Senator John Faulkner

Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories

The Hon David Beddall MP
Minister for Resources
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear David

Further to my letter of 7 December I am now providing my advice on areas likely to be of high conservation value in Victoria. The details of my advice are set out in the attachments to this letter. I am also providing you with a copy of the report on high conservation value forests prepared by Environment Victoria.

The Australian Heritage Commission will provide separate advice under section 30 of its Act in relation to forest areas in Victoria listed in the Register of the National Estate.

I have noted the concerns on the timing of advice which you expressed in your letter to me of 7 December. I have provided my advice to you as quickly as practicable in the circumstances. My Department is prepared to work closely with officers of your Department in facilitating the consideration of my advice.

The remainder of my advice on the applicability of the National Forest Policy Statement to the export of woodchips from Australia will be provided to you very soon.

Yours sincerely

JOHN FAULKNER

12 DEC 1994

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The consideration by the portfolio of the woodchip export licences for Victoria also found that:

There is concern within the portfolio that, while operations on private land in the Otways has been considered, the environmental significance of export woodchip operations in Victoria as a whole have not as yet, been subject to consideration under the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*;

There is concern about the long term ecological sustainability of the current level of timber harvesting in the Wombat Forest;

The ability to continue to provide the high level of water allocation from catchments associated with the Wombat Forest, may be compromised given the level of harvesting operations. The downstream impacts arising from proposed timber harvesting operations may also need consideration given Commonwealth obligations arising from the *Murray-Darling Basin Act 1993*.

Specific regions

Midlands

The lack of systematic data has limited the analysis of forest areas likely to be of high conservation value in the Midlands Forest Management Area. The portfolio has, therefore only considered the Wombat Forest based on the information in the consultant's report.

Otways

A significant number of coupes have been identified in the Otways in catchments important for the continued survival of the Australian Grayling (*Protroctes maraena*). While it is recognised that DCNR have prescriptions for Grayling in the Otways Forest Management Plan, it should be emphasised that the Otways are exceptionally important for this species.

A number of coupes within these catchments have also been identified as having old-growth forest.

A substantial number of coupes have been identified from the HCV report (Environment Victoria 1994) and the Otways FMP as old-growth forest. Although it is recognised that approximately 73% of old-growth forest is represented in the reserve system, and additional areas of old-growth forest are protected through prescription, in the absence of CAR criteria, these coupes should nevertheless be recognised as being likely to have high conservation value.

An analysis of the biodiversity attributes of the Otways at the forest block level registered a low index with one exception (Wye River).

Central Highlands

A number of coupes have been identified from the 13 catchments considered important in the HCV study (Environment Victoria 1994) for the long term survival of Leadbeaters Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*). Other coupes in