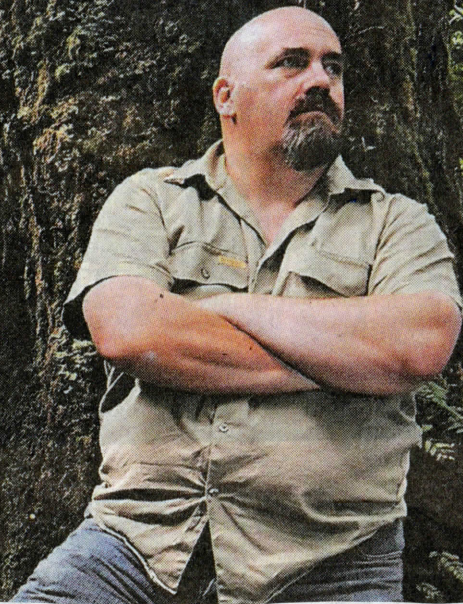


Time to sit down and talk

“You have this crazy scenario where the Government is pushing forward with a conflict-ridden agenda that neither side wants. Save the Tarkine’s SCOTT JORDAN



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TASMANIA'S global edge as a wild and unspoilt island can only be enhanced by abandoning conflict and building a consensus approach to the state's environment, conservation groups and developers agree.

The state's current success — particularly as a tourism destination — has been built on the back of battles fought by the conservation movement over decades, but unity is being shunned in favour of an old approach which is holding us back.

Better planning and an accord between developers and the conservation movement are being backed as ways to propel the state into a unbeatable position as a tourism and agriculture powerhouse.

Laura Kelly, of Environment

Tasmania, laments four lost years under the Liberal Government — which she says has attempted to stoke the fires of division for its own electoral purposes.

She cites policies like the abandoned forest peace deal and the pursuit of four-wheel-drive tracks in the Douglas-Apsley National Park as examples of issues which hold the state back unnecessarily.

“They want the conflict because it enables them to create a straw man to attack, rather than update their political vision, to do the hard work,” she said.

“I think it would be really, really nice to see an end to the divisive politics in a culture-war approach to natural resource management,” she said.

“What we see is a polarisation of environmental protection versus job creation which I think

in a state that depends so heavily on tourism and, in Tasmania, its clean image to so many of its exports, is almost a false dichotomy.”

Ms Kelly says the state has a large number of people who are deeply protective of the state's environment, and who cannot simply be ignored.

Vica Bayley, of the Wilderness Society, says Brand Tasmania is built on wild and unspoilt nature but the state has been too slow to build a mature consensus about how to use that as a key for future growth.

Involving the environment movement is key, he says.

“The tourism industry is currently busy capitalising on the work the environment movement has done over the last 30 or 40 years. The tourism industry — with the exception of a bunch

of individuals — hasn't lifted a finger to help — but are now cashing in on it.

“I would have thought it would be in the tourism industry's interest in supporting the protection of the environment and doing it collaboratively.

“You know, let's have a consultation with the conservation movement and the broader community about the tourism opportunities in those forests. You know, let's go agree upfront what those tourism opportunities are but we haven't got these new conflicts being created.

Jenny Weber, of the Bob Brown Foundation, says protecting the Tarkine in the state's North-West was the state's next big environmental campaign.

“We will be lobbying for all candidates in the state election to be committing to a Tarkine on

national park and World Heritage listing and so they're going to be our focus right up to the state election.

“We've got a march for Tarkine that we're going to run at the end of February — we're really going to focus big on trying to get Labor to commit to a national park for the Tarkine.

“I think the North-West economy and the North-West region is really waiting for the Tarkine to reveal itself as one of the iconic areas of Tasmania and one of the things that we've really tried to be using in our campaign is that they will benefit, and you see the Tarkine coast brand being pushed, for example, being a Circular Head organisation — but 10 years ago, you would have been hassled about using the name Tarkine.

Scott Jordan, of Save the

Tarkine, says the area is an example of potential that is being squandered by needless conflict.

“You have this crazy scenario where the Government is pushing forward with a conflict-ridden agenda that neither side wants.

“We've seen huge expansion in tourism off the back of the Tarkine and we've seen local produce being promoted off that Tarkine brand. The fact that this area's become synonymous with clean and all those wilderness values and pristine sort of environment has meant people have been able to sell Tarkine Oysters and Tarkine bottled water and Tarkine beef.

“But the brand has to be authentic, you can't sell oysters or beef off the back of the Tarkine if the world has seen it clearfelled and laid waste.”