



**REPORT OF THE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON**

**ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**IN RELATION TO**

**1999 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF**

**PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC WORKS AND**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES**

Presented by the Hon Christine Sharp MLC (Chairman)

Report 5

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Date first appointed:**

June 26 1997

### **Terms of Reference:**

1. A Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development is established.
2. The committee consists of 5 members.
3. The functions of the committee are to inquire into and report to the House on:
  - (a) any matter in Western Australia concerning or relating to the planning for or management, use or development of natural resources and the environment having particular regard to demographic, economic, ecological, technological and lifestyle and settlement factors and concerns; and
  - (b) any Bill or matter referred to it by the House.

### **Members at the date of this report:**

Hon Dr Christine Sharp MLC (Chair)

Hon Dexter Davies MLC

Hon Norm Kelly MLC

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich MLC

Hon Greg Smith MLC

### **Staff at the date of this report:**

Ms Anne Turner, Advisory/Research Officer

Ms Connie Fierro, Committee Clerk

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**IN RELATION TO THE**

**1999 NATIONAL CONFERENCES OF PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEES**

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**1 ORGANISATION OF THE CONFERENCES**

- 1.1 The Tasmanian Standing Committee on Public Works hosted the 1999 National Conferences of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees at Parliament House in Hobart between September 13 and 15 1999.
- 1.2 Two separate conferences were held consecutively, two days being devoted to the Public Works Committees' Conference and a day to the Environment Committees' Conference. A list of participants for each of the two conferences is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Western Australia was represented at the conferences by the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development. Hon Christine Sharp MLC, Chairman and Hon Dexter Davies MLC were delegated to attend. The Committee Clerk, Ms Connie Fierro, and the Advisory/Research Officer, Ms Anne Turner, also attended.
- 1.4 This is the second consecutive year that Western Australia has sent representatives to the conferences. Victoria was the only State not to attend this year as its Parliament was prorogued prior to the conferences.
- 1.5 The host Committee is a five member committee of the Parliament of Tasmania, chaired by Mr Don Wing MP. Mr Wing and the staff of the Committee organised a full and stimulating program of speakers and site visits, using the facilities of the Tasmanian Parliament. Thanks are due to the host Committee and to Hon Michael Field, Premier of Tasmania 1989-1992 who opened the conference. Mr Field's opening address was about the role of the Member of Parliament and how it is the highest expression of civic action.

## **2 CONFERENCES PROGRAM**

- 2.1 The first morning of the Public Works Committees' Conference involved each State and Territory reporting on the work of their Committees during the last 12 months. After this the day's theme was heritage issues. Delegates were addressed by the Tasmanian Heritage Council and in the afternoon participated in site inspections, including the Centre for the Arts, Temple House and Highfield House which are major heritage sites in Hobart. Delegates visited Government House both as an heritage site and also to receive the hospitality of the Governor and Lady Green at an official reception that evening.
- 2.2 The theme for the second day was Capital Works programmes and Public/Private Sector Partnership Arrangements. The main presentation concerned the Tasmanian Government's involvement with *International Catamarans and Metal Training Facility ("INCAT")* as well as the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Centre, the latter being an educational interactive theme park facility for tourists.
- 2.3 In the afternoon, Delegates visited the Heritage listed offices of Forestry Tasmania. This site originally operated as a sawmill and timber outlet. Timbers from the sawmill and sheds were reused throughout the new section as exposed beams and trusses. The site itself is both a working government department and a living eco system open to the public. An enormous glass dome houses an indoor forest where both wet and dry forests types are represented. Understorey species include native laurel and leatherwood. The facility is a testament to eco tourism for all to experience a small living forest within a city.
- 2.4 The Environment Committees' Conference was held on the third day and again involved each State reporting on the work of their Committees during the last 12 months. In the afternoon, Delegates heard presentations about the rectification of Mt Lyell and Tasmania's Land Information system, the latter being a unique computer programme that contains environmental information about every registered parcel of land in the State. In the afternoon Delegates inspected the Derwent River Aquatas Atlantic salmon aquaculture facility.
- 2.5 Each Committee reported to one or both conferences on activities since the last conferences in July 1998. Western Australia's Committee reported to the Environment Committees' Conference. Dr Sharp made a report on behalf of the Western Australian delegation. A copy of the full program for the Conferences is attached as Appendix 2.

### **3 OUTCOMES OF THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES' CONFERENCE**

#### **3.1 Role of a Public Works Committee**

3.1.1 As reported last year, Western Australia does not have a public works committee. The reports of committees from other jurisdictions suggest that most matters dealt with by public works committees in other jurisdictions could, in this State, be dealt with by one or more of the Legislative Council's Public Administration, Ecologically Sustainable Development or Estimates and Financial Operations Committees, and the Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee.

