22nd November 2010

The Hon Greg Combet MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

**Letter of support for Federal Government involvement in Tasmanian forest solution**

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

Australia’s biodiverse native forests play a vital role in capturing and storing carbon out of the atmosphere. Protecting Australia’s forests should be part of a suite of measures adopted by the current Government to combat climate change.

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

The protection of Tasmania’s native forests will make a major contribution to reducing Tasmania’s and Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions. The logging of native forests is responsible for massive amounts of carbon dioxide pollution in Australia, even though we currently do not account for these emissions in our accounting under the Kyoto Protocol.

We believe you have a critical role in setting up a Green Carbon Fund. This fund would provide much needed funds to implement the Tasmanian forest Agreement. This will result in immediate reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the permanent protection of Tasmania’s natural carbon stores.

We encourage and look forward to the Federal Government’s announcement of support for the Statement of Principles that will lead to an agreement. 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. These activities will also result in the sequestration of large amounts of carbon dioxide and safely store carbon in natural landscapes in perpetuity.

One of the principles that must to be adopted in full is that the burning of native forest residues will not receive Renewable Energy Certificates. Burning native forests for power is not a carbon neutral activity and should not be considered as a renewable energy source by the Australian Government.

Our organisations urge you and 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 a transition of the wood and paper products industry away from native 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 will support you in your efforts to deliver the protection of Tasmania’s forests as part of Australia’s actions to combat climate change. Representatives from the Australian Forest and Climate Alliance (AFCA) would like to meet with you to discuss issues relating to forest protection, management and forestry across Australia. I will be in contact with your office shortly to follow up on this request for a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Gemma Tillack

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On behalf of the following community based conservation organisations:
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Convenor  
North East Forest Alliance

Harriet Swift  
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Chipstop

Brush Box  
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NORTH EAST FOREST ALLIANCE  
Jess Beckerling  
Western Australian Forest Alliance

Jenny Weber  
Huon Valley Environment Centre

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