THE HON JOHN ANDERSON MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Energy

Deputy Leader
National Party of Australia

22 APR 1997

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REGISTRY

The Hon Michael Ronaldson MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport & Regional Development
Federal Member for Ballarat
5 Lydiard Street North
BALLARAT VIC 3350

Dear Mr ~~Ronaldson~~ Michael

Thank you for your letter of 12 November 1996 which enclosed correspondence from the Wombat Forest Society concerning the Wombat Forest.

The Wombat Forest Society also wrote direct to me, and a copy of my reply is enclosed for your information.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of the Wombat Forest Society to my attention.

Yours sincerely

JOHN ANDERSON

enc.

Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 Tel: (06) 277 7520 Fax: (06) 273 4120

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Ms Robin Ramsay
Director
Wombat Forest Society
PO Box 428
DAYLESFORD VIC 3460

Dear Ms Ramsay

Thank you for your letter of 11 November 1996 outlining your concern about the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment's sustainability model for the Midlands Forest Management Area (FMA).

Responsibility for managing the Midlands FMA lies with the Victorian Government. I understand that the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment has recently released the Midlands Forest Management Plan. The Plan will be an important component of the Victorian systems and processes to be reviewed as part of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for the West Region in Victoria, expected to be completed in 1999. I am sure that you will have every opportunity to raise your concerns during consultations on the West Region RFA.

The Midlands Forest Management Plan reduces the sustainable yield by 18% to 58,000 cubic metres of sawlog. To help minimise disruption and provide certainty for the region's other mills, contractors and employees the Commonwealth has agreed to a Victorian proposal to provide funding under the Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package (FISAP) to enable licensed volume to be retired voluntarily. To date one sawmill licence has been retired and negotiations are continuing to enable the balance of the reduction in harvesting levels to be achieved.

The Commonwealth does not approve 'residual log' or 'pulpwood' contracts in the Midlands FMA. Timber harvesting control is the responsibility of the Victorian Government. Export licences granted by the Commonwealth only grant a right to export material obtained from harvesting operations which have taken place in accordance with all State and local government laws applying to such operations.

On 31 October 1996 I granted export licences which allow the export of up to 129,000 tonnes of hardwood woodchips per annum from the West Region of Victoria. These export licences do not grant any rights to harvest, and are consistent with the Interim Forest Agreement (IFA) between the Commonwealth and Victoria. Under the IFA, the Victorian Government has undertaken not to allow timber harvesting (whether for domestic use or

export) in any area, including areas in the Wombat State Forest, which may be required for a comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserve system.

Grants to facilitate stakeholder participation are being coordinated by the Forests Task Force. The 1996/97 grants were recently announced and I understand that the Forests Task Force has informed your society that a decision on funding for the Wombat Forest Society has been deferred until the West Region RFA is active.

I believe that a key feature of the RFA process is the full participation of major stakeholders and other interest groups at each stage of the process and look forward to your continued contribution towards the finalisation of a RFA in West Victoria.

Yours sincerely

JOHN ANDERSON