28 July 2002

Wombat Forest Society inc.

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28-07-2002

To whom it may concern,

This letter is in support of Environment Victoria's application for a grant to establishment a facility to enable computer based analysis and monitoring of the State's forests as well the potential for other land based issues.

The Wombat Forest Society has been at the forefront of the development and application of forest modelling systems and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) in Victoria for the past decade. The WFS has been able to apply these excellent modern techniques and tools to analyse most of Victoria's Forest Management Areas and present the conclusions to the Brack's Government and convince them that there were major issues over sustainability in our forests. This was the basis for the Government hiring Prof. J. VanClay, whose recent report brought about an average 30% reduction in logging across the State.

The WFS believes that in order for the community to be able to act as watchdogs over our forests as well as being able to meaningfully contribute to the myriad or forest related processes that go on, we need Environment Victoria to have the facility to enable the support of in-depth analysis that a GIS lab can enable.

The cost of the software needed, in order to be 'compatible' with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (ArcView and ArcInfo) are beyond the reach of community groups. If your organisation were able to fund EV getting these programs, this would be one of the biggest steps forward towards sustainable forest management in 20 years. There is no doubt that the community is now ready and willing to use these new tools, they are just too costly from a community point of view.

I am on a Steering Committee for a project being run by the State Government and NRE called the 'West RFA Private Sawlog Project' which is aimed at planting extensive hardwood plantations in the west of the State that are sited in a way that means the trees will also aid in the much needed environmental repair to this highly degraded part of the State. The project has used the above computer programs to build detailed, multi-layered models to ensure that we plant in the right areas, for salinity, biodiversity and a host of other issues. I would be happy to demonstrate this product to further illustrate the scope and outstanding potential that these tools give us for ensuring a better environmental future of our State and our children.

Your Sincerely
Tim Anderson
President
Wombat Forest Society