Letter of support for Federal Government involvement in Tasmanian forest solution

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the undersigned organisations may I congratulate you on your appointment as Federal Minister for the Environment. We are all community based conservation organisations that are actively working to protect Australia’s biodiverse native forests.

We also write to seek the Federal Government’s support of the historic agreement between Tasmanian conservationists, forestry industry, workers and community to end the conflict over native forest logging by moving toward a plantation-based forestry industry.

It is vital that you help to resolve the conflict over forests in Tasmania, protect native forests, and develop a strong sustainable timber industry in Tasmania. We believe you have a critical oversight role to ensure there is legislated protection for Tasmania’s irreplaceable native forests, including World Heritage Area listing for those forests with recognised universal values. We encourage and look forward to the Federal Government’s announcement of support for the Statement of Principles.

The Tasmanian forest agreement will only be successful if the Federal Government agrees to support the delivery of all of the principles in full. From our perspective, as nature conservation organisations from across the country, this will mean the legislated protection of all high conservation value forests identified by ENGOs and a legislated rapid transition of industrial commodity logging out of native forests toward a plantation based resource. It will also require a suite of reforms for landscape conservation, restoration, planning and private land conservation, which are seen as critical must-do components of this agreement.

Our organisations urge the Federal Government to prioritise the allocation of funds to enable delivery of these principles as a suite of landmark environmental reforms including:

• Legislative protection of high conservation value forests;
• A significant funding package for the conservation of native forests on
private land;
• A fully funded landscape conservation, restoration and integrated-catchment management program, and;
• A significant boost to funding for reserve management and nature conservation in the state.

Political will is required to help the Tasmanian Government, forestry industry and conservation groups to deliver a long lasting solution to the conflict over Tasmania’s native forests. We believe that Federal Government support of the Tasmania’s initiative is appropriate as it will show the way toward a new era where native forests are protected from logging and other land degrading activities.

Protecting natural forests in formal reserves will make a valuable contribution to protecting biodiversity, natural carbon stores and water supplies. By acting as a buffer, additional reserves will build ecosystem and landscape resilience by assisting Tasmania’s existing protected areas and World Heritage Areas adapt to a changing climate.

As you will be aware Tasmania’s forests are crucial habitat for endangered species such as the Tasmanian Devil, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Giant Freshwater Lobster and many others that are listed under the EPBC Act. You will make a valuable contribution to the protection of Australia’s natural environment by prioritising the protection of Tasmania’s high conservation value forests and ensuring the success of this agreement and the transition of the wood and paper products industry away from native forests in Tasmania.

We will support you in your efforts to deliver a solution for Tasmania’s native forest and support the transition to a strong, sustainable plantation-based forestry industry.

Yours sincerely,

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