



**MEDIA RELEASE      31 March 2006**

## **HOWARD GOVERNMENT ADMITTED IT BROKE PROMISE IN STYX AND FLORENTINE VALLEYS**

### **‘4730 hectares saved’ instead of promised 18,700 hectares**

The Howard Government has admitted it broke its promise to protect 18,700 hectares of oldgrowth forest in the Styx and Florentine Valleys.

“Fresh destruction of oldgrowth forests in the Styx and Florentine valleys is occurring because Prime Minister John Howard broke his promise to protect these areas,” said Wilderness Society Campaign Coordinator, Geoff Law.

Yesterday, in response to a question by Greens Senator Christine Milne, Senator Nick Minchin denied that the promise had been broken.

However, the Government’s literature about the Howard-Lennon agreement of last May admits that the protected areas in the Styx and Florentine contain ‘4730 hectares of old-growth eucalypt against a target of 18,700 hectares’. (*The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, Fact Sheet No. 3*)

“The Government admits that it failed to meet its promise by nearly 14,000 hectares of oldgrowth,” said Mr Law. “These areas are now being destroyed.”

Mr Law said that logging is having serious impacts on World Heritage values in both the Styx and Florentine valleys.

The logging has created two new flashpoints – one in the Styx, where lone community campaigner Peter Firth has been sitting in a 75-metre-tall swamp gum in the path of logging operations for 10 days; and one in the upper Florentine, where conservationists yesterday protested against the bulldozing of a new logging road into a previously untouched part of the Florentine valley.

The fresh destruction in the upper Florentine occurred in the presence of two Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles – listed as endangered.

“Conservationists are having to do the Prime Minister’s job for him. Even with \$250 million allocated to the logging industry, the Government still could not fulfil its promises to the Australian people to save 18,700 ha of irreplaceable oldgrowth forests in the Styx and Florentine valleys.”

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## PART 1 PRESERVING TASMANIA'S OLD GROWTH FORESTS

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement increased the size of the conservation reserve system in Tasmania.

Currently more than 40 per cent of Tasmania and 68 per cent of its public forest is held in reserve. In addition 68 per cent of Tasmania's old growth forest and almost 95 per cent of Tasmania's high quality wilderness is now protected in reserves and is not available for timber harvesting.

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement was a great improvement over the ad hoc arrangements that had been in place in the early 1990s. It added some 440,000 hectares to the reserve system.

The Regional Forest Agreement has provided certainty for industry. Coupled with the Coalition's strong economic management yielding low inflation, low unemployment and low interest rates, the RFA has provided confidence and security for industry development and investment.

Unlike Labor the Coalition remains committed to maximizing confidence and certainty for both industry and conservationists and to working with all stakeholders to optimize opportunities for the sustainable preservation of Tasmania's old growth forests, the sustainable development of Tasmania's forest and forest products industries and the creation of sustainable jobs.

### PRESERVING TASMANIA'S OLD GROWTH FORESTS

In accordance with the Regional Forest Agreement, a re-elected Coalition Government will negotiate with the Tasmanian Government to immediately add over 170,000 hectares to the current reserve system.

This will include the:

- immediate protection of an additional 76,100 hectares of rainforest in the Tarkine, Southern forests (including the Huon and Weld Valleys) and North East Tasmania;
- immediate protection of 18,700 hectares of old growth forest in the Styx and the Florentine along the Eastern Boundary World Heritage Area;
- immediate protection of an additional 29,600 hectares of old growth forest on the Eastern Tiers, Tasman Peninsula and North East Highlands (including the Blue and Great Western Tiers) and Central Highlands;

**Overview of the Public Land Reserve Outcome (cont.)**

**Reservation levels of selected old-growth forest types**

Old-Growth Forest	Reservation target (% of 1996 extent)	Existing reservation (%)	Existing reservation (ha)	New reservation (ha)	New reservation (%)	National forest reserve criteria numerical target
<i>E. amygdalina</i> forest on dolerite	60	50	15,190	18,960	62	Achieved
<i>E. amygdalina</i> forest on sandstone	60	33	2,190	4,680	71	Achieved
Dry <i>E. delegatensis</i> forest	60	60	48,620	54,100	68	Achieved
Tall <i>E. delegatensis</i> forest	60	56	58,920	63,500	61	Achieved
Dry <i>E. obliqua</i> forest	60	57	26,870	31,650	67	Achieved
Tall <i>E. obliqua</i> forest	60	55	46,170	52,840	63	Achieved
<i>E. pulchella/globulus/viminalis</i> forest	60	47	29,920	32,910	52	Reservation increased
<i>E. regnans</i> forest	60	49	6,510	7,480	56	Reservation increased

The table above shows the significant increases in reservation for a number of old-growth forest types, with many now meeting the numerical forest reserve criteria targets. The reservation of other old-growth forest types has increased substantially and the reserve criteria are considered met, taking social and economic factors into account.

Governments have also agreed to a new program to increase the protection of forest on private land. The program to secure private forest reserves has always been an important aspect of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), in recognition that there are some forest types that, because of their distribution, cannot be adequately protected on public land. Please refer to Fact Sheet No. 8 *Protecting Forests on Private Land* for more information.

The RFA added 440,000 hectares of public land to reserves, creating a reserve system of over 2.7 million hectares of reserves. The RFA has also protected over 30,000 hectares of forest on private land to date, including 5,000 hectares of old growth.

With the extra public land areas protected as part of this new Agreement, Tasmania will have nearly 2.9 million hectares, or 42 per cent of the State's land area, in reserves.

The reserve system previously protected over 40 per cent of Tasmania's native forests, 68 per cent of the State's old-growth forest and 95 per cent of high-quality wilderness. The new reserves will increase this protection to 45 per cent of Tasmania's native forests, 78 per cent of the 1996 old-growth forest area and 97 per cent of the 1996 high-quality wilderness areas.

The Australian Government's policy goal was to protect old-growth forest values through reservation of 125,700 hectares of forest on public land. The new Agreement protects a further 135,450 hectares of public forest, including:

- 81,980 hectares of rainforest across the State against a target of 76,100 hectares;
- 26,990 hectares of eucalypt forest in north-eastern, eastern and central Tasmania (containing 22,800 hectares of old-growth eucalypt against a target of 29,600 hectares);

- 6,460 hectares of eucalypt forest along the eastern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area, including the Styx and the upper Florentine valleys (containing 4,730 hectares of old-growth eucalypt against a target of 18,700 hectares), as well as significant areas of rainforest included in the rainforest outcome. Further reservation along the boundary was carefully considered but not progressed due to the significant economic and social impacts of removing this high productivity forest from timber production;
- 18,090 hectares of eucalypt forest in northern and western Tasmania (containing an additional 17,980 hectares of old-growth eucalypt);
- 1,930 hectares of sub-alpine eucalypt forest against a target of 1,300 hectares.

One million hectares of old growth will be protected in reserves through the extra old growth added to public land reserves and the protection of at least 25,000 hectares of old growth expected to be secured through the new private forest reserve program.