3.1.2 A feature of the public works committee in some jurisdictions is that a proposal to undertake public works requiring expenditure over a set limit cannot proceed until it has been referred to, reported on by the committee, and the Government has tabled a response to the report. However, generally a public works committee does not have the power to veto or impose conditions on a public work. Exceptionally, the Australian Capital Territory permits its public works parliamentary committee to consider the full list of proposed capital works in the forthcoming year before the budget bills. This gives the government time to amend its draft programme in light of committee recommendations. The Chairman reported that over the years, nearly all recommendations have been adopted.

#### **3.2 Public Works Committees and Private Sector Projects**

3.2.1 The Reports of the Public Works Committees reinforces 1998's message that increasingly public works tend to be carried out by the private sector and that this raises problems for the ability of Parliament to scrutinise and evaluate projects. For example: the Hon Judi Moylan MP, Chairman of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee questioned the future role of public works committees in light of the continuing devolution of government service provision. Mrs Moylan said that contracting out of construction activities to the private sector means that there are large publicly funded projects which by nature of various lease back and other contractual arrangements, escape the purview of their Committee.

3.2.2 Other Delegates expressed similar concerns. For example, the Hon Peter Lewis MP, Chairman, South Australian Public Works Committee, said that contracting out obscures accountability. By contrast, the Tasmanian experience appears to be quite different with productive relationships and excellent channels of communication between government and the private sector. The Tasmanian Committee ascribed this to the small size of the State.

- 3.2.3 Mr Neal Roberts MP, Chairman of the Queensland Committee of Public Works, described two public works projects which were tendered to private contractors. One involved accommodation for seniors and the other concerned two private hospitals delivering public health services. Mr Roberts said that in neither case could the Committee decide that there was better value for money from private contracting, and it was inconclusive that the private contractor could deliver public health systems better.
- 3.2.4 Other delegates, for example, from New South Wales and South Australia, raised concerns about the "commercial in confidence" of documents causing problems with accountability. By comparison, the Australian Capital Territory delegation reported that this is not an issue and their committee has no problem demanding documents. This is because in the Australian Capital Territory, the private sector expects documents will be tabled and it is in fact government departments that are fearful of demanding documents, not the private sector. Delegates continue to verbalise a lack of confidence in their ability to adequately review projects which have significant private sector involvement.
- 3.2.5 The plenary session included a discussion on the conduct of public meetings. Delegates discussed the importance of citizens attending and contributing to such public meetings with this being a valuable adjunct to the inquiry process. Delegates outlined jurisdictional differences in the swearing in of witnesses; the Commonwealth delegation for example, commented that this procedure needed to be more informal for indigenous Australians and was so practised during the Bradshaw Army Base Inquiry. Neither Queensland nor the Australian Capital Territory swear in witnesses, the rationale being that it is a redundant process as Parliament is a court. In New South Wales, all witnesses are subpoenaed, simply as a matter of routine, not because witnesses are reluctant. Other jurisdictions invite and rarely subpoena. The Tasmanian delegation thought it was better for witnesses to be sworn in case of perjury.

#### **4 CONFERENCE THEME: PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE**

- 4.1 As outlined above, the Tasmanian Committee on Public Works presented an informative session on the Tasmanian government's productive relationship with INCAT, a private company manufacturing gigantic catamarans. INCAT has developed a training culture, born out of the necessity for the company to have a consistent workforce. INCAT has developed its own onsite educational facility called the *College of Aluminium Training* in co-operation with the Tasmanian TAFE.
- 4.2 As a major employer of young Tasmanians, the company realised that in order to recruit trained staff it would have to establish its own pool of skilled workers. The College is



the outcome of a partnership between Government and industry. Delegates visited both the factory floor, inspecting an almost completed catamaran and the College itself, where classroom teaching and hands on learning was observed.

