



**Media release from the Southern Wood Council  
July 3, 2000**

**A government proposal which would allow trucks to carry heavier loads has the backing of the Southern Wood Council.**

Transport Minister Steven Joyce is seeking feedback on a plan to introduce a permit system allowing trucks to weigh up to 50 tonnes on specific routes, up from the current statutory limit of 44 tonnes.

Local councils will be involved in permit approval under the proposal, with the permit system ensuring that the heavier trucks travel only on appropriate designated roads and bridges.

Southern Wood Council chairman Grant Dodson said the proposal has many benefits for forest owners transporting logs across the region.

Allowing logging trucks to carry heavier loads will improve productivity, with fewer vehicles needed to shift logs from the forests to the port or sawmill, and lower fuel costs. Cost savings to the forestry industry from this change could be large, with more than 20 percent savings in fuel alone, as one study has shown.

Fewer trucks will also mean less impact on the region's roading system, less traffic on rural and urban roads, and fewer emissions.

"The regional economic and environmental benefits are considerable given the large forestry resource in Otago and Southland, and the major economic value the industry provides to the community," Mr Dodson said.

"Council members are pleased to see the government showing leadership in supporting business growth. The forestry industry, which last year accounted for about 10 percent of the total value of New Zealand's export trade, makes a significant contribution to the economy. The Government proposal will certainly assist the industry to increase its productivity and therefore its contribution to the regional and national economy."

A NZ Forest Owners Association and Ministry of Transport and Transit NZ (Now NZTA) pilot trial in Napier conducted by PanPac Ltd, looking at the impact of increased weight and dimension logging trucks (up to 60 tonne gross, and 24 m in length) on designated routes on some state highways, produced stunning results. It demonstrated productivity increases of 63% (predicted 44%) and fuel saving of 22% (predicted 14%).



A general government-commissioned trial also showed productivity increased between 10 and 20 percent, trip numbers reduced by 16 percent and fuel use dropped by 20 percent.

There was no measurable increase in noise and vibration effects of heavier vehicles demonstrated during the trials, and there was a decrease in total emissions.

"Individual forest owners in the region will be providing feedback to the government on this. We look forward to seeing the proposal adopted into legislation," Mr Dodson said.

*The Southern Wood Council Inc was set up in 2001 to promote, encourage and coordinate the sustainable economic development of the forest products industry in Otago and Southland. One of a few truly independent groups of its type in New Zealand, it includes all the major forest owners within the region (ownership or management of over 140,000 hectares of production forests with an annual harvest of over 1.2 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood), the larger wood processing and manufacturing companies, the port authorities, and each of the three economic development agencies from local councils.*

**For further information contact Grant Dodson on 03-467-7722.**