dence remains of regeneration in harvest areas.

"The retained canopy appears to be too dense to allow a proper regeneration of messmate.

"It is a joke to think that that standard of forest could ever be a viable commercial forest for sawlog production."

Mr Phillips said PFNC argued the Cobboboonee habitat and conservation values may well be more important than its timber-production value.

Mr Anderson said: "Our protection network's approach to the Portland forest management area and regional forest agreement next year is to advocate a balance between timber and non-timber values in the forest."

Ms Duclos said the forthcoming agreement would provide opportunities for new or expanded reserves - and much the vegetation

"I believe the federal agencies involved with the regional forest after the agreement is signed off, which could be as late as March, 2000."



LORIS Duclos and Tim Anderson (right) ...speaking out after a guided tour of the Cobboboonee by Portland field naturalist Doug Phillips.

Picture: NICOLE CLEARY

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# Save forest: rivals

By **TIM WINKLER**

Loggers and conservationists have united to condemn the State Government's management of central Victoria's Wombat State Forest in an historic display of cooperation.

In a model of cooperation which could provide a basis for reducing Australia's historically bitter forest conflict, the Wombat Forest Society signed a letter with local logging contractors and sawmill owners calling on the State Government to boost spending on forest management and research.

"The organisations are also concerned that the present level of DNRE (Department of Natural Resources and Environment) funding is impinging on the ability of the department to manage the forest," the letter said.

Signed at the Daylesford Town Hall in front of the Federal Environment Minister, Senator Robert Hill and various State and Federal MPs, the letter was welcomed by a State Government backbencher, Mr Dick de Fegely, who said it was a constructive contribution to the forest's management.

However, the rosy prospect of a new era of forest detente was dashed before the ceremony's conclusion, when timber workers hijacked the ceremony, complaining that they were left out of negotiations.

The assistant federal secretary of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, Mr Michael O'Connor, told the mill owner's representative, Mr Geoff Proctor, and the Central Victorian Forestry Company manager, Mr John Slorach, that they should be ashamed of themselves for not involving the union when negotiations began 10 months ago.

Wombat Forest Society president Mr Tim Anderson said his group supported logging in the area, but also wanted conservation values protected.

The idea of the joint letter arose when the society addressed a group of loggers last year and found they shared many concerns.



**Pros and cons: John Slorach with the Wombat Forest Society's Tim Anderson.** Picture: VIKI YEMETTAS

AGREED TO 14TH SEPT 1995