



# PRIME MINISTER

## AGREEMENT ON TASMANIAN WOODCHIP LICENCES

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments about the conditions for exports of woodchips was signed in Canberra today.

The Memorandum was signed by the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, Mr John Kerin, the Tasmanian Premier, Mr Robin Gray, and the State Minister for Forests, Mr Ray Groom.

Mr Kerin said the industry could now proceed on a firm basis.

"The community can be assured that the woodchip operations will be carried out in an environmentally responsible manner."

The development of the Memorandum followed negotiation to ensure that the Commonwealth's demands, announced on 16 December 1985, would be met.

"Included in the Memorandum is an agreed buffer zone to protect the wilderness values of the South West National Park".

Commenting on the Memorandum, the Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, stressed that in the event of disagreement with Tasmania where forestry operations would adversely affect National Estate values all the Commonwealth's powers would be used to protect those values.

Mr Hawke emphasised decisions would be taken by the Commonwealth only when appropriate consideration had been given to environmental aspects.

"As part of this process a Commonwealth consultative committee, which will include environmental experts, will be set up," he said.

"No logging in the National Estate areas will be permitted before the formal process of consultation, as set out in the Memorandum, has been completed and the Commonwealth is satisfied that the National Estate values will be protected."

Other items covered by the Memorandum include the supply of information and the monitoring of woodchip operations, compliance with management prescriptions, introduction of improved forest practices, five yearly reviews of forest operations, requirements for regeneration of Crown and private land, provision of adequate reserves to protect rare and endangered species and implementation of a program of research into matters of environmental concern.

"These are all matters that the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Cohen, had recommended to me as a precondition for the renewal of Tasmanian export licences," Mr Kerin said.

"I believe the Memorandum and the export licences provide a means of ensuring that the issues raised by Mr Cohen in his assessment of the environmental impact statement on Tasmanian woodchip operations, will be covered in a practical and effective manner.

"As I said at the time of the decision, the Government's approach is to seek an appropriate balance between the interests of workers, industry and the environment.

"The Memorandum enables industry and employment to be maintained, while the environment is protected and subject to continuing review", Mr Kerin said.

"Now the document has been settled, I will be looking to quickly put in place the necessary supporting mechanisms including research arrangements and a consultative committee."

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12 June 1986