



PRIME MINISTER

31/95

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP TASMANIA AND THE NATIONAL FOREST POLICY STATEMENT

I welcome the signing by Tasmania of the National Forest Policy Statement. The signing means that the Statement is now truly national, with all States and Territories party to it.

The Federal Government and the Tasmanian Government are now in a position to work together to provide a long term future for an ecologically sustainable timber industry and to put into place a system of comprehensive, adequate and representative reserves to protect Tasmania's unique forests.

The Commonwealth and the Tasmanian Government have also signed a Statement of Intent on forest management. This will enable an early start to be made on the environmental, heritage, social and economic studies necessary for the development of a Regional Forest Agreement (RFA).

Importantly, it also guarantees protection of extensive areas of high conservation value forest, pending the development of the RFA.

Subject to the outcome of the Commonwealth's statutory processes, Tasmania and the Commonwealth have agreed to a rescheduling plan. This will maintain employment in the industry, by shifting logging activities to coupes of lower conservation value than those on the Commonwealth's interim protection list.

Tasmania has agreed to protect all areas on the interim protection list and the Commonwealth will provide bridging assistance to Tasmania for road expenses resulting from the rescheduling.

These agreements are sound outcomes for both Governments, and for the environment and the industry.

(Note: The NFPS was signed by the Commonwealth and the other States and Territories at COAG in Perth in December 1992).

**CANBERRA
12 APRIL, 1995**