PREFACE

The Lake Country of Tasmania - high, flattish and bejewelled with lakes - is unique in Tasmania and even in Australasia. Indeed there are few similar places in the world; Finland and the barrens of Canada are similar but at a much lower elevation; parts of the Tibetan Plateau are also lake-bestrewn, but at a much higher elevation. Lakes are common in other regions - Switzerland, British Isles, Norway - but in mountainous areas. There are over 4,000 lakes in 10,000 square kilometres on the Central Plateau, a region readily defined by a sharp rim on the west, north and east from Travellers Range to Table Mountain but sloping gradually to the south where the 600 m contour may be taken as a convenient boundary.

Most of the lakes were cut by an ice sheet a couple of hundred metres thick within the last 25,000 years. Ice accumulated on the area because of its altitude, an altitude produced by uplift of hundreds of metres, during the last 70 million years, of an area underlain by a great sheet or sheets of once molten rock, dolerite. The sheets of dolerite were injected into the Earth's crust about 165 million years ago as the supercontinent, Gondwana, began to break up.

The rare or unique geological and geomorphological features of the Central Plateau provide a substrate supporting unusual plant communities. Many animal species, some of which are themselves rare or endemic to the plateau, depend directly or indirectly on these plant communities.

The abundance of water, the altitude and the topography make the area attractive not only to the biologist and bush-walker but also to the grazier, the timber-getter, the fisherman and the power engineer. All these and others have claims to the enjoyment and use of the natural resources of the Plateau. The basis of these claims and their co-ordination in the long term optimal use of the natural resources form an important theme stated in the keynote address by Dr. Alec. Costin and underlying many of the subsequent papers.

It is peculiarly appropriate that this area should be the subject of this symposium, the first of its kind in the annals of the Royal Society of Tasmania. The symposium

and the associated excursion arose as a suggestion from a sub-committee (Mr. W.F. Ellis, Dr. E.R. Guiler, Mr. G.E.A. Hale and Mr. M.R. Banks as convener) appointed by the Council of the Royal Society to investigate the feasibility of regional symposia. In making arrangements for the symposium, the sub-committee has enjoyed the full support of the Council and of the Council of the Northern Branch as well as of many individuals. Special mention should be made of the contribution by Mr. W.F. Ellis O.B.E. who was responsible for accommodation and transport arrangements, and by Dr. D. Martin who made staff available to assist with preparation of this book. The Hydro-Electric Commission, the Inland Fisheries Commission and the Department of Geology, University of Tasmania also made facilities available which made possible the organisation of this Symposium and printing of this volume.

I hope that this will not be the last of such regional symposia or similar activities bringing together all the members of the Society in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and in attempts to synthesize knowledge to the common good.

Maxwell R. Banks
Senior Vice-President.