



Government Media Statement

May 2002

Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Bass Strait Island Flora Book Gains International Recognition

Tasmania's Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment has been recognised internationally for its contribution towards the International Biodiversity Observation Year.

The DPIWE published *One Hundred Islands: The Flora of the Outer Furneaux* has been recognised by the International Biodiversity Observation Year Program Director as an important contribution to raising awareness of the value of the world's natural landscapes.

"Not only is the book an important contribution to science, conservation and education – but it is very, very beautiful," Program Director Gina Adams said.

"I'm sure it will be successful in catching the eye of many people who don't usually pick up such guides and therefore have a strong impact on raising awareness of these diverse and important flora.

"We are extremely grateful for all the ways that you have helped to draw attention to International Biodiversity Observation Year through the book."

Dr Adams said International Biodiversity Observation Year had been established by scientists to focus on raising awareness of the importance of the world's biological diversity which people were a part of as well.

"Despite the Earth's biodiversity providing a capital resource that provides vital eco-system services, goods such as food, fuel, fibre and medicines, it remains a poorly understood frontier with an estimated 90 per cent of species yet to be discovered and described."

One Hundred Islands co-author Stephen Harris said they believed their book was an important part of International Biodiversity Observation Year as it aimed to provide a record and greater understanding of the vegetation of the outer islands of the Furneaux Group.

"We're hoping this book will assist people to appreciate a fascinating part of Australia," Mr Harris said.

"It is the first attempt at a systematic description, analysis and celebration of the flora and vegetation of the one hundred islands in the Outer Furneaux.

Mr Harris said the importance of the islands and islets could not be underestimated.

"The region is at the junction of two major sea-currents and occupies several distinctive marine provinces as well as lying at the eastern extreme of a climatic belt," he said.

"All this contributes to an area that is home to a diversity of plant communities – many of which are only found in this area. When you add in the natural and cultural history of the area it provides us with a remarkable region to study the interactions of fire, humans, sea-level rise and isolation of the flora of southeastern Australia."

Mr Harris said although not all of the islands in the region are pristine, there were some that were still untouched.

"From all our work it is very encouraging to see there are islands that demonstrate that human existence can co-exist with important natural values."