as 30 on Easter Monday for a picnic to continue this tradition.

Also in the first photo, the second person from the left is my great uncle Will, who from the age of 16 used our track to go up the mountain to snare possum and wallaby to provide for his family through the depression. In 1942 he went to war to fight for his country so that his family could continue to have the rights and freedoms that he enjoyed. He was blown to bits somewhere on the Malay Peninsula in 1942. I wonder what he would think of the world we live in today.

My family have also run sheep and cattle on the mountain. I can remember as a child, the family tradition of brothers, sisters, cousins, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties and friends taking sheep up the mountain in the summer, to return in the autumn and gather them. I have never been able to do this with my children, as this practice was stopped in the late 1980's due to green lobbying. Another part of our heritage eroded.

We also have a strong history in the local timber industry, my great uncle Joe was killed in the Huntsman working in the bush. Many of my relatives have worked in the bush and in sawmills.

Over my lifetime I have seen our heritage eroded. The “conservation areas” have grown like a cancer to now land at our back door. This is our home. The families in our entire community have thrived through the use of these areas.

We hear people now talking about social licence, communication and consultation. We are now a direct neighbour of this proposed World Heritage Area and we haven't been consulted or even notified of the listing.

We hear people talk about world heritage, what about OUR heritage?

Our ancestors have managed these areas for over 100 years, so well that they are now classed as world heritage and OUR heritage is to be wiped out.

What happens to property values?

What about the fire risk?

What impact will it have on us as landowners that now border world heritage area?

I have talked about one family in one area, but this same story could be told about hundreds of families in a lot of areas all around Tasmania.

In closing I would like to thank you for your time.

I call on you to ignore the contempt that Tony Burke has shown for the Tasmanian Parliament and the Tasmanian people and throw this bill out.

Mike Johnston

Give it Back

