



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

13 FEBRUARY

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER; THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS, SPORT, THE ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM AND TERRITORIES, SENATOR RICHARDSON; AND THE MINISTER FOR RESOURCES, SENATOR COOK.

The Federal Government has endorsed an agreement with the Victorian Government on forestry issues in East Gippsland.

The agreement, which guarantees resource security to industry and protects jobs, provides for an immediate cessation of logging in the National Estate this season.

In particular, the agreement is on the basis that its implementation will cause no loss of jobs. All of the contracts between the Victorian Government and the industry will be honoured. We reiterate undertakings provided earlier today in a separate media statement.

The conservation movement has repeatedly said that there is no need to log the National Estate to meet industry contracts. The review mechanism provides the opportunity to test that claim fully and openly.

Alternative nearby forestry resources for the remainder of this season have already been identified by the Victorian Government and will be made available this week.

This agreement in no way prejudices any future government decisions on a pulp mill.

The agreement will also establish a process for reviewing alternatives to logging the existing National Estate in future seasons. This review mechanism will involve the two Governments and all interested parties - unions, industry, conservation groups and the local community.

The agreement will provide \$6 million for identified forestry projects over the three years 1989/90 to 1991/92 with a commitment to review funding for the years to 1998/99.

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Another \$4 million will be provided over the first three years of the agreement to assist plantation establishment. Funding for plantations beyond this period will be addressed in the light of the outcome of the Resource Assessment Commission's Forests Inquiry and various Victorian Government studies already announced or underway.

The Commonwealth reaffirms its policy that where prudent and feasible alternatives to forestry operations in the National Estate do not exist, then logging can be allowed, provided that action is taken to minimise damage to those values for which the area is registered.

The Commonwealth will arrange meetings between State Governments, industry, unions, the conservation movement and the Australian Heritage Commission to discuss the Register of the National Estate and the processes for and implications of future listings.