

TERRY HIE HIE TRADITIONAL OWNERS & WESTERN CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Media Release

Thursday 24th February 2005

Renewed Call for Aboriginal-owned National Park

One year after their blockade of logging, traditional owners of Terry Hie Hie and conservationists will re-assemble today in Mission State Forest near Moree to renew their call for an Aboriginal-owned National Park. They seek the declaration of a new 16,000 hectare Terry Hie Hie National Park made up of seven existing State Forests and one existing Nature Reserve. They also want the NSW government to add the area to the schedule for Aboriginal ownership when the new Park is created.

The NSW government has announced that it will be making a decision next month on the future of the public forests in the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion, an area between Dubbo and the Queensland border.

"Terry Hie Hie is our special area. We are here to make an offer to the government and the people of NSW. If you give us back this little bit of our traditional land, we promise to work with you to protect it forever in a beautiful National Park. I reckon that's a fair deal," said Mr Lou Swan, an elder of the Terry Hie Hie traditional owners. Aboriginal ownership of National Parks with cultural significance has been possible in NSW since 1996 under arrangements similar to Uluru and Kakadu. "An Aboriginal National Park will be good for the land, good for our culture, good work for our young people and good for everybody," added Mr Swan.

The Western Conservation Alliance, backed by peak environment groups, wants the declaration of large new conservation reserves to protect endangered western woodlands. "Mission State Forest is an area of high conservation value in the Brigalow Belt South. It includes rare woodlands and threatened species and has the added importance of its cultural value. The conservation movement supports Aboriginal ownership of a great new National Park at Terry Hie Hie," said Bev Smiles from the Western Conservation Alliance.

"This area is the last big bit of bush that Aboriginal people can connect with in the Moree area. After we stopped the logging here last year we put a detailed proposal to the government and this has wide public support. Our old people started this struggle and we won't give up until we get our land back. We have written to the Premier and his Ministers again recently, renewing our call for an Aboriginal-owned National Park. Now the government should agree," said traditional owner Floyd Tighe.

For more information:

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