



PRIME MINISTER

106/95

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP, THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, SPORT AND TERRITORIES, SENATOR JOHN FAULKNER, AND THE MINISTER FOR RESOURCES, DAVID BEDDALL MP

DRAFT DEFERRED FOREST AREAS

The Government agreed this evening to release detailed draft proposals from officials setting out Deferred Forest Areas in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania. The draft proposals for each State will be made available to stakeholders later this week. There will be a three week period for public consultation.

The draft reports identify Deferred Forest Areas through which it is proposed to protect values needed to meet the Commonwealth's criteria for comprehensive, adequate and representative reserves pending the negotiation of Regional Forest Agreements with relevant States. The documents represent the positions which have been reached by Commonwealth officials in negotiations with their State counterparts. Following the public consultation period, the Government will then decide on the areas to be set aside as Deferred Forest Areas.

This is a vital step in the development of Regional Forest Agreements with State Governments. It shows the progress that has been made in identifying forest areas to be deferred for further study to determine those forests which will be required for inclusion in a National Forest Reserve System. In contrast with previous decisions on forest use, assessments of possible Deferred Forest Areas have been conducted on a regional level.

The Commonwealth's proposed criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system were announced in July 1995 and formed the basis of the identification of draft Deferred Forest Areas.

The scheduled consultations will allow public scrutiny of the Government's process on this important issue. Any significant issues that arise during the consultation process will be referred to the Government's independent scientific panel to ensure the objectivity of the process.

**CANBERRA
25 SEPTEMBER 1995**