



Senator the Hon Robert Hill

Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for the Environment

Media Release

CONSERVATION GAINS IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

Federal Environment Minister, Robert Hill, welcomed the Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) signed today as a significant gain for the conservation of Australia's native forests.

"The RFA increases the region's reserve system by 116,000 hectares - or 64 per cent," Senator Hill said.

"Nearly half the public land in the region is now in national parks or other conservation reserves.

"The RFA delivers on this Government's commitment to develop a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System which meets the nationally agreed criteria for biodiversity, old growth and wilderness. It ensures that the whole forest estate will be sustainably managed for future generations.

"At the same time, it provides the certainty needed for jobs and opportunities in the regional and State economy. This is an outstandingly balanced and responsible result."

Senator Hill noted that the environmental benefits of the RFA went beyond additions to the conservation reserve system.

"The Central Highlands forests are a valuable reservoir of biodiversity, providing habitat for a number of endangered, rare or vulnerable species of flora and fauna including Leadbeater's possum, which is one of Victoria's faunal emblems."

"The RFA will result in more effective management of endangered species by protecting areas of high quality habitat, by making programs more focussed, and by setting priorities for specific plans to protect threatened species.

"The Commonwealth has assisted in preparing and is funding implementation of a recovery plan for Leadbeater's possum. Twenty-one areas have been identified across the species' range and within each of these areas a minimum of 600 hectares of optimum habitat will be protected as reserves."

Senator Hill said the RFA also builds on Victoria's ecologically sustainable forest management practices, to ensure that forests are managed wisely both on and off reserves.

For further information:

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