

SERCA IN THE MEDIA:

Conservationists slam Tas forest deal, Canberra Times Lauren Farrow 25.7.2011

Conservationists have slammed the Tasmanian forestry agreement, saying it cannot be used as a blueprint to safeguard forests in other states.

Noel Plumb from South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) in NSW said the \$276 million restructure plan for the Tasmanian forestry sector was a big disappointment.

"We were hoping it was going to be a blueprint to protect NSW and Victorian forests," Mr Plumb told AAP on Monday.

"But it just means that the program of protests of legal challenges and of consumer campaigns will intensify.

"The industry will collapse more suddenly."

The agreement was based around a statement of principles signed last year by environmentalists, industry groups and the forestry workers' union, the CFMEU.

It provides an \$85 million exit package for forestry contractors, as well as \$120 million of federal money over the next 15 years to diversify the economies of towns affected by the industry downturn.

At least 430,000 hectares of native forests will be set aside as informal reserves, while an additional 142,000 hectares will be earmarked to fulfil existing logging contracts.

Mr Plumb said the deal missed a golden opportunity and that the "informal reserves" did not go far enough.

"We were hoping to see a clear timetable for a real transition right out of native forests, which would be done, say, in the next three years."

He said the money should be used to boost the plantation industry and to relocate loggers from native forests.

Up to 100 residents protested the arrival of logging machinery in the "cathedral of trees" in the NSW coastal town of Bermagui on Monday.

The spotted gums line the entrance into the town and were an important tourist asset as well as being the home of one of the last remaining koala colonies in southern NSW, protester Suzanne Foulkes said.

Forest NSW said it was undertaking legal timber harvesting operation in the Bermagui State Forest.

"The harvestplan for the operation clearly shows that a modified harvesting operation will be conducted in a marked area to preserve the visual amenity," spokesman Howard Spencer said.

At least 55 per cent of timber in the area would be retained, he said.