## **5 OUTCOMES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES' CONFERENCE**

### **5.1 Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 Delegates reported on a variety of interesting and varied environmental projects. These included:

- the rectification of Mt Lyell in Tasmania. Here, one hundred years of past copper mining activity today causes two tonnes of copper to leach daily into the Queen and King Rivers. Reclamation of the copper is being trialed as well as tree planting. Interestingly, the local community was averse to trees being planted on denuded mountains because as a bare landscape, it is a significant tourist attraction. Hence the remediation process itself has become an eco tourism industry;
- an inquiry into water catchment management by the Commonwealth;
- fish stocks of the inland waters, especially the Murray River in South Australia;
- the decimated pilchard industry in South Australia;
- a tree management protection strategy in the Australian Capital Territory to plant one billion trees;
- the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly Sessional Committee on the Environment was of particular interest. The Hon Maurice Rioli spoke of the environmental effects of mining in Kakadu. Mr Rioli referred to the social impacts of mining on indigenous people in the regions. Mr Rioli said the Mirrar people, the traditional owners of the Jabiluka site, disagree with mining, claiming their rights and culture have been ignored or are at risk by Government actions. Mr Rioli said the Mirrar people represent one of 28 Aboriginal land owner groups of Kakadu and their land only comprises 5% of the park. Currently the project is on hold waiting the outcome of a social impact study. However, the Kongami Aboriginal Corporation, whose leader is the daughter of the lessor who signed the original agreement in 1982, is currently fighting to close the mine. Mr Rioli said things had quietened since 1998 and Jabiluka is now on hold to allow for more consultation with Aboriginal groups. The mining company is supportive of the social impact study.

## **5.2 Western Australia Committee Report**

- 5.2.1 Hon Christine Sharp MLC, Chairman, presented the report of this Committee to the conference. Unfortunately, no Hansard facility was available to record the speech.
- 5.2.2 By way of summary, Dr Sharp described the circumstances of the Committee's establishment, its two earlier Reports: the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill in April 1998 and the Regional Forest Agreement Process in August 1998, as well as work in progress. Dr Sharp mentioned her unique position of being the only member with a background in environmental management, that is, five years with the Environmental Protection Authority.
- 5.2.3 Dr Sharp referred to the Brundtland Commission and ecologically sustainable development ("**ESD**") as an approach to sustainable development, explaining that ESD was a compatible approach for balancing the economic requirement of jobs and the need for environmental protection. Dr Sharp emphasised that ESD can reduce the tension and conflict caused by these competing interests. An advantage is that such an approach then reduces the conflict between developers and conservation conscious community groups.
- 5.2.4 In relation to forests, Dr Sharp referred to three definitions of sustainability in common usage, of which ecologically sustainable forest management ("**ESFM**") is the highest expression. However, Dr Sharp explained that a full accounting of the utility of ESFM as an approach to forest sustainability is not capable of evaluation in Western Australia for some time because there are too few indicators being monitored.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 When the Ecologically Sustainable Development Committee first proposed travelling to Tasmania, the following reasons for attending were listed:
- to obtain an understanding of the kinds of matters dealt with by similar committees around Australia during the past year;
  - to compare WA's performance in its second year of existence with the performance of other committees in the past year; and
  - to learn the process of inquiry from other Committees.

- 6.2 This Committee believes all these objectives have been met and the networking from three days of both formal and informal interaction was very valuable.
- 6.3 Delegates Hon Christine Sharp MLC and Hon Dexter Davies MLC are happy to discuss any of the matters raised in this report with interested readers. The Committee looks forward to the 1999 conferences in Darwin.

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**Hon Christine Sharp MLC**

**Date:**



## **APPENDIX 1**



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**APPENDIX 1****DELEGATES - PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES CONFERENCES<sup>1</sup>****Invited Speakers**

Hon Michael Field

Mr Peter James, Chairman, Tasmanian Heritage Council

Mr Graeme Corney, Senior heritage Advisor, Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment

Mr Andrew Grimsdale, Forward Viney & Partners, Architects

Mr David Archer, Director of Property Services, University of Tasmania

Ms Lorraine Jenyns, Head of the School of Arts

Mr Paul Murphy, General Manager, Institute of Industry, TAFE Tasmania

Mr Dennis Baker, Manager HR & IR, INCAT Tasmania

Mr Robert Vincent, Certificate for Construction, Conservation of Cultural Heritage Places, TAFE Tasmania

Mr Tony Hughson, Director, Office of Antarctic Affairs

Ms Jennifer Trethewey, General Manager, "Antarctic Adventure"

Mr Terry Hall, Institute of Industry, TAFE Tasmania

**Parliament of Tasmania - Standing Committee on Public Works**

Hon Don Wing MLC, Chairman

Mr Bryan Green MHA

Mr Rene Hidding MHA

Mr Steven Kons MHA

Mr Shane Donnelly, Secretary

**Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia - Public Works Committee**

Hon Judi Moylan MP, Committee Chair

Mr Colin Hollis MP

Mr Bjarne Nordin, Secretary

Mr Michael Fetter, Assistant Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> This material is reproduced precisely from the Conferences Folder.

**Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Standing Committee on Urban Services**

Mr Harold Hird MLA, Chair  
Mr Dave Rugendyke MLA  
Mr Simon Corbell MLA  
Mr Rod Power, Secretary

**Parliament of New South Wales - Standing Committee on Public Works**

Ms Diane Beamer MP, Chair  
Mr Matt Brown MP  
Mr Kerry Hickey MP  
Mr Andrew Humpherson MP  
Mr Antony Windsor MP  
Dr Bill Dunbar, Director

**Parliament of Queensland -Public Works Committee**

Mr Neil Roberts MP, Committee Chair  
Hon Kevin Lingard MP  
Mr Les Dunn, Research Director

**Parliament of South Australia -Public Works Committee**

Mr Peter Lewis MP, Chairman  
Ms Gay Thompson MP  
Mr Mitch Williams MP  
Mr Joe Scalzi MP  
Ms Lyn Anderson, Secretary

**Parliament of South Australia - Environment, Resources & Development Committee**

Mr Ivan Venning MP, Chair  
Ms Stephanie Key MP  
Ms Heather Hill, Research Officer



**Parliament of Western Australia - Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable  
Development**

Dr Christine Sharp MP, Chairman

Mr Dexter Davies MP

Ms Connie Fierro, Committee Clerk

Ms Anne Turner, Research Officer

**DELEGATES - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES CONFERENCES**

**Invited Speakers**

Hon David Llewellyn MHA, Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment and Minister for Police

Ms Lois Koehnken, Consultant to the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Mr Robert Twin, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Mr Graham Green, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Mr Peter Sheldon - Collins, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Mr Greg Dowson, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Ms Karen Parsons, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Mr Craig Harding, Aquatas Pty Ltd.

Mr Joe Curia, Aquatas Pty Ltd.

**Parliament of Tasmania - Standing Committee on Public Works**

Hon Don Wing MLC, Chairman

Mr Bryan Green MHA

Mr Rene Hidding MHA

Mr Steven Kons MHA

Mr Shane Donnelly, Secretary

**Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage**

Mrs Dana Vale MP

Mr Ian Dundas, Secretary

**Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Standing Committee on Urban Services**

Mr Harold Hird MLA, Chair

Mr Dave Rugendyke MLA

Mr Simon Corbell MLA

Mr Rod Power, Secretary

**Parliament of New South Wales - Standing Committee on Public Works**

Ms Diane Beamer MP, Chair  
Mr Matt Brown MP  
Mr Kerry Hickey MP  
Mr Andrew Humpherson MP  
Mr Antony Windsor MP  
Dr Bill Dunbar, Director

**Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory - Sessional Committee on the Environment**

Mr Maurice Rioli MLA  
Mr Graham Gadd, Secretary

**Parliament of South Australia - Environment, Resources & Development Committee**

Mr Ivan Venning MP, Chair  
Ms Stephanie Key MP  
Ms Heather Hill, Research Officer

**Parliament of South Australia - Public Works Committee**

Mr Peter Lewis MP, Chairman  
Ms Gay Thompson MP  
Mr Mitch Williams MP  
Mr Joe Scalzi MP  
Ms Lyn Anderson, Secretary

**Parliament of Western Australia - Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development**

Dr Christine Sharp MP, Chairman  
Mr Dexter Davies MP  
Ms Connie Fierro, Committee Clerk  
Ms Anne Turner, Research Officer



## **APPENDIX 2**



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**APPENDIX 2**  
**CONFERENCES PROGRAM**

**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES**

**Monday 13 September 1999**

- 9 am Registration
- 9.30am Welcome by Hon Don Wing MLC, Chairman of the Tasmanian Standing Committee on Public Works
- 9.35am Official Opening by Hon Michael Field, Premier of Tasmania 1989-1992

**Session One**

(Chair - Hon Don Wing)

9.45am Committee Reports

Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia - Standing Committee on Works  
Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory - Standing Committee on Urban Services  
Parliament of New South Wales - Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament of Queensland - Public Works Committee  
Parliament of South Australia - Public Works Committee  
Parliament of Tasmania- Standing Committee on Public Works

11am Morning Tea

**Session Two- Management of Heritage Assets**

(Chair - Mr Bryan Green MHA)

- 11.15am Principal Address by Mr Peter James, Chairman, Tasmanian Heritage Council
- 11.45 am Case Studies  
Mr Graeme Corney, Senior heritage Advisor, Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment  
Government House  
Highfield House  
Temple House

Mr Andrew Grimsdale, Forward Viney & Partners, Architects  
Centre for the Arts

12.30pm Mr Robert Vincent, Certificate for Construction, Conservation of Cultural  
Heritage Places, TAFE Tasmania

1.00pm Lunch

**Session Three**

Site Inspection - Centre for the Arts, Temple House

2.20pm Board coach at Parliament House for site inspections.  
Centre for the Arts, Hunter Street, Hobart

Mr David Archer, Director of Property Services, University of  
Tasmania

Ms Lorraine Jenyns, Head of the School of Arts

Mr Andrew Grimsdale, Forward Viney & Partners, Architects

Temple House, cnr Liverpool and Argyle Streets, Hobart

Mr Graeme Corney, Senior heritage Advisor, Department of Primary  
Industries, Water & Environment

4.45pm Arrive Parliament House for collection of Delegates' partners

4.50pm Depart for Government House

5.00pm Official reception at Government House hosted by his Excellency the  
Governor of Tasmania, Sir Guy and Lady Green

6.00pm Return to Parliament House

Evening free

**Tuesday 14 September 1999**

8.45 am Reception Hall (coffee and tea)

9.00am Reconvene - Members Lounge



**Session One-Plenary Session**

(Chair - Mr Rene Hidding MHA)

Draft Public Works Program-Paper by ACT Standing Committee on Urban Services

Approaches to Public Meetings - General discussion

10.15am Morning Tea

**Session Two**

(Chair - Mr Bryan Green MHA)

10.30 am Case Study - International Catamarans and Metal Fabrication Training Facility

Mr Paul Murphy, General Manager, Institute of Industry, TAFE Tasmania

Mr Dennis Baker, Manager HR & IR, INCAT Tasmania

11.30am Case Study- Antarctic and Southern Ocean Centre/"Antarctic Adventure"  
Depart Parliament House for Salamanca Place

Briefing and conducted tour of the facility

Mr Tony Hughson, Director, Office of Antarctic Affairs

Ms Jennifer Trethewey, General Manager, "Antarctic Adventure"

Return to Parliament House

1.00pm Lunch

**Session Three**

Site Inspection - College of Aluminium Training and INCAT Tasmania Pty Ltd.

2.15 pm Depart Parliament House by coach

2.30pm Disembark at College of Aluminium Training for inspection of facilities

Mr Paul Murphy, General Manager, Institute of Industry, TAFE Tasmania

Mr Terry Hall, Institute of Industry, TAFE Tasmania

Proceed to International Catamarans for inspection of facilities and briefing

5.00pm Return to Parliament House

Optional tour of Parliament House

7.00pm            Joint Conferences Dinner - Siscos on the Pier, Level 1, Murray Street Pier,  
Hobart  
Hosted by Hon Don Wing MLC, Deputy Chairman of Committees of the  
Legislative Council and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Public  
Works

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEES CONFERENCES**

### **Wednesday, 15 September 1999**

8.30 am            Registration  
Reception (coffee and tea)

9.00am            Members' Lounge  
Welcome by Hon Don Wing MLC, Chairman of the Standing Committee on  
Public Works

9.05am            Official Opening by Hon David Llewellyn MHA, Minister for Primary  
Industries, Water and Environment

### **Session One**

(Chair - Hon Don Wing)

9.15 am            Committee Reports  
Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia - House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage  
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory Sessional Committee on the  
Environment  
Parliament of South Australia - Environment, Resources and  
Development Committee  
Parliament of Western Australia - Standing Committee on Ecologically  
Sustainable Development

10.30am           Morning Tea

11.00am           Board coach for Level 6, Lands Building, 134 Macquarie Street, Hobart

**Session Two**

11.15am Rectification of past environmental damage - The Challenge of Mount Lyall - Presentation by Ms Lois Koehnken, Consultant to the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

11.45 am Tasmanian's Land Information System- Environmental Applications - Presentation by Mr Robert Twin, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

**Session Three**

Site Inspection - River Derwent Environmental Rehabilitation/Aquaculture Industry North-West Bay

12.30pm Depart Waterman's Dock on board MV "Cartela" for inspection of River Derwent environmental rehabilitation/Aquaculture Industry North-West Bay

Lunch

Presentations on:-

Derwent Estuary Management Program - Mr Graham Green, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

River works projects to remediate environmental problems - Mr Peter Sheldon- Collins, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Stormwater management issues - Mr Greg Dowson, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Introduced marine pests - Ms Karen Parsons, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

Disembark at North-West Bay for inspection of Aquatas aquaculture facility

Mr Craig Harding and Mr Joe Curia, Aquatas Pty Ltd.

Return by coach to Hobart

Evening free

