



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT NATIONAL ESTATE VALUES IN TASMANIAN FORESTS

The Prime Minister, the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr John Kerin, and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, announced today that the Government will oppose forestry operations in National Estate areas of Tasmania until it is satisfied that National Estate values are protected or there are not feasible alternatives.

This followed Cabinet consideration of Tasmanian forestry operations today.

Cabinet agreed that Mr Kerin should, in accordance with the 1985 Memorandum of Understanding, actively pursue negotiations with the Tasmanian Minister for Forests, Mr Groom, with a view to reaching agreement on feasible alternatives to forestry operations continuing - otherwise than in areas currently being logged - in the Lemonthyme, Southern Forests, Douglas River and Jackey's Marsh/Quamby Bluff/Western Tiers National Estate areas.

In the event that agreement is unable to be reached, the Commonwealth will - again pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding - seek agreement with the Tasmanian Government to establish a formal review to determine whether there are such prudent and feasible alternatives: see the attached draft Terms of Reference.

If the Tasmanian Government should not agree to a review along the lines proposed, then the Commonwealth will establish it pursuant to its own enquiry powers.

The objective would be to complete any review before the next logging season commences towards the end of 1987.

The object of the proposed consultations and, if necessary, formal review process, is to settle once and for all the question as to whether feasible alternatives do exist, as has been claimed by the conservation movement, to logging in the contentious National Estate areas.

The Ministers said that they were conscious in reaching this decision of the importance of the forestry industry to the State of Tasmania and of its important economic, social and employment implications. They believed that a full examination now of the key and contentious National Estate areas will ensure that future operations can proceed without contention and confrontation. It will lay a basis for the continuing strengthening of forestry production in Tasmania in a way that protects National Estate values.

During the course of the consultations and any subsequent review the Commonwealth will oppose forestry operations continuing in the area of the Lemonthyme in which the Commonwealth's Advisory Committee on Tasmanian Forestry Operations recommends no forestry operations take place, the Southern Forests (except for areas currently being logged) and the Douglas River region.

If forestry operations should commence in the Lemonthyme or Southern Forests areas during the course of the proposed consultations and any review, the Commonwealth will seek their protection under the 'universal heritage' provisions of the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act.

The Government is convinced that for the period of the review at least there are ample feasible alternative sources of supply available to replace those in the three areas. Accordingly, not a single job need be lost as a result of the Government's decisions.

The Ministers said that as far as Jackey's Marsh is concerned, logging would continue for the remainder of this season in the present coupe, as surveys of plant species had been carried out and steps had now been taken to protect these plant species in the immediate logging area. However, the Ministers expressed their concern regarding any future logging in Jackey's Marsh and will include this area in the proposed consultations and, if necessary, review.

The Government's decision has been conveyed to the Tasmanian Government, and the Commonwealth looks forward to the Tasmanian Government's co-operation in seeing that National Estate values are protected and jobs are maintained. This is in the interests of all Australians, the Ministers said.