



MEDIA RELEASE

FORESTERS PROCLAIM NEW NATIONAL PARKS PREMATURE (120698)

The Hon Pam Allen, Minister for the Environment, proudly announced last week the Government's intention to declare 52 new National Parks before the next State election. "This pre-emptive action compromises the current assessment program which is taking place in New South Wales forest areas," Professor Ian Ferguson, President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), said today.

The IFA supports the current joint Commonwealth and State Regional Assessment process to research, assess and consult with the community before any decisions are made on the location and extent of additional conservation reserves. The State Government has previously guaranteed that all decisions would be based on extensive public consultation and would not disadvantage the hardwood timber industry.

Over \$30 million of taxpayers' money has been spent on collecting the best scientific data to reassess the adequacy of the current National Park system. Comprehensive forest assessment and community forest forums have been conducted over the past twelve months as part of the Government's initiative towards striking a fair balance between conservation and the timber industry. These studies are not yet complete and work in the forest is continuing.

"Ms Allen's announcement appears to pre-empt the entire expensive Comprehensive Regional Assessment process in order to meet short term political goals. If political decisions such as this are used to determine land use policy instead of scientific appraisal and community involvement, then the sawmilling industry and many small rural communities are doomed and the development of a national conservation reserve system is compromised," Professor Ferguson